

Gonorrhoea

Also known as 'The Clap', gonorrhoea often has no symptoms and can lead to infertility if left untreated.

Cause

Gonorrhoea is caused by a bacterium called *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*.

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

Many people with gonorrhoea often have no symptoms.

Women with gonorrhoea may experience unusual vaginal discharge or pain when urinating. In advanced stages they may also experience abdominal pain or pain during vaginal sex.

Men with gonorrhoea may experience a pus-like discharge from the penis and/or a burning sensation when urinating.

Both men and women may experience a sore throat or discharge from the rectum if gonorrhoea is present in either of these areas.

How is it transmitted?

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

Gonorrhoea can also be spread from a mother with gonorrhoea to her baby at birth.

As gonorrhoea 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 gonorrhoea involves a swab from the cervix, urethra, rectum or throat, or a urine test.

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

Treatment/Management

Gonorrhoea is treated with a course of antibiotics. A follow-up test is required when all the antibiotics are finished to ensure that the infection has gone. You should avoid sex until after the treatment is complete, and make sure that all sexual partners are treated at the same time.

Why is treatment important?

If gonorrhoea is left untreated it can lead to infertility in both men and women, and can sometimes cause infections in joints and skin.

For women, the most serious danger from gonorrhoea 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 gonorrhoea. Many people with gonorrhoea 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