

What is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia (pronounced Kla-MID'-ee-ah) is a common sexually transmitted infection caused by the bacterium chlamydia trachomatis. It can cause other less common infections, as well. The Center for Disease Control in Atlanta estimates that over 2.25 million people in the U.S. are infected with Chlamydia. Sexually active persons aged 25 and under should be screened for Chlamydia each year and with each new sexual partner. All persons should be screened for Chlamydia if they have a new partner or multiple sexual partners.

How do people get Chlamydia?

Chlamydia can be transmitted during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. It can also be passed from mother to baby during childbirth.

Any sexually active person can be infected with Chlamydia. The greater the number of sex partners, the greater the risk of infection. Because the cervix (opening to the uterus) of teenage girls and young women is not fully matured and is probably more susceptible to infection, they are at particularly high risk for infection if sexually active. Since Chlamydia can be transmitted by oral or anal sex, men who have sex with men are also at risk for chlamydial infection.

What are the symptoms?

Chlamydia is known as a "silent" disease because about three quarters of infected women and about half of infected men have no symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they usually appear within 1 to 3 weeks after exposure.

In women, the bacteria initially infect the cervix and the urethra (urine canal). Women who have symptoms might have an abnormal vaginal discharge or a burning sensation when urinating. When the infection spreads from the cervix to the fallopian tubes (tubes that carry fertilized eggs from the

ovaries to the uterus), some women still have no signs or symptoms; others have lower abdominal pain, low back pain, nausea, fever, pain during intercourse, or bleeding between menstrual periods. Chlamydial infection of the cervix can spread to the rectum.

Men with signs or symptoms might have a discharge from their penis or a burning sensation when urinating. Men might also have burning and itching around the opening of the penis. Pain and swelling in the testicles are uncommon.

Men or women who have receptive anal intercourse may acquire chlamydial infection in the rectum, which can cause rectal pain, discharge, or bleeding. Chlamydia can also be found in the throats of women and men having oral sex with an infected partner.

What complications can Chlamydia cause if left untreated?

It can lead to serious health problems for women in particular. Up to 40% of women who are untreated will develop an infection of the reproductive tract called pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). The damage done by PID can lead to chronic pelvic pain, potentially fatal ectopic pregnancy and infertility.

Complications among men are rare. Infection sometimes spreads to the epididymis (the tube that carries sperm from the testis), causing pain, fever, and, rarely, sterility.

Rarely, genital chlamydial infection can cause arthritis that can be accompanied by skin lesions and inflammation of the eye and urethra (Reiter's syndrome).

When a woman who is sexually active goes for her annual pelvic examination and Pap smear, she may be tested for Chlamydia. This service is offered at Student Health Services at no charge.

(Cont. on Back)



How is Chlamydia diagnosed and treated?

The only sure way to know if you have Chlamydia is to be tested. A simple, inexpensive test is available to diagnose Chlamydia. ***Chlamydia can be easily treated and cured with antibiotics.*** It is important to take all medications as prescribed when being treated for Chlamydia and to return for any follow-up if your clinician advises it.

Does my partner need treatment?

If you were diagnosed with a Chlamydial infection, your sexual partner(s) will need to be treated at the same time. Persons with Chlamydia should abstain from sexual intercourse until they and their sex partner(s) have completed treatment, otherwise re-infection is possible.

How can Chlamydia be prevented?

The surest way to avoid transmission of STDs is to abstain from sexual contact, or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a

partner who has been tested and is known to be uninfected.

Latex male condoms, when used consistently and correctly, can reduce the risk of transmission of chlamydia.

CDC recommends yearly chlamydia testing of all sexually active women age 25 or younger, older women with risk factors for chlamydial infections (those who have a new sex partner or multiple sex partners), and all pregnant women.

Any genital symptoms such as an unusual sore, discharge with odor, burning during urination, or bleeding between menstrual cycles could mean an STD infection. If a woman has any of these symptoms, she should stop having sex and consult a health care provider immediately. Treating STDs early can prevent PID. Women who are told they have an STD and are treated for it should notify all of their recent sex partners (sex partners within the preceding 60 days) so they can see a health care provider and be evaluated for STDs. Sexual activity should not resume until all sex partners have been examined and, if necessary, treated.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: