

Chlamydia

What is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs). It is caused by bacteria which infect the cervix, urethra and other reproductive organs. Chlamydia is easy to treat and can be cured.

Symptoms of Chlamydia

Approximately 70 percent of women and 25 percent of men infected with chlamydia have no symptoms. They can unknowingly pass the infection on to their sexual partner(s). If symptoms develop, they appear two to six weeks after sexual contact with an infected person.

Women may have vaginal itching or increased discharge from the vagina. They may also have bleeding during or after sexual intercourse, bleeding or spotting between menstrual periods, pain in the lower abdomen or burning when passing urine.

Men may have discharge and itching around the urethra or penis. The urethra is the opening in the penis. They may also have burning when passing urine, frequent passing of urine or pain and swelling in the testicles.

How Chlamydia spreads

Chlamydia spreads through unprotected oral, vaginal or anal sex with an infected person. Sometimes, chlamydia can be spread to the eyes by the hands following direct contact with the infected fluids. It can also be passed from an infected mother to her baby during birth. Until a person finishes treatment, he/she continues to have the infection and can pass it on to others.

Complications of Chlamydia

Untreated chlamydia in women may lead to a condition called Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). PID is a serious infection of the lining of the uterus, the fallopian tubes and the ovaries. Sometimes the fallopian tubes of a woman with PID are blocked by scar tissue and her eggs cannot pass through. When this happens, she may not be able to get pregnant. If the fallopian tubes are only partially blocked, sperm may pass through and there could be a pregnancy inside the fallopian tube. This is called an ectopic pregnancy. Women with untreated chlamydia may be at higher risk for miscarriages.

Men with untreated chlamydia may become sterile if the tubes carrying the sperm are blocked by scar tissue. They may have swelling and pain in their testicles. This is a condition called epididymitis. Some men may also develop arthritis.

Infants who are born to mothers with untreated chlamydia may become ill with pneumonia or eye infections.

For further information, please call:
York Region Health Connection 1-800-361-5653
TTY 1-866-252-9933 or visit www.york.ca



Diagnosing Chlamydia

Chlamydia testing can be done as soon as requested after exposure, as follows:

- for women, a test can be done by taking a sample from the cervix (the opening to the uterus)
- for men, a sample is taken from the urethra. Men should not pass urine at least one hour before the test
- for both men and women, a urine sample, throat swab or rectal swab can also be collected to test for chlamydia

Treating Chlamydia

Chlamydia is treated with antibiotic pills. Some of the commonly used antibiotics include Azithromycin and Doxycycline. It is important that you complete the treatment as directed by your health care provider. Even if your symptoms have disappeared, you must finish all the pills to make sure that you are cured. If you have PID or epididymitis, you may need to go into a hospital and be treated with intravenous antibiotics.

What about Sexual Partners?

All sexual partners within the past 60 days should be examined and treated. If you have not had sex in the past 60 days, your last sexual partner should be examined and treated. Tell your partner(s) that having no symptoms does not mean there is no infection. Your Public Health Nurse can help you to notify your partner(s). Your name will be kept confidential.

Importance of a Follow-Up

A follow-up test is recommended six months after you have completed the treatment to make sure that you are cured. In some situations, such as if your symptoms continue after treatment, a health care professional may ask for a follow-up test four weeks after treatment.

Remember:

- ✓ take all your medication as prescribed by your doctor or clinic
- ✓ do not have oral, vaginal or anal sex with your sexual partner(s) until seven days after the last partner has completed treatment
- ✓ you can get reinfected every time you have sex with an untreated or infected partner
- ✓ use condoms to reduce the chance of getting STIs and to prevent pregnancy
- ✓ it is possible to have more than one infection at a time, so it is important to be tested for other STIs
- ✓ if you are taking the Birth Control Pill, use an additional form of birth control while taking antibiotics and for at least seven days after you finish your antibiotic pills

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