

What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted infection (STI) that can infect both men and women. It is caused by the bacteria *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

How is chlamydia spread?

This infection is most often spread through vaginal, oral, or anal sexual contact. In women, the bacteria typically infect the cervix or urethra. In men, the urethra is commonly infected. Both men and women who engage in oral or anal sexual contact may be infected in the throat or the rectum. It is also possible for pregnant mothers with untreated chlamydia to transmit it to newborns during childbirth. Chlamydia can be spread from one person to another when no symptoms are present.

What are the signs and symptoms of chlamydia?

Most people who are infected with chlamydia do not show any sign of the infection, and symptoms vary depending on the area of the body that is infected. Women may have a white or gray vaginal discharge, or burning sensation when urinating. If the infection has spread up the reproductive tract, there may be pain in the lower abdomen. Men with signs or symptoms might have a discharge from their penis or a burning sensation when urinating. Men might also have burning and itching around the opening of the penis. Pain and swelling in the testicles can occur. Chlamydia infections in the rectum may cause rectal discharge or bleeding.

How long after infection do symptoms appear?

Generally, the infection takes one to three weeks after the exposure to begin showing symptoms, if any symptoms occur.

Who is most at risk?

Any sexually active person may contract chlamydia. Both heterosexual (opposite sex) and homosexual (same sex) persons are at risk for developing infection. Chlamydia is most often seen in sexually active adolescents and young women. While infected mothers can pass rectal or genital chlamydial infections to infants, the possibility of sexual abuse should be considered in children who are diagnosed with this infection. Factors that increase your risk of chlamydia include:

- Age under 24 years
- Multiple sex partners within the past year
- Not using a condom consistently
- History of prior STI.

What type of health problems are caused by chlamydia?

The initial damage of chlamydia often goes unnoticed, but women can develop pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which can cause permanent damage to the upper reproductive tract or surrounding tissues. This damage may lead to chronic pelvic pain, infertility, potentially deadly tubal pregnancies, or damage to other internal organs. Untreated chlamydia infections may also increase a person's chances of getting or spreading HIV/AIDS.

How is chlamydia diagnosed?

Chlamydia is usually diagnosed by testing urine or samples collected from the site(s) of the body at risk for infection.

How is chlamydia treated?

Chlamydia is easily treated with antibiotics, although, it is possible for sexually active people to become re-infected. Persons who have been diagnosed should abstain from sex until both they and their partner(s) have completed treatment.

How does chlamydia affect pregnancy?

In pregnant women, untreated chlamydia may lead to pre-term births, and newborns may develop severe eye infections or pneumonia. Pregnant women should be tested at their first prenatal visit and at various stages of their pregnancy to prevent newborns from contracting chlamydia.

How can chlamydia be prevented?

The most effective way to avoid any STI is to abstain from vaginal, anal, and oral sex. Sexually active persons can reduce chances of getting chlamydia by:

- Being in a long-term relationship with only one partner who has also agreed not to have sex with anyone else, and has been tested and has negative STI results; and
- Using latex condoms the right way for every sexual encounter.
- Spermicides do not prevent infection from any sexually transmitted disease, including chlamydia.

Where can I get more information?

- Your personal healthcare provider
- Utah Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology, 801-538-6191
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
 - For directions on proper condom use, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/condomeffectiveness/docs/male-condom-use-508.pdf>.