

Fact sheet

Chlamydia

Last updated 25 March 2011

Chlamydia often has no symptoms but is infectious and can lead to infertility and other complications if not treated. Testing and treatment are simple. Use condoms to prevent chlamydia.

What is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a sexually transmissible infection caused by bacteria. Most people do not have symptoms but can still transmit the infection. Chlamydia can infect the urethra (the urine passage), cervix (the neck of the womb), anus, throat, and eyes. If chlamydia is not treated it can cause serious complications.

Are there any symptoms?

Not always - women and men can have chlamydia for months, or even years, without noticing any symptoms.

Symptoms can start from 2 to 14 days after infection.

If **women** have symptoms, they can include:

- pain when passing urine
- bleeding or pain during or after sex
- bleeding between regular periods
- an unusual vaginal discharge
- cramps or pain in the lower abdomen
- anal pain or discharge
- conjunctivitis and eye inflammation

If **men** have symptoms they can include:

- discharge from the penis
- pain when passing urine
- swollen and sore testicles
- anal pain or discharge
- conjunctivitis and eye inflammation

For **women**, complications of untreated chlamydia can include:

- pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) when the reproductive organs become inflamed
- chronic pelvic pain
- infertility due to scar tissue damaging the fallopian tubes
- ectopic pregnancy (when the pregnancy develops in the fallopian tubes instead of in the uterus/womb)
- arthritis

For **men**, complications of untreated chlamydia can include:

- recurrent urethritis (inflammation of the urine passage)
- inflammation of the tube and the testes
- arthritis
- conjunctivitis and eye inflammation

How is it transmitted?

Chlamydia is transmitted through oral, vaginal, or anal sex.

If a mother has chlamydia, her baby can become infected during birth.

Chlamydia can be transmitted even when there are no noticeable symptoms.

How is it prevented?

Using a condom and water based lubricant can significantly reduce the risk of transmission of chlamydia and other sexually transmissible infections.

Do not have sex with anyone who has been diagnosed chlamydia, even using a condom, until 7 days after treatment is completed.

Go for a regular sexually transmissible infection (STI) check-up to find infections before complications develop and to prevent transmission to others. Always use condoms.

How is it diagnosed?

Chlamydia can be diagnosed by your doctor. The doctor will do a simple and painless urine test for men, and a urine or swab test for women. It is important not to pass urine for one hour before the test.

How is it treated?

Chlamydia is easily cured by a single dose of antibiotics.

Telling partners

If you have chlamydia it is important to tell your sexual partner/s so they can be tested and treated. Your doctor can help you decide who may be at risk and help you to contact them.

Chlamydia is a notifiable disease. This means that doctors and laboratory staff are legally required to tell NSW Health about new cases. This information is confidential and is used for public health planning.

The information in this fact sheet is general and you should see a doctor if you are worried about your health.

Contact

NSW Sexual Health Infoline freecall **1800 451 624**.