

# Chlamydia

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Chlamydia is caused by a bacteria that generally attaches itself to the mucous membrane of the urethra. It can also occur in the rectum or throat in both men and women. In women, the bacteria is also found in the vagina or the cervix.

Chlamydia is usually spread through unprotected vaginal intercourse and through unprotected anal sex. The bacteria can also be passed on through oral sex without a condom. Although this is not common, Chlamydia can also be transmitted through mutual masturbation as a result of direct contact with an infected mucous membrane. Your fingers only have to come into contact with the infected mucous membrane for them to then infect a healthy mucous membrane. You can also get Chlamydia by sharing sex toys with someone.

## SYMPTOMS OF CHLAMYDIA

It's very common for Chlamydia to not show any symptoms. This means you can infect your sexual partner or be infected by your sexual partner without either of you being aware of it. If you do get symptoms, you won't notice any problems until a few days to some weeks after getting the infection.

Chlamydia mainly results in itching in the urethra and pain when urinating. There may be a discharge from the urethra due to inflammation. You may also experience pains in your joints. Women can also suffer bleeding between menstrual cycles and bleeding during intercourse. Vaginal discharge may also occur. In men, the scrotum may swell and become painful. Chlamydia may also infect the eyes and cause symptoms there.

## GETTING TESTED FOR CHLAMYDIA

Get tested for Chlamydia if you have had unprotected sex. Testing is free. A urine sample is often all that is needed to detect Chlamydia. For women the urine sample is generally combined with a sample from the vagina or the cervix. In men, it may need to be supplemented with a sample from the urethra. If you have had unprotected oral or anal sex, you should provide a sample from the throat and rectum.

It can take up to a week after becoming infected for the test to show that you have Chlamydia. So you may need to wait some days after having unprotected sex before getting

tested. If you take a Chlamydia test over the Internet, you must always see a doctor for treatment if the test shows that you have an infection.

## TREATMENT

Treatment is free if you have Chlamydia. The infection is treated with antibiotics and it's important not to have sex during the course of treatment to allow the infection to clear up. If you have Chlamydia, your sexual partner also needs to be checked and treated for the infection. Otherwise you will infect one another again. If you have several sexual partners, they all need to be checked and treated.

## IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT CHLAMYDIA

You can get Chlamydia several times. To be sure that you are healthy after completing your treatment and that you haven't become infected again, you can get tested again after a month. If you have several partners, it's a good idea to get tested again after another six months. Untreated or repeated Chlamydia infections can cause complications.

The risk of complications decreases if you are treated quickly after being infected. In women the bacteria can spread to the womb and the fallopian tubes. Men can have problems with the epididymis or prostate. You can also get inflammation of the joints. Untreated Chlamydia can affect your ability to have children as it can make you sterile.

Another sexually transmitted infection, *Mycoplasma genitalium*, can cause symptoms similar to those of Chlamydia.

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These texts were produced in 2009 by the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare and the texts have been checked by HANS CARLBERG, consultant physician at Sösam, the Unit for Sexual Health at the Dermatology and Venereology Clinic, Södersjukhuset (Stockholm South General Hospital); HANS FREDLUND, Associate Professor and consultant in communicable diseases, Örebro County Council, Örebro University Hospital; LENA MARIONS, Associate Professor and consultant physician at the Gynaecology Clinic, Karolinska University Hospital.

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