

GONORRHEA

Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the bacteria *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. It is passed on during vaginal, anal, and oral sex. Gonorrhea can also be spread from a pregnant person to their baby during childbirth.

In addition to genital infections, it is possible to have a rectal or anal infection, as well as a gonorrhea infection in the throat.

Anyone who is sexually active can get gonorrhea.

Symptoms of Gonorrhea

Often a person with gonorrhea will have no symptoms and will look and feel fine. If you do have symptoms, they may include:

- discharge from the penis or vagina
- burning or pain when peeing
- the need to urinate (pee) often
- bleeding between periods

If the infection spreads to the fallopian tubes, some women still have no signs or symptoms. Others may have one or more of the following symptoms, which can be a sign that the infection has caused a condition called pelvic inflammatory disease (PID): lower abdominal pain, lower back pain, pain during intercourse, bleeding between menstrual periods, nausea, fever.

OVERVIEW

- Gonorrhea (also known as “the clap”) is an infection caused by the bacteria *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*.
- It is passed on during vaginal, anal, and oral sex (performing or receiving).
- Many men infected with gonorrhea have symptoms, while most women do not.
- If it is undiagnosed and untreated, gonorrhea can cause serious health complications.

Symptoms of anal infections may include anal or rectal itching, discharge, and pain when pooping. Gonorrhea infections of the mouth and throat also usually have no symptoms, but a person may have soreness and redness in the mouth or throat.

Since many people with gonorrhea infection will have no symptoms at all, the only way to know if you are infected is to get tested.

Getting Tested

There are different testing options for gonorrhea such as urine or swab tests (with swabs of the urethra or vagina). If a person has had oral and/or anal sex, pharyngeal (throat) and/or rectal swab specimens may be taken as well.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends yearly gonorrhea testing for all sexually active women younger than 25 years, as well as older women with risk factors such as new or multiple sex partners, or a sex partner who has a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

Treatment

Currently, the recommended treatment for gonorrhea is a single injection of an antibiotic (ceftriaxone).

Patients with gonorrhea should also be treated for chlamydia (unless testing has ruled out chlamydia infection). People infected with gonorrhea are often also infected with chlamydia, so treatment is often prescribed for chlamydia as well, since the cost of the treatment is less than the cost of testing for chlamydia.

Here are some important points about treatment:

- All medications should be taken as directed.
- All partners should be examined and treated.
- Sexual contact should be avoided until the patient and all partner(s) have been treated and cured.
- Persons with symptoms after treatment should be tested again.

Telling Your partner

It can be hard to tell a partner that you have gonorrhea, but keep in mind that your partner can have it and not know. If you need help telling your partner(s), there are several services online that will notify your partners anonymously.

Staying Healthy

You can protect yourself from gonorrhea in the same ways you protect yourself from other STIs.

- Talk to your partner about safer sex and how you can protect yourselves against STIs.
- Have condoms on hand, and be ready to use them. Use a condom when you have vaginal, anal and oral sex, or any genital-to-genital or genital-to-anal contact.
- Get tested—and bring your partner with you to get tested too.
- If you have any symptoms of an STI or have a sexual partner that was diagnosed, go to your healthcare provider or clinic as soon as possible. YesMeansTest.org has a clinic finder if you need help locating a provider.

Learn More

Learn more about gonorrhea and other STIs from the American Sexual Health Association, a trusted nonprofit organization that has advocated on behalf of those at risk for STIs for more than a century. Our websites include:

www.ashasexualhealth.org

www.iwannaknow.org

www.quierosaber.org

www.nccc-online.org

www.askexpertsnow.com

www.YESmeansTEST.org

