



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
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Helping Hand™

Health Education for Patients and Families

Gonorrhea: Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT)

Your partner was diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection (STI) called gonorrhea (gon-o-REE-ah). You may also be infected. This infection is serious but can be easily treated with antibiotics. Your partner has already been treated. It is very important that you are treated as well. Most people have no symptoms and do not know they have the disease. That makes it easy to give it to someone else without knowing it.

Sexual intercourse, oral sex, anal sex or any contact between a penis and a vagina can spread the germ. It can also spread during a vaginal birth to a baby.

Your partner will give you a prescription written by a health care provider to treat this infection. **Please read all of the information in this handout before taking the medicine called cefixime.**

Why it is harmful

Gonorrhea is caused by the bacteria (germ) *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. When gonorrhea is treated early, it can be cured easily. If it is not treated early, gonorrhea can cause serious damage. It can spread through the blood and cause damage to the joints, the heart or brain.

If a female at birth has a severe gonorrhea infection, it may infect the fallopian tubes and ovaries. This could make them unable to have babies. This infection is called pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID can cause long-term pelvic pain. Both males and females may not be able to have children if they have repeated infections or are not treated.

Signs and symptoms

It is important to know that some people may not have symptoms at all. Some common signs and symptoms to look for include:

- burning when you urinate (pee)
- changes in menstrual bleeding
- discharge from the throat or rectum
- discharge from the penis or vagina
- males at birth – pain around the bladder or in the groin or rectum, fever, swollen scrotum
- females at birth – pain in the lower belly with fever, chills and vomiting

Testing

- **Male at birth:**
 - A urine (pee) test is given even if there are symptoms or not.
- **Female at birth: no symptoms:**
 - A urine test is given if there are no symptoms.
- **Female at birth: with symptoms:**
 - A health care provider will examine the genital area. A metal or plastic speculum is used to look inside the vagina. Samples of discharge are taken from the cervix. The samples are tested by the lab for gonorrhea.
 - If you were assigned female at birth and are sexually active, you should get tested for gonorrhea one time every year.

Treatment

If you live in the Columbus area, your partner(s) can be treated at the Columbus City Health Department, 240 Parsons Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43215. The phone number is (614) 645-7417. If you live outside of the Columbus area, call your local health department.

- Gonorrhea is treated with an antibiotic called cefixime. It kills the germ that causes gonorrhea. The medicine comes in a shot or pill form. You will get a prescription for this medicine. It can be filled at any pharmacy.
- People can have more than one infection at the same time. Cefixime will not cure other infections. See a health care provider to get tested for other STIs.
- Some STIs make it easier for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) to enter the skin and mucous membranes. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. If you have an STI, you should think about getting tested for HIV.

Taking cefixime

- You have been prescribed one 800 mg dose of cefixime. This may change if your partner also tested positive for a different STI, called chlamydia.
- Read the label carefully. Cefixime is a one-time dose. That means that all the medicine should be taken at the same time.
- You can take this medicine with or without food. Taking with food prevents common side effects. See the section below called ‘Side effects.’
- If you vomit the medicine within one hour after taking it, call the health care provider who wrote the prescription. You may need another dose.

The medicine is very safe. DO NOT TAKE IT if any of the below are true:

- You are assigned female at birth and have lower belly pain, pain during sex, vomiting or fever. See a health care provider right away if you have any of these symptoms.
- You think that you might be pregnant or you are breastfeeding. Talk to your health care provider or pharmacist before taking this medicine.
- You have an allergy to cefixime or any medicines like it. Tell your health care provider about the allergy and your symptoms. These may be:
 - Any rash, hives or itching.
 - Skin turned yellow. This side effect can be related to liver function.
 - Having shortness of breath, wheezing or coughing
 - You have a serious long-term illness such as kidney, heart or liver disease.
 - Swelling of face, lips, tongue or throat

If you have any of these, or if you are not sure, do not take this medicine. Instead, talk to your health care provide as soon as possible.

Side effects

- **Common side effects**
 - pain
 - nausea
 - vomiting
 - diarrhea
- **Serious side effects** (call your health care provider right away if you have any of these):
 - nausea or vomiting
 - dark colored urine (pee)
 - jaundice (yellow skin and eyes)
 - upper abdomen (belly) pain on the right side
 - skin rash
 - fatigue (tired)

When to call for emergency help

Call 911 for emergency help if you have any of these signs of an allergic reaction:

- trouble breathing
- swelling of the tongue, lips or throat
- swelling of the hands, feet or ankles

Follow-up

You and your partner(s) **must** BOTH be treated and have a follow-up health care visit if the symptoms do not go away. You need to come back for ALL follow-up appointments.

- Contact your sex partner(s) so they can get treatment.
- **Wait for one week after you are both treated before having sexual intercourse.** During the first 7 days, you can give the infection to your sex partner(s).
- If you have sex without a condom or if a condom breaks, you can get infected again.
- You should be tested for gonorrhea again in 2 to 3 months after treatment.

Prevention

Abstinence (not having sex) is the only way to fully prevent gonorrhea, other STIs and HIV. If you have sex, you can do some things that might help prevent the spread of STIs:

- Respect yourself and your partner(s).
- Limit your number of sexual partners. Know your partner(s) and their sexual history.
- **Always use a latex condom.** Use it the correct way. Use a condom every time you have sex, the whole time you have sex.
- Have extra condoms with you 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 use them.
- If you are pregnant and think you have gonorrhea, call your health care provider right away.
- Sexually active teens need to be tested for STIs at least one time a year, even if they have no symptoms.

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>.