

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

Chlamydia

What is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

How is Chlamydia spread?

- Chlamydia is spread by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has untreated chlamydia;
- A pregnant woman with Chlamydia can give the infection to her baby during childbirth.

What are the symptoms of Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is known as a "silent" disease because about three out of every four (75%) infected women and about half (50%) of infected men have no symptoms.

Men, who do have symptoms, may have:

- Painful, burning sensation when urinating;
- Burning and itching around the opening of the penis;
- Watery or milky discharge from the penis;
- Painful or swollen testicles (although this is less common).

If left untreated, Chlamydia in men may cause inflammation of the urethra (urethritis), inflammation of the testicles (epididymitis), or sterility.

Women may experience mild symptoms, if any and can be mistaken for a bladder or vaginal infection:

- Painful and/or frequent urinating;
- Abnormal vaginal discharge;
- Vaginal bleeding between periods;
- Abdominal pain and/or pain during sex;

Women with Chlamydia are at risk of developing serious complications from the infection, regardless of the presence or severity of symptoms. Women may develop pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), chronic abdominal pain, ectopic (tubal) pregnancy, sterility, miscarriage or premature births.

Chlamydial infection of the cervix can spread to the rectum

Rectal infections may either cause no symptoms or cause symptoms in both men and women that may include:

- Discharge;
- Rectal pain;
- Bleeding;

Chlamydia can also be found in the throats of women and men having oral sex with an infected partner.

How does Chlamydia affect a pregnant woman and her baby?

If a pregnant woman has Chlamydia, she may give the infection to her baby as the baby passes through the birth canal during delivery. This can cause eye infection or pneumonia in a newborn. Having chlamydia may also lead to premature delivery. Treatment of Chlamydia as soon as it is detected in pregnant women will reduce the risk of these complications. Pregnant women should consult a health care provider for appropriate examination, testing, and treatment, as necessary.

How long after exposure to the bacteria do symptoms begin?

If symptoms occur, they can appear 1-3 weeks or as long as 30 days after exposure.

How is Chlamydia diagnosed?

Several laboratory tests are available to diagnose Chlamydia. A doctor or nurse can obtain a sample for testing from the parts of the body likely to be infected (cervix, urethra, rectum, or throat) and send the sample to a laboratory for analysis. Chlamydia that is present in the cervix or penis can be diagnosed in a laboratory by testing a urine sample.

How is Chlamydia treated?

Chlamydia is treated with antibiotics. Treatment needs to start as soon as possible and it is very important that you:

- Take all medicine as prescribed, even if you start to feel better. Inform your health care provider before taking any medicine if you think you may be pregnant.
- Inform your sex partner(s) that you have Chlamydia and encourage them to be tested and treated.
- Stop all sexual activity until treatment is complete

I was treated for Chlamydia. When can I have sex again?

You should wait seven days after finishing all medications before having sex. To avoid getting infected with Chlamydia again or spreading Chlamydia to your partner(s), you and your sex partner(s) should avoid having sex until you have each completed treatment. If you've had Chlamydia and took medicine in the past, you can still get infected again if you have unprotected sex with a person who has Chlamydia.

How can I reduce my risk of getting Chlamydia?

The only way to avoid STDs is to not have vaginal, anal, or oral sex.

If you are sexually active, you can do the following things to lower your chances of getting chlamydia:

- Being in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and has negative STD test results;
- Using latex condoms the right way every time you have sex.
- Have regular medical exams if you are sexually active. If you think you have a STD, get tested.
- Tell your partner if you are infected. Tell anyone you have had sex with that they need to be tested

For more information on Chlamydia, call (816) 325-7204

For additional copies, visit our website at <http://www.ci.independence.mo.us/Health/>

You may also visit CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/std/chlamydia/STDFact-Chlamydia.htm>