

Lymphogranuloma Venereum (LGV)

What is LGV?

Lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV) is a disease new to Canada and North America. It is a sexually transmitted infection that is caused by a form of the bacteria *Chlamydia trachomatis* (the same bacteria that causes the common chlamydia infection). However, LGV infection is often more serious.

How does LGV spread?

LGV is spread from an infected person by unprotected anal, oral or vaginal sex, fisting, sharing sex toys and/or having a new or multiple sex partners.

What are the symptoms?

Between three to 30 days after infection with the bacteria, a painless sore/lump may develop on the vagina, penis, rectum, cervix or mouth. The sore may disappear on its own, even though the infection is still there. Two to six weeks after the sore, the bacteria affects the whole body giving the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Chills, tiredness, muscle and joint aches
- Swollen and painful glands in the genital area
- Bloody discharge from the rectum
- Bloody diarrhea

What are the complications?

Untreated LGV can cause scarring and deformity in the genital, cervical or anal area, depending on the location of the infection. In rare cases, it can lead to inflammation and infection of the brain and spinal cord tissues, hepatitis, and death.

How is LGV diagnosed?

LGV is difficult to diagnose because the symptoms overlap with other sexually transmitted infections. It can be diagnosed by taking a swab from the inside of the man's penis or anus, or the inside of the woman's vagina, or from the sore if it is present. A health care provider may also take a urine or blood sample. A biopsy of a swollen gland is sometimes taken as well. The sample is then sent to a laboratory.

How is LGV treated?

LGV is treated with antibiotic pills. Some of the commonly used antibiotics include doxycycline, erythromycin and azithromycin. It is important that you complete the treatment as directed by your health care provider. Even if your symptoms have disappeared, it is important take the medication as directed. It is also important to avoid sexual intercourse (oral, anal and/or vaginal), even with a condom, until all medication is finished and all test results after treatment are negative or reinfection can occur.

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



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.

How do you protect yourself and others?

- Abstain from sex or limit number of sex partners
- Always use a condom for vaginal, oral and anal sex
- Get an STI check up—especially if you've had a new sex partner, more than one sex partner, or suspect you have an infection
- Ask your partner(s) to be tested before you have sex
- Make informed decisions by talking to your partner about his/her sexual health and the use of protection, BEFORE having sex

Is follow-up important?

Yes. It is important to return for a follow-up visit three to five weeks after treatment to make sure the infection is gone.

If you think you may have LGV or have had sex with someone who has LGV, please see your health care provider for more information. Specialized testing and treatment is needed for LGV.

Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections such as HIV, hepatitis C, hepatitis B, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and syphilis, because it may be easier to get LGV if you have another one of these infections. Having LGV also increases the risk of getting HIV, hepatitis C and other STIs.

Remember:

- Take all your medication as prescribed by your health care provider
- 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 re-infected 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 (e.g. Doxycycline)

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