

# Chlamydia - The Facts



## WHAT IS CHLAMYDIA?

Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the bacterium, *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

## HOW DO PEOPLE GET CHLAMYDIA?

Chlamydia can be transmitted during vaginal, anal or oral sex. Once infected a person can remain infected for months to years, and can transmit the infection to other sexual partners by engaging in unprotected sex. Condoms can be effective in preventing transmission. The likelihood of transmission from a single act of unprotected sex is high - approximately 68% of male partners of infected women will be positive when tested:

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF CHLAMYDIA?

Chlamydia is also known as a 'silent' STI. You may have no symptoms. This is particularly true for women. If symptoms do occur, they usually appear within 1 to 3 weeks.

**Women:** In women the bacteria initially infects the cervix (structure that connects the vagina or birth canal to the uterus or the womb) and the urethra (urine canal). Therefore, the woman might have an abnormal vaginal discharge or a burning sensation when urinating. There may be symptoms of lower abdominal pain, low back pain, nausea, fever, pain during intercourse, or bleeding between menstrual periods.

**Men:** Men might have a discharge from their penis or a burning sensation when urinating.



## **WHAT ARE THE COMPLICATIONS OF CHLAMYDIA?**

If left untreated, Chlamydia can lead to serious health problems in women. The infection can spread to the uterus and the fallopian tubes (tubes that carry fertilised eggs from the ovaries to the uterus) causing Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID): this happens in up to 40% of untreated women. PID can cause permanent damage to the woman's reproductive tract and can lead to infertility and ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy which occurs outside the womb, in a fallopian tube). Complications among men are rare. Inflammation of the testicles can cause infertility.

## **HOW IS CHLAMYDIA DIAGNOSED?**

There are laboratory tests to diagnose Chlamydia. These can be performed on a urine sample and on a swab collected by your doctor from a site such as the penis or cervix.

## **WHAT IS THE TREATMENT OF CHLAMYDIA?**

Chlamydia is easily cured with antibiotics. It is important that all sexual partners are traced, evaluated, tested and treated. Persons infected with Chlamydia should abstain from sexual intercourse until they and their sexual partners have completed treatment, otherwise reinfection is possible.

**For further information,  
please speak with your doctor.**





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