

Chlamydia

Chlamydia (kla-MID-ee-ah) is a sexually transmitted infection (STI), caused by bacteria (germs). Oral or anal intercourse (sex), or any contact between a man's penis and a woman's vagina can pass the germ from one person to another.

Who Can Get Chlamydia

Anyone who has sex has a chance of getting chlamydia. Those who have had more than one partner are at greater risk. Most people who have Chlamydia have no symptoms and do not realize they have the infection. They can give it to others without knowing it.

If a pregnant woman has chlamydia, it can be passed to her baby during birth. Chlamydia can cause eye infections or pneumonia in the newborn baby.

Why Chlamydia Is Harmful

If chlamydia is not treated, it can be very serious.

In females, an infection may spread to the uterus, tubes and ovaries. This infection is called PID (pelvic inflammatory disease). This may cause a woman any of the following:

- long-term pain
- problems with pregnancy
- sterility (unable to have babies).

In males, chlamydia can cause an inflammation of the urinary tube (urethra). If it is not treated, it can spread to the epididymis (epi DID i mis), where sperm is stored. The infection can make a male sterile (unable to father a child).

Signs of Chlamydia

Chlamydia can be in the body for a long time with no signs. **If it does cause symptoms:**

- **Females** may have burning when they urinate, vaginal discharge, pain or bleeding after sex, or bleeding between their periods. Females may have pain in the lower belly which may range from mild to severe (fever, chills and vomiting).
- **Males** may have painful urination. There might also be a watery discharge from the penis.

If You Think You Have Chlamydia

- If you do not have symptoms, but have had sex with someone who has chlamydia, see your health care provider. You will need to be tested for the infection and treated with antibiotics.
- If you have any symptoms of chlamydia, see your health care provider for an exam and testing. You will need to be treated with antibiotics.
- Be sure to tell your health care provider if there is any chance you may be pregnant.

Testing for Chlamydia

Females

- If you have symptoms, a doctor or nurse practitioner will examine the genital area. A sample of the discharge is taken from the vagina. Sometimes, a metal or plastic speculum is used to look inside the vagina. The samples are examined by the lab for the Chlamydia germ.
- If there are no symptoms, a urine sample may be taken instead of a vaginal sample to test for the Chlamydia germ.

Males

- A urine sample is taken to test for the germ.

Treatment

- If you have Chlamydia, your doctor will give you antibiotics to treat the infection. Chlamydia can be cured with antibiotics. For the infection to go away completely, you must take all of the medicine.
- Contact your sex partner(s) so that he or she may be treated also.
- AVOID SEXUAL CONTACT until one week after all the medicine is gone. Your partner needs to be treated before you have sexual contact again.

Treatment for Partners

You and your partner(s) must both be treated. The treatment not only protects the sexual partner, it also prevents the person already being treated from getting chlamydia back again.

If you do not think your partner will get treated on his or her own, tell your doctor. The doctor may be able to write a prescription for your partner to get treated.

If you live in the Columbus area, your partner(s) can be treated at the Columbus City Health Department, located at 240 Parsons Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43215. The phone number is (614) 645-7772. If you live outside the Columbus area, call your local health department.

Follow-Up Visits

- You both need to have a follow-up doctor's visit if the symptoms do not go away. You need to come back for ALL follow-up appointments.
- You should be tested for chlamydia and other infections again in 2 to 3 months.

Preventing Future Infection

Abstinence (not having sex) is the only 100% effective way to prevent chlamydia, other STI's and HIV (the virus that causes AIDS). If you choose to have sex, you can do some things to help prevent the spread of STI's:

- Respect yourself and your partner.
- Limit the number of sexual partners. Know your partner and his or her sexual history.
- ALWAYS USE A LATEX CONDOM. Use it correctly. Use it every time you have sex, the whole time you have sex.
- Be prepared. Have another condom available in case the one you are using breaks.
- Avoid mind-altering substances such as alcohol and other drugs. You cannot make good decisions if you are drunk or high.
- Some STI's make it easier for HIV to enter the skin and mucous membranes. If you have an STI, you should consider being tested for HIV.
- If a woman is pregnant and thinks she has chlamydia, she should call her health care provider right away.
- It is a good idea for sexually active teens to be tested for STI'S at least once a year even if there are no symptoms.

For More Information

If you have any questions, call the Adolescent Medicine Clinic at (614) 722-2450.

You may also call the National STD Hotline at 1-800-227-8922, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Or you can get information at <http://www.ashastd.org/sitemap.cfm>.