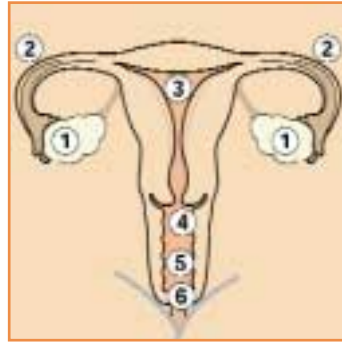


Chlamydia

Chlamydia is the most common treatable bacterial sexually transmitted infection. It can cause serious problems later in life if it is not treated (see 'Complications' section). Chlamydia infects the cervix in women. The urethra, rectum and eyes can be infected in both sexes.



Women's sexual organs (front)

- ① Ovaries
- ② Fallopian tubes
- ③ Womb
- ④ Cervix
- ⑤ Vagina
- ⑥ Entrance to vagina



Women's sexual organs (side)

- ① Ovary
- ② Womb
- ③ Fallopian tubes
- ④ Bladder
- ⑤ Urethra
- ⑥ Vagina
- ⑦ Anus
- ⑧ Cervix
- ⑨ Clitoris



Men's sexual organs

- ① Scrotum
- ② Testicle
- ③ Vas deferens
- ④ Seminal vesicle
- ⑤ Bladder
- ⑥ Prostate gland
- ⑦ Urethra
- ⑧ Penis
- ⑨ Foreskin
- ⑩ Glans
- ⑪ Anus

Signs and symptoms

Women

The majority of women who are infected with chlamydia will have no symptoms at all. Possible symptoms are:

- a slight increase in vaginal discharge – caused by the cervix becoming inflamed
- a need to pass urine more often/pain on passing urine

- lower abdominal pain
- pain during sex • irregular menstrual bleeding
- a painful swelling and irritation in the eyes (if they are infected)

Men

- Men are more likely to notice symptoms than women. However, they too may have no symptoms. Likely symptoms are:

Chlamydia

- a discharge from the penis which may be white/cloudy and watery and stain underwear
- pain and/or a burning sensation when passing urine
- a painful swelling and irritation in the eyes (if they are infected)

Chlamydia in the rectum rarely causes symptoms.

How chlamydia is passed on

Chlamydia can be transmitted by:

- having sex with someone who is infected
- a mother to her baby at birth
- occasionally, by transferring the infection on fingers from the genitals to the eyes

Where to go for help

- Your local NHS sexual health (GUM) clinic

You can find details of your nearest NHS sexual health clinic in the phone book under genito-urinary medicine (GUM), sexually transmitted diseases (STD) or venereal diseases (VD). Or phone your local hospital and ask for the 'special' or GUM clinic. Or check the web site www.playingsafely.co.uk for a directory of GUM clinics in the UK.

You will get free, confidential advice and treatment. You can go to any NHS clinic anywhere in the country – you don't have to go to a local one – and you don't have to be referred by your GP. (Non-NHS sexual health clinics may not always offer the full range of services which are available at NHS sexual health clinics.)

- Your own GP.

The tests for chlamydia

- An examination of your genital area is carried out by a doctor or a nurse.
- Samples are taken, using a cotton-wool or spongy swab, from any place which may be infected.
- Women are usually given an internal pelvic examination.
- Men are given an external examination of their testicles (balls) to check that these are healthy.
- Increasingly, chlamydia tests are being taken using a urine sample.

None of these tests should be painful, but may sometimes be uncomfortable.

Diagnosis and treatment

Samples taken during the examination are sent to a laboratory for testing, and the result is available usually within one week.

The treatment for chlamydia is simple and effective once it has been diagnosed. You will be given antibiotic tablets.

If you are allergic to any antibiotics or if there is any possibility that you may be pregnant, it is important that you tell your doctor. This will affect which antibiotics you are prescribed.

It is important that you finish any course of treatment. If treatment is interrupted, it may be necessary to start again from the beginning.

If you have chlamydia a health adviser will explain the infection to you and answer your questions. The health adviser will also ask you about your sexual partner(s), so that they can get a check-up and treatment if necessary.

Chlamydia

You should not have penetrative sex (when the penis enters the vagina, mouth or anus) until you have returned to the clinic and been given the all-clear by the doctor.

Follow-up

It is important to return for a check-up once you have completed the treatment to make sure you are well and have no other infection.

Complications

Women

- If untreated, chlamydia can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). This is an inflammation of the fallopian tubes (the tubes along which an egg passes to get to the womb). PID can lead to problems with fertility. Many cases of infertility can be traced back to infection with chlamydia.
- If a woman has chlamydia when she is pregnant she risks having an ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside the womb) or a premature birth. The infection can be passed on to the baby, giving it an eye or lung infection. Chlamydia can be safely treated during pregnancy.
- Chlamydia can also lead to chronic (long-term) pelvic pain.

Men

Complications caused by chlamydia in men are uncommon. But it may lead to painful inflammation of the testicles, which can cause infertility.

Men and women

- Reiter's syndrome can be triggered by chlamydia. It is inflammation of the eyes and joints and sometimes a rash on the soles of the feet and genitals.

Remember, after treatment, using condoms during sex can reduce your risk of getting or passing on sexually transmitted infections.

This factsheet is one of a series which give information on the following range of infections and diseases: bacterial vaginosis, chlamydia, cystitis, genital herpes, genital warts, gonorrhoea, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, non-specific urethritis, penile cancer, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), prostate cancer, pubic lice, scabies, syphilis, testicular cancer, thrush and trichomonas vaginalis.

Alternatively, free copies of any of these factsheets are available from GP surgeries, NHS sexual health (GUM) clinics, or your local health promotion unit (in the phone book under your local Health Authority).



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