

What is gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted disease caused by bacteria called *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*.

How is gonorrhea spread?

Gonorrhea is spread through sexual contact with the penis, vagina, mouth, or anus of an infected partner. Ejaculation does not have to occur for gonorrhea to be spread. Gonorrhea can also be spread from mother to baby during childbirth.

What are the signs and symptoms of gonorrhea?

Symptoms of gonorrhea are different for men and women. Men may have large amounts penile discharge, usually with painful and frequent urination. The head of the penis may become swollen and sore. Some men who are infected have no symptoms. Women may have vaginal discharge, pain or burning upon urination, and bleeding between menstrual cycles. Most women who are infected have no symptoms.

How long after infection do symptoms appear?

On average, symptoms appear 2 to 7 days after infection, but they can appear up to 30 days after infection.

Who is most at risk?

Any sexually active person can be infected with gonorrhea. In the United States, the highest reported rates of infection are among sexually active teenagers, young adults, and African Americans.

What type of health problems are caused by gonorrhea?

Untreated gonorrhea can cause serious and permanent health problems in both men and women. In men who have epididymitis (infection of the tube that lies above and behind each testicle), gonorrhea can lead to infertility in rare cases. In women, gonorrhea can spread to the uterus or fallopian tubes and cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). Symptoms of PID can be mild or severe and include abdominal pain and fever. PID can lead to internal abscesses, chronic pain, ectopic (tubal) pregnancy, and infertility.

Both men and women infected with gonorrhea are at risk of the infection spreading to the blood stream and causing disseminated gonococcal infection (DGI). DGI causes pain throughout the body and can be life threatening. Untreated gonorrhea can also increase a person's risk of acquiring or transmitting HIV/AIDS.

How is gonorrhea diagnosed?

Gonorrhea is diagnosed by testing urine or other discharges.

How is gonorrhea treated?

Gonorrhea is typically treated with antibiotics. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend using two different drugs. Although medication will stop the infection, it will not repair any permanent damage caused by the disease.

How can gonorrhea be prevented?

Latex condoms, when used consistently and correctly, can reduce the risk of spreading gonorrhea. The best way to prevent gonorrhea is to not have sex or to have sex with only one uninfected partner who has sex only with you.

Who should be tested for gonorrhea?

Any sexually active person can be infected with gonorrhea. Anyone with symptoms of gonorrhea should immediately stop having sex and see a healthcare provider. CDC recommends yearly gonorrhea screenings for all sexually active women younger than 25 years, as well as older women with risk factors such as new or multiple sex partners, or a sex partner who has a sexually transmitted infection.

How does gonorrhea affect a pregnant woman and her baby?

If a pregnant woman has gonorrhea, she may give the infection to her baby during birth. This can cause blindness, joint infection, or a life-threatening blood infection in the baby. Treatment of gonorrhea in pregnant women will reduce the risk of these complications. Pregnant women should consult a healthcare provider for appropriate examination, testing, and treatment as necessary.

Where can I get more information?

- Your personal healthcare provider
- Utah Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology, 801-538-6191
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

