

Fact Sheet: Chlamydia

What is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by a bacterium called Chlamydia trachomatis. This common disease is easy to prevent and treat, but often remains undiagnosed. Seventy percent of infected women and 25% of infected men have no symptoms but can still infect their sex partners.

What are the symptoms?

Most symptoms will appear 7-14 days after exposure. Men are more likely to have noticeable symptoms. If left untreated, chlamydia can cause serious health problems.

Women may experience:

- Abnormal discharge from the vagina
- Painful and/or frequent urination
- Abdominal pain and/or pain while having sex
- Bleeding between periods

Long-term problems in women may be:

- Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)
- Chronic abdominal pain
- Ectopic (tubal) pregnancy
- Sterility
- Miscarriage, premature deliveries

Men may experience:

- Watery or milky discharge from the penis
- Painful, burning sensation when urinating
- Pain in testicles or abdomen

Long-term problems in men may be:

- Inflammation of the urethra (urethritis)
- Inflammation of the testicles (epididymitis)
- Sterility

How is it spread?

Chlamydia is spread during oral, anal or vaginal sex with someone who is infected. An infected person can also pass the bacteria from genital areas to other areas such as the eyes. An infected woman can pass chlamydia to her newborn infant during delivery.

How is it treated?

Chlamydia is easily treated with a course of antibiotics.

It is very important that you:

- Take all medicines as prescribed even if you start to feel better.
- Inform all sex partners that you have chlamydia and encourage them to be tested and treated.
- Inform your health care provider if you think that you may be pregnant before taking any medications. Chlamydia can be safely treated during pregnancy.
- Stop all sexual activity until treatment is complete.

How is it prevented?

- Don't have sex. You cannot give or get an 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 one every time you have sex.
- Have regular exams if you are sexually active. If you think you have an STD, get tested. Your health care provider can test for all STDs, or you can be tested and treated at the Washtenaw County Adult Clinic. Ask your partner(s) to get tested.
- Remember, a Pap smear is not a chlamydia test. A Pap smear does NOT test for chlamydia. Ask to be tested if you are at risk.
- Tell your partner. Tell anyone you have had sex with that they need to be treated. If they are not treated they may have permanent damage from chlamydia and can also pass it back to you.

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

