

Chlamydia is a sexually transmissible infection (STI). It is the most common bacterial STI in Australia. It can cause an infection of the cervix (the lower part of the womb) and/or the urethra (tube that connects the bladder to the outside of the body) and/or the anus. Less commonly, chlamydia can also infect the eyes and throat.

What are the symptoms of chlamydia?

Most people 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. If you have symptoms, they may include:

- a change in vaginal discharge
- irregular vaginal bleeding or heavier than usual periods
- pelvic pain
- vaginal pain during sex
- vaginal bleeding after sex
- 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

These symptoms also happen with other conditions including allergy, skin irritation, genital herpes and other infections. It is important to have the right diagnosis so you can get the right treatment.

How does someone get infected with chlamydia?

You can get chlamydia by having vaginal, anal or oral sex without a condom, with someone who has the infection.

How is chlamydia diagnosed?

Chlamydia testing is done by checking a urine sample or swab. Swabs can be taken to test your cervix, vagina, urethra, anus, eye or throat. You may be able to collect your 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, you will get your test results within one week. Your health professional will let you know how to get your 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?

Untreated chlamydia can cause:

- infection in your 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

- problems during pregnancy for you and your baby
- pain in your testicles and scarring which may lead to infertility.

Do sexual partners need treatment?

Your sexual partners may also have chlamydia through vaginal, oral 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 you have finished your treatment. We also recommend 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 more tests after I have been treated?

Yes. To check you haven't been re-infected with chlamydia, everyone should have a repeat test 3 months after treatment. If you are pregnant or you have had a rectal chlamydia infection, you need to be re-tested 4-6 weeks after treatment.

How do I avoid getting infected again?

- Use a condom for oral, 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 if necessary.

If you need more information or have any questions, please contact the Canberra Sexual Health Clinic on (02) 5124 2184.

References:

Australian Sexual Health Alliance (2018) Australian STI Management Guidelines

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

Marrazzo, J (2019) Patient Information: Chlamydia (Beyond the Basics).

<https://www.uptodate.com/contents/chlamydia-beyond-the-basics>

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