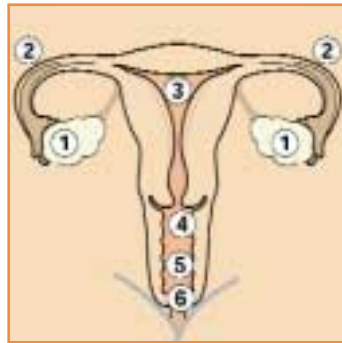


Gonorrhoea

Gonorrhoea is a bacterial infection. It is sexually transmitted and can infect the cervix, urethra, rectum, anus and throat.



Women's sexual organs (front)

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



Women's sexual organs (side)

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



Men's sexual organs

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

Signs and symptoms

Women

It is possible to be infected with gonorrhoea and have no symptoms. Men are far more likely to notice symptoms than women.

Symptoms can include:

- a change in vaginal discharge. This may increase, change to a yellow or greenish colour and develop a strong smell

- a pain or burning sensation when passing urine
- irritation and/or discharge from the anus.

Men

Symptoms may include:

- a yellow or white discharge from the penis
- irritation and/or discharge from the anus
- inflammation of the testicles

Gonorrhoea

How gonorrhoea is passed on

By -

- penetrative sex (when the penis enters the vagina, mouth, or anus)

and less often by:

- rimming (where a person uses their mouth and tongue to stimulate another person's anus)
- inserting your fingers into an infected vagina, anus or mouth and then putting them into your own without washing your hands in between

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 our Lovelife web site (www.lovelife.uk.com) 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 gonorrhoea

- 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 places which

may be infected – the cervix, urethra, anus or throat.

- Women are given an internal pelvic examination.
- A sample of urine may be taken.

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

If you have had anal sex, it is important to tell the doctor so that a swab can be taken from your rectum. Also tell the doctor if you have had oral sex.

Diagnosis and treatment

Samples taken during the examination are looked at under a microscope to check for infection. In some clinics, the result is available immediately. A second sample is sent to a laboratory for testing, the result of which is available usually within one week.

Treatment is easy and essential. You will be given an antibiotic in tablet, liquid or injection form.

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. It is important to complete your course of treatment.

If you are told you have gonorrhoea, you may be asked to see a health adviser who 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.

You should not have penetrative sex until you have returned to the clinic and been given the all-clear by the doctor. The doctor or health adviser will tell you about which sexual activities are safe.

Gonorrhoea

Follow-up

Once you have completed your course of treatment you should return to the clinic or GP for a check-up.

Some types of gonorrhoea are resistant to certain antibiotics, especially if you acquired the disease abroad. Further tests will be done to make sure that the infection has cleared. If it has not, you will be prescribed a different antibiotic.

Complications

Women

If left untreated gonorrhoea can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). This is inflammation of the fallopian tubes which can cause fever, lower abdominal pain and backache. Sex may be uncomfortable. PID can cause a woman to become infertile or have an ectopic pregnancy. A separate factsheet on PID is available.

If you're pregnant and you have gonorrhoea when your baby is born, you could pass the infection on. Also your baby could be born with a gonococcal eye infection. This must be treated with antibiotics as it can cause blindness. But it is better for you to be treated before the birth.

Occasionally gonorrhoea spreads into the blood stream causing infection of the heart and joints.

Men

Gonorrhoea can cause inflammation of the testicles, which causes pain. Without treatment a narrowing of the urethra or abscesses can develop.

Once gonorrhoea has been successfully treated, it will not come back unless you become reinfected.

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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