



Chlamydia

Chlamydia (Cla-mid-ee-uh) is the name of the bacteria that cause the most common sexually transmitted disease (STD). Chlamydia is much like gonorrhea and in the past, the two diseases were often confused with one another.

It may take one to six weeks for symptoms to show up. However, some people never have symptoms. Up to 50% of men and 70% of women never have symptoms. Chlamydia is spread to others during sexual intercourse whether there are symptoms or not.



What are the symptoms?

Women

- Often no symptoms.
- Increased vaginal discharge.
- Vaginal itching.
- Burning pain when passing urine.
- Bleeding between menstrual periods.
- Pain in the lower abdomen.
- Painful intercourse.

Men

- Often no symptoms.
- Watery discharge from penis.
- Burning/itching around tip of penis.
- Pain and swelling in the testicles.
- Frequent passing of urine.
- Burning pain when passing urine.
- Painful intercourse.

Are there complications?

Women

Inflammation and spread of the infection to the fallopian tubes and ovaries will result in Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). This can cause a woman to be sterile (unable to get pregnant), or cause chronic pelvic pain or cause a pregnancy to occur in the fallopian tube requiring emergency surgery. Babies born to women with untreated chlamydia may be born too early and are at risk of severe eye and lung infections.

Both partners must be treated at the same time to avoid reinfection.

Men

Inflammation and spread of the infection to the testicles and prostate gland may cause a man to become sterile.

How is chlamydia diagnosed?

Chlamydia can be diagnosed by taking a swab from a woman's cervix or from the tip of a man's penis. In many cases, a urine sample may be used to diagnose chlamydia.

How is chlamydia treated?

A specific antibiotic is given to treat chlamydia. To cure chlamydia, all prescribed pills must be taken as directed. It is very important that all sexual partner(s) within the last 60 days are tested and treated whether they have symptoms or not. To prevent re-infection, sexual intercourse, even with a condom, must be avoided for at least seven days following treatment of both partners.

Is followup important?

Yes. If asked to do so, it is important to return for a repeat test to make sure the chlamydia has been cured. These clients must abstain from unprotected sex until the test of cure is negative.

Chlamydia must be reported to the Medical Officer of Health as required by the Health Promotion and Protection Act.

For more information, please contact a Public Health Nurse on Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit's Infectious Disease Team.

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