

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is one of the most common sexually transmissible infections (STIs) in Australia, particularly among men and women aged between 15 and 25.

Cause

Chlamydia is caused by a bacterium called *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

It can be caught and carried in the urethra, cervix and rectum in women and in the penis and rectum in men. It can also be caught and carried in the throat by both men and women.

Symptoms

The majority of people with chlamydia experience no symptoms at all. Where symptoms are present, they can take some time to develop.

Women with symptoms may experience one or all of the following:

- Unusual vaginal discharge
- A burning sensation when urinating
- Painful sex with possible bleeding afterwards
- Vaginal itching/soreness
- Lower abdominal pain.

Men are more likely than women to experience symptoms. Symptoms can include:

- Pain when urinating
- A discharge from the penis
- Itching inside the urethra
- Pain in the testicles or rectum
- Pain with ejaculation.

Both men and women may experience a sore throat if the throat area is infected with chlamydia.

How is it transmitted?

Chlamydia is transmitted through unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex.

Chlamydia can also be spread from a mother with chlamydia to her baby at birth.

As chlamydia cannot live outside the body, it can't be caught from sharing towels or from toilet seats.

How do I know if I have it?

Testing for chlamydia is simple and painless and involves a swab from the urethra (or cervix in women) and/or a urine test.

Your doctor may also test for gonorrhoea, as it is often present at the same time as chlamydia.

Treatment/Management

Treatment for chlamydia usually involves a single dose of antibiotics, however more advanced cases may

require a longer course.

Sex should be avoided for one week after treatment and retesting for chlamydia after treatment is advisable.

All sexual partners should be tested and treated.

Why is treatment important?

If chlamydia is left untreated it can lead to infertility in both men and women.

For women, the most serious danger from chlamydia is that it can spread into the fallopian tubes and cause pelvic inflammatory disease (blocked tubes).

In men, inflammation of the epididymis (the thin tube leading from the testes to the vas deferens where the sperm mature) may develop causing it to become painful and swollen. This can lead to infertility if left untreated.

Prevention

Using condoms and dams reduces the risk of contracting chlamydia. Many people with chlamydia don't have any symptoms and are therefore unaware of the risk of passing it on.

Practising safe sex reduces the risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmissible infections (STIs).

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Contact Details:
Address: 70, Roe St., PO Box 141, Northbridge, WA, 6865, Australia.
Ph (08) 9227 6177
Fax (08) 9227 6871