



Chlamydia

What is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by having unprotected sex (sex without a condom) with a person who is infected. Chlamydia can affect both men and women and can occur in the cervix, penis, anus or throat.

What are the symptoms?

- Many people will not have any symptoms. They may think (incorrectly) that they are OK, but they can still get health problems and spread the infection to others.
- When symptoms do occur in women they may notice an unusual vaginal discharge, a burning feeling when urinating, bleeding in between periods or after sex, or pains in the lower abdomen.
- These symptoms may go away without treatment – but health problems can still occur later on.
- Men may notice a whitish-yellow or watery discharge from the penis, a burning feeling when urinating, or irritation or itching around the ‘eye’ of the penis or painful, swollen testicles

What other problems can it cause?

- If Chlamydia is untreated in men it can lead to swelling and pain in the testicles which can lead to infertility.
- If Chlamydia is untreated in women, the infection can spread up into the uterus (womb/baby bag), fallopian tubes, and other parts of the lower abdomen. This is known as pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). This can be painful and women may be quite sick and need to be admitted to hospital.

- PID can damage the tubes from the uterus to the ovaries which can lead to infertility. If a woman with damaged tubes gets pregnant, this pregnancy may be “ectopic”, or outside the uterus.
- Ectopic pregnancies are a medical emergency and usually require an operation. Infertility or ectopic pregnancy can even happen without the woman knowing that she had chlamydia in the past.
- Babies born to mothers with Chlamydia can develop eye and lung infections.
- Having Chlamydia can also make it easier for a person to become infected with HIV or to pass HIV on to someone else.

What tests do you do?

- If a discharge is present in men a swab can be taken from the penis. Alternatively a urine sample can be used to test for these infections in men. The sample needs to be the first urine of the day after getting up.
- In women, the best way is to take a swab from the cervix. Women can also take a swab themselves from their vagina or provide a urine sample for testing.
- Swabs will also be taken from the throat or anus if the person has had oral or anal sex.
- Tests should also be done to look for other STIs and HIV.

What is the treatment?

- Usually, treatment is with a single dose of antibiotic tablets. However women with PID, or men with infection in the testicles will need a longer course of treatment.
- Sexual partners need to be told so they can also be tested and treated to prevent passing the infection back or spreading it further.