



# CHLAMYDIA

## WHAT IS CHLAMYDIA?

Chlamydia is a common STD that can cause infection among both men and women. It can cause permanent damage to a woman's reproductive system. This can make it difficult or impossible to get pregnant later. Chlamydia can also cause a potentially fatal ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy that occurs outside the womb).

## WHO CAN GET CHLAMYDIA?

Chlamydial infection is sexually transmitted or may be acquired at birth. A person can get chlamydia by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone that has chlamydia.

## WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF CHLAMYDIA?

Symptoms may start to appear from 1-3 weeks up to a few months after infection. Some people may not have any symptoms. It varies from person to person.

Chlamydia often causes no symptoms, but it can cause serious health problems, even without symptoms. If symptoms occur, they may not appear until several weeks after having sex with a partner who has chlamydia.

Even when chlamydia causes no symptoms, it can damage a woman's reproductive system by scarring her fallopian tubes.

Women with symptoms may notice:

- An abnormal vaginal discharge; and
- A burning sensation when peeing.

Symptoms in men can include:

- A discharge from their penis.
- A burning sensation when peeing; and
- Pain and swelling in one or both testicles (although this is less common).

Men and women can also get chlamydia in their rectum. This happens either by having receptive anal sex, or by spread from another infected site (such as the vagina). While these infections often cause no symptoms, they can cause:

- Rectal pain.
- Discharge; and
- Bleeding.

See a healthcare provider if you notice any of these symptoms. You should also see a provider if your partner has an STD or symptoms of one. Symptoms can include:

- An unusual sore.
- A smelly discharge.
- Burning when peeing; or
- Bleeding between periods.

Asymptomatic infection is common. There may be pain during urination or abnormal genital discharge. Females can have abdominal pain due to pelvic inflammatory disease, which can cause infertility or ectopic pregnancy.

## HOW IS CHLAMYDIA SPREAD?

Chlamydial infection is sexually transmitted or may be acquired at birth. A person can get chlamydia by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone that has chlamydia. Disease rates are highest among sexually active adolescents and young adults. Female adolescents are physiologically more susceptible to infection than older women. Perinatal infection can result in neonatal conjunctivitis or pneumonia.

## HOW IS CHLAMYDIA DIAGNOSED?

Laboratory tests can diagnose chlamydia. Your healthcare provider may ask you to provide a urine sample for testing, or they might use (or ask you to use) a cotton swab to get a sample.

## HOW IS CHLAMYDIA TREATED?

Antibiotics is the treatment required for chlamydia.

## HOW CAN I HELP PREVENT CHLAMYDIA?

One should use safe sexual practices to reduce transmission. Sexually active women at risk should be screened to detect infection even if asymptomatic. If Chlamydia is found, one should also screen, or treat for gonorrhea. One should not have sex again until they and their sex partner(s) complete treatment. If given a single dose of medicine, one should wait seven days after taking the medicine before having sex. If given medicine to take for seven days, wait until they finish all the doses before having sex.

Anyone who has had chlamydia and been treated in the past, can still get it again. Especially if they have sex without a condom with a person who has chlamydia.

Chlamydia is a Washington State reportable disease and must be reported to your local health department in Lewis County, contact Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response at 360-740-1223 during business hours or leave a voicemail on our confidential reporting after hours line at 360-740-1275.

