

# Fact Sheet

# Chlamydia



## What is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by infection with *Chlamydia trachomatis* that can infect both men and women. It can cause serious, permanent damage to a woman's reproductive system, making it difficult or impossible to conceive. Chlamydia can also cause a potentially fatal ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy that occurs outside of womb).



## How is it Spread?

Chlamydia is transmitted through vaginal, anal, or oral sex with an infected partner. Ejaculation does not have to occur for chlamydia to be transmitted or acquired. Chlamydia can also be spread during delivery from an untreated mother to her baby causing eye infection or pneumonia in some exposed infants. Having chlamydia may also make it more likely to deliver a baby too early.

## Signs and Symptoms

Early stage chlamydia infections often cause few or no signs and symptoms. When signs or symptoms occur, they usually start one to three weeks after exposure to chlamydia and may be mild and easy to overlook. Signs and symptoms may include:

- § Painful urination
- § Lower abdominal pain
- § Vaginal discharge in women
- § Discharge from the penis in men
- § Painful intercourse in women
- § Bleeding between periods and after sex in women
- § Testicular pain and swelling in men

Chlamydia infections in the rectum often have no symptoms. However, they can cause rectal pain, discharge, and bleeding.

## Diagnosis

Having Chlamydia or having been treated for it in the past provides no immunity against reinfection in the future.

Screening and diagnosis of chlamydia is relatively simple. Tests include:

**A swab:** For women, a health care provider takes a swab of the discharge from the cervix for culture or antigen testing for chlamydia. This can be done during a routine Pap test.

**A urine test:** For men and women, a sample of urine analyzed in a laboratory may indicate the presence of the infection.

## Treatment

Chlamydia can be easily cured with antibiotics. In most cases, infection resolves within one to two weeks. Persons with chlamydia should abstain from sexual activity for seven days after single dose antibiotics or until completion of a seven-day course of antibiotics, to prevent spreading the infection to partners. It is important to take all medication prescribed.

Although medication will cure the infection, it will not repair any permanent damage done by the disease. If a person's symptoms continue for more than a few days after receiving treatment, he or she should return to a health care provider to be reevaluated.

If a person has been diagnosed and treated for chlamydia, he or she should tell all recent anal, vaginal, or oral sex partners (all sex partners within 60 days before the onset of symptoms or diagnosis) so they can see a health care provider and be treated. This will reduce the risk that the sex partners will develop serious complications from chlamydia and will also reduce the person's risk of becoming re-infected. Repeat infection with chlamydia is common. Retesting three months after treatment is recommended, even if sex partner(s) were treated.

## Prevention

Latex condoms, when used consistently and correctly, can reduce the risk of getting or giving chlamydia. The surest way to avoid chlamydia is to abstain from vaginal, anal, and oral sex, or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and is known to be uninfected.

## Risk Factors

Factors that increase risk of chlamydia include:

- § Being a sexually active woman younger than 25 years
- § Older women with risk factors such as new or multiple partners
- § Having multiple partners or having sex with high-risk partners
- § Inconsistent or incorrect condom use
- § Having a history of sexually transmitted infections
- § Having a sex partner who has a sexually transmitted infection
- § Being gay, bisexual, or men who have sex with men
- § Pregnancy



***For more sources of information on this topic visit:***

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT [www.scchealth.co](http://www.scchealth.co)

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES [www.michigan.gov/mdhhs](http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs)

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)