

Chlamydia and Gonorrhea



Think about it.
Talk about it.
Protect yourself
and your partner.



Chlamydia and gonorrhea are very common sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) that are caused by bacteria. In the United States, about 3 million people get chlamydia each year, and about 650,000 people get gonorrhea. Chlamydia and gonorrhea can infect both men and women.

How do I know if I have it?

Most people with chlamydia (cla-MIH-dee-ah) have no symptoms at all. If people do have symptoms, they usually start within one to three weeks after sexual contact with someone who carries the germs. Symptoms include pain when you urinate and unusual mucus or pus coming from the vagina, penis, or anus.

People with **gonorrhea** (gone-o-RHEE-a) will usually have symptoms within 2 to 10 days after being infected. Like chlamydia, gonorrhea causes unusual mucus or pus and pain when you urinate. Women can also have fever and chills, pain in the lower belly, and irregular menstrual bleeding. Some people can have gonorrhea without showing symptoms.

How do I get infected?

Chlamydia and gonorrhea are both passed by contact with infected semen (cum), vaginal fluids, or rectal discharge during vaginal, anal, and oral sex. Gonorrhea can also infect the throat if you perform oral sex on an infected partner. A sore throat can be a symptom of an oral gonorrhea infection, and anal itching or discharge may be symptoms of a rectal gonorrhea infection. Chlamydia

and gonorrhea can also infect other areas of the body, such as the eyes. A pregnant woman with chlamydia or gonorrhea can also pass the diseases to her baby during childbirth.

How do you test for it?

There are two ways to test for chlamydia and gonorrhea. One test uses a sample of urine. Another test uses a swab to collect a small amount of fluid from the man's penis or the woman's cervix (the opening to the uterus).

Who should be tested?

You should be tested if you:

- are sexually active and under the age of 26.
- have had oral, vaginal, or anal sex without a condom.
- have any symptoms.
- have any reason to think that you may have been exposed to chlamydia or other STD.

Is there a treatment?

Yes. Chlamydia and gonorrhea can be treated and cured with several different antibiotics. If you are given pills, it is very important to take **all of them**. If you don't take all the pills, the symptoms may go away, but you may still have the infection. Sometimes, your doctor or nurse practitioner may want you to come back for another appointment to make sure that you are cured. Be sure to keep that appointment.

Once you know that you have chlamydia or gonorrhea, it's very important to tell anyone you have had sex with so that they

can get treated right away, too. You can become reinfected with chlamydia or gonorrhea. You should not have sex until both you *and your partner* have finished treatment.

What happens if I don't get treated?

If you don't get treated, gonorrhea can spread into the blood and cause joint pain, skin sores, or heart damage. Both chlamydia and gonorrhea can spread into a woman's uterus and fallopian tubes, and cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID can lead to infertility (difficulty getting pregnant), debilitating pelvic pain, and life-threatening ectopic pregnancies. Chlamydia or gonorrhea can cause fertility problems in men, too. These diseases can also cause problems during pregnancy that may cause eye or lung infections in the baby, or even death. Once found, however, chlamydia and gonorrhea are usually easily cured.

The only way to know for sure if you have chlamydia or gonorrhea is to get tested. You should see your doctor or other medical professional right away if you think you've been exposed or if you have any symptoms.

Should I get tested for anything else?

It is important to also be tested for other sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV, syphilis, and hepatitis. Talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner about getting tested for these diseases, as well.

What if I'm under 18?

If you are between the ages of 12 and 18, you can be treated for sexually transmitted diseases in California without your parents' permission. California state law requires that Kaiser Permanente must protect your privacy.



How can I protect myself from chlamydia and gonorrhea?

Whenever you start a new sexual relationship, it's important to talk honestly and openly with your partner about whether either one of you might have a sexually transmitted disease.

It's possible to have been infected with chlamydia, gonorrhea, HIV, or other STDs and have no symptoms. Latex condoms, when used correctly, can help to protect you and your partner from many STDs. Other birth control methods—such as the pill, Depo-Provera, emergency contraception (Plan B), spermicides, and diaphragms—do **not** protect you from STDs.

Call your doctor or nurse practitioner if you have symptoms of chlamydia or gonorrhea or if you just want to be tested for STDs. We are here to help you. Most medical professionals do tests based on what you tell them. Talking to them honestly about your sex life will help them to give you the best care possible.

How to use a condom

1. When the penis is hard, squeeze the tip of the rolled up condom and place on the head of the penis. 
2. Hold the tip and press air out as you unroll completely. (Air bubbles can break condoms.) 
3. Use water-based lubrication.
4. After ejaculation ("cumming"), hold the base of the condom and pull out while the penis is hard. Move away from your partner to remove the condom in case semen spills out of the condom. Never reuse a condom.

Other resources

- Connect to our Web site at members.kp.org
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Request a *Healthphone Directory* from your Health Education Center or Department and call 800-332-7563; TTY, 800-777-9059 to listen to recorded health messages on the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.
- Call the National STD Hotline at 1-800-227-8922.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other medical professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have further questions, please consult your doctor. If you have questions or need additional information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse any brand names; any similar products may be used.