

# Lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV)

## What is it?

Lymphogranuloma venereum, or LGV, is a sexually transmissible infection (STI). It is caused by a type of chlamydia bacteria. In the past, people with LGV got the infection in countries in Asia, Africa, Central and South America and the Caribbean. Now the infection is in Europe and North America and mainly affects men who have sex with men.

## How do I know I have it?

LGV starts as a small painless lump or sore that appears on or in the:

- Penis
- Bottom (anus and rectum)
- Vagina
- Cervix (the neck of the womb)
- Mouth

This happens 3 to 30 days after exposure. The lump or sore heals after a few days. Most people are not aware they have this painless lump.

Over the next two to six weeks the infection spreads to the lymph glands in the groin, pelvis or anus.

Some people may also have:

- Fever
- Chills
- Weight loss
- Feel generally unwell
- Sore muscles and joints

If the anus is infected there can be:

- Blood.
- Pus or mucus.
- A painful urgent feeling of needing to poo but being unable to do so.
- Diarrhoea or constipation
- Cramps or pain in the lower abdomen, below the stomach
- Painful sores at the site of infection

Most men who have sex with men who have LGV will have it in their anus and rectum and may present with these symptoms

In the final stages, the infection can cause a lot of scarring and changes in the area where the infection was. This is rare in Australia.

## How did I get it?

LGV is transmitted through anal, vaginal or oral sex without a condom. It can also be spread when sex toys are shared.

If a mother is infected, her baby can become infected during birth. This hasn't been recorded in Australia.

LGV can be transmitted even when there are no symptoms.

### **How can I make sure I don't get it?**

Using condoms for oral, anal or vaginal sex can lower the risk of getting LGV and other STIs. Always use a new condom with each sexual partner and when sharing sex toys.

If you have visible signs or symptoms or have been diagnosed with LGV, do not have sex with anyone (even using a condom) until after treatment is completed.

Have regular STI checks – doing this stops STIs from causing serious health issues. It also helps stop the spread of STIs to others.

### **How can the nurse/ Doctor tell me if I have it?**

In Australia LGV mainly affects men who have sex with men, and the diagnosis is made from a swab of the sore.

### **How can I get rid of it?**

LGV is easily treated with antibiotics. It takes 3 weeks of treatment to get rid of the infection completely.

Painful swollen lymph nodes may need to be drained but this is rare in Australia

### **Who do I need to tell and why?**

It is important to tell people you have had sex with that you have LGV. They will need to be tested and treated. Ask your doctor if you aren't sure who you need to tell. They can help you with this and help you contact them.

This fact sheet is just some general information. If you are worried about your health go and see a doctor.

### **For more information or support visit:**

For more information on STIs and safe sex visit the Play Safe website:  
[www.playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au)

Sexual Health Info Link is a service that you can call up for information on STIs and sexual health. It's anonymous and non-judgemental. Call: 1800 451 624 or visit <https://www.shil.nsw.gov.au/>

"Let them know" allows you to send an anonymous messages to tell someone you've had sex with that they have come into contact with the infection: <http://www.letthemknow.org.au/>