

# Chlamydia

Chlamydia is a sexually transmissible infection (STI) which can affect both men and women. In women chlamydia commonly causes an infection of the cervix (the lower part of the womb) and sometimes the urethra (tube that connects the bladder to the outside of the body). In men chlamydia usually causes infection of the urethra. Less commonly, chlamydia can also infect the anus, eyes and throat. Chlamydia is the most common bacterial STI in Australia.

## *What are the symptoms of chlamydia?*

Most women and men with chlamydia have no symptoms which is why check-ups are important. A person may have chlamydia for months or even years without knowing it.

When symptoms are present the following may occur:

Women

- a change in vaginal discharge
- irregular bleeding or heavier than usual periods
- pelvic pain
- pain during sex
- bleeding after sex
- and if there is urethral infection, stinging or burning when passing urine

Men

- stinging or burning when passing urine
- redness at the opening of the penis
- discharge from the penis, which is usually clear
- pain or tenderness in the testicles.

## *How does someone get infected with chlamydia?*

Chlamydia is transmitted by having vaginal, anal or oral sex without a condom, with someone who has the infection.

## *How is chlamydia diagnosed?*

Chlamydia testing is done from a urine sample or swab. Swabs can be used to test the cervix, vagina, urethra, anus, eye or throat. Patients may have the option of collecting their own vaginal or anal swabs.

After collection, the specimens are sent to the laboratory to see if the genetic material (DNA) of the chlamydia bacteria is present.

## *How long does testing take and how do I get my results?*

In most cases, test results will be available within one week. Your practitioner will let you know how to get results.

## *What is the treatment for chlamydia?*

Chlamydia is treated with oral antibiotics. It is important to be treated to prevent complications and spread of infection, even if you have no symptoms.

## ***What can happen if chlamydia is not treated?***

In women, untreated chlamydia can cause infection in the fallopian tubes or pelvis, which is called Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). PID can have serious consequences including infertility, long-lasting pelvic pain and ectopic (tubal) pregnancy. Chlamydia in pregnancy can cause problems for both mother and baby, therefore prompt treatment is always recommended.

In men, untreated chlamydia can cause pain in the testicles, and scarring from the infection can occur and may lead to infertility.

## ***Do sexual partners need treatment?***

Your sexual partners may also have chlamydia, through vaginal or anal sex. Current partners should be tested and treated which will also reduce your risk of reinfection. All partners in the past 6 months, or since your last negative test, should get tested.

## ***When can I have sex again?***

It is important that you don't have sex for 7 days after your treatment. It is also recommended that you don't have sex with partners of the last 6 months unless they have been tested and treated if necessary. If you do, chlamydia could be passed back and forth between you and your partner(s).

## ***Do I need further tests after I have been treated?***

Yes. To check you haven't been re-infected with chlamydia, everyone should have a repeat test in 3 months' time. Pregnant women and people who have had a rectal chlamydia infection need to be re-tested 4-6 weeks after treatment.

## ***How do I avoid getting infected again?***

- always use a condom for both anal and vaginal sex
- ask new partners to get tested before you decide to stop using condoms
- make sure that your current sexual partner(s) are tested and treated.

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### **References:**

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<http://www.sti.guidelines.org.au/sexually-transmissible-infections/chlamydia#management>

Marrazzo, J (2015) Patient Information: Chlamydia (Beyond the Basics).  
[http://www.uptodate.com/contents/chlamydia-beyond-the-basics?source=see\\_link](http://www.uptodate.com/contents/chlamydia-beyond-the-basics?source=see_link)