

# Fact Sheet: Non-Gonococcal Urethritis

## What is NGU?

Non-gonococcal urethritis (NGU) is a term that describes a combination of symptoms that occur in men, most often causing “urethritis” or an inflammation of the opening into the bladder. It is not a “bladder infection” and can be caused by several different sexually transmitted bacteria. Men should be tested for gonorrhea and chlamydia first, before diagnosing the symptoms as NGU.

## What are the symptoms?

- Pain when urinating
- Discharge from the penis, usually clear
- Burning or itching around the opening of the penis.

Often there are only mild or occasional symptoms. Some men have no symptoms at all.

## Can women get NGU?

Yes, although in women it often causes problems in the reproductive tract (uterus, fallopian tubes) instead of the urethra. If a man is treated for NGU, his sexual partner(s) should be treated also.

Anal to vaginal sex without changing condoms can introduce bacteria from the rectum into the vagina. This can lead to an infection. There is no specific lab test for NGU.

## How is it spread?

- NGU is spread through anal, oral and vaginal sex with an infected partner.
- For men, having anal sex without a condom can result in these symptoms. The bacteria from the rectum can get into the urethra and bladder, causing an infection.

## How is it treated?

- NGU is treated with antibiotics.
- Take all the medications as prescribed, even if you start to feel better and the symptoms are gone.
- Your sex partner(s) need to be seen and treated.
- Early treatment can prevent lasting damage to your body.

## Are there long-term complications?

Yes. If left untreated, NGU may lead to:

- Infertility
- Problem pregnancies (miscarriage, premature deliveries)
- Infections in newborns
- Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)
- Chronic pelvic pain
- Epididymitis (inflammation of the testicles)

## How is it prevented?

- **Don't have sex.** You cannot give or get a sexually transmitted disease (STD) if there is no contact with the penis, vagina, mouth or anus.
- **Limit your number of sexual partners.** The more people you have sex with, the greater the chance of getting an STD.
- **If you choose to have sex, be prepared.** Have condoms with a water-based lubricant on hand and use a new condom every time you have sex.
- **Have regular exams if you are sexually active.** If you think you have an STD, get tested. Ask your partner(s) to get tested.
- **Remember: a Pap smear is not an STD test.** Ask to be tested for STDs if you are at risk.
- **Telling your partner.** If you are diagnosed with NGU, tell anyone you have recently had sex with that they should be treated.

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider or call Washtenaw County Public Health at 734-544-6700.*

