

# NONGONOCOCCAL URETHRITIS (NGU)

NGU is a term that describes an infection of the urethra (the tube that carries urine from the bladder). NGU stands for nongonococcal urethritis (urethritis is an inflammation of the urethra). It means that after testing, gonorrhea has been ruled out as the cause of the urethral infection.

Other sexually transmitted organisms are usually the cause of NGU. Among the several organisms that cause NGU, the most common cause is chlamydia. In many cases the cause is never known.

NGU is most often found in men between the ages of 15 and 30. Men who have multiple sex partners are most at risk for this infection. Women can be diagnosed with NGU, but it is much more common in males.

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## Symptoms of NGU

Symptoms in Men (urethral infection)

- Discharge from the penis
- Burning or pain when urinating (peeing)
- Itching, irritation, or tenderness
- Underwear stain

Symptoms in Women (vaginal/urethral infection)

- Discharge from the vagina
- Burning or pain when urinating (peeing)
- Abdominal pain or abnormal vaginal bleeding. This may be a sign that the infection has progressed to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)

## OVERVIEW

- Nongonococcal urethritis—or NGU—is an infection of the urethra caused by pathogens (germs) other than gonorrhea.
- Several kinds of germs can cause NGU, like *trichomonas vaginalis* or *mycoplasma genitalium*, but the most common cause is chlamydia.
- There are nonsexual causes for NGU as well, such as a urinary tract infection or catheterization.
- NGU is more commonly diagnosed in men than in women.

It usually takes one to three weeks after the infection occurs before a man will develop symptoms of NGU.

## Diagnosis

An NGU diagnosis is made when a man has urethritis (inflammation of the urethra), but gonorrhea is ruled out because he has a negative gonorrhea culture and/or gram stain. Other tests include chlamydia culture or urinalysis (sometimes, but rarely).

In women, it may be diagnosed by chlamydia culture. A gonorrhea culture may be done to rule out gonorrhea.

### Treatment for NGU

NGU is treated with antibiotics. Some treatments are not appropriate for pregnant persons, so someone who is pregnant, or thinks they might be, should inform their healthcare provider.

Follow instructions carefully. Depending on your medication, you may take only one pill or you may take pills every day for a week. Be sure to take all of the medication - even if symptoms go away after a day or two. It takes longer to get rid of the actual infection.

All sex partners of someone diagnosed with NGU should be treated because:

- they may have an infection and not know it
- it keeps them from passing the infection back to you or to others
- it prevents them from suffering possible complications

What are some of the possible health complications of untreated NGU? They may include:

- Epididymitis (inflammation of the epididymis, the elongated, cordlike structure along the posterior border of the testes) which can lead to infertility if left untreated.
- Reiter's syndrome (arthritis)
- Conjunctivitis
- Skin lesions

- Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) which can result in ectopic (tubal) pregnancy.
- Recurrent PID may lead to infertility.
- Chronic pelvic pain
- Urethritis
- Vaginitis
- Mucopurulent cervicitis (MPC)
- Spontaneous abortion (miscarriage)
- Severe proctitis (inflamed rectum).

### Talking to a Partner

If you have been told that you have NGU, talk to your partner(s), and let them know so they can be tested and treated. The most common cause of NGU is chlamydia, and it is easy to pass from an infected partner to one who is not infected. It's important to be tested for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as well, since having one infection can indicate that you have other infections too.

#### Learn More

Learn more about NGU 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](http://www.ashasexualhealth.org)

[www.iwannaknow.org](http://www.iwannaknow.org)

[www.quierosaber.org](http://www.quierosaber.org)

[www.nccc-online.org](http://www.nccc-online.org)

[www.askexpertsnow.com](http://www.askexpertsnow.com)

[www.YESmeansTEST.org](http://www.YESmeansTEST.org)

