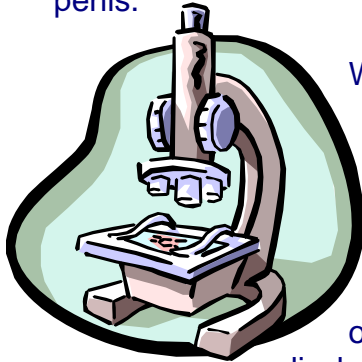


# CHLAMYDIA

Chlamydia (klah-MID-ee-uh) is the most frequently occurring sexually transmitted disease in the United States. It is caused by an organism that is not always easy to detect, and often there may be no symptoms (especially in women). In women, chlamydia can cause infections of the cervix (cervicitis), infections of the uterus and fallopian tubes (Pelvic Inflammatory Disease or PID) and even infertility. In men, chlamydia can cause infections of the urethra (urethritis), prostate gland or epididymis (the collecting and transport system for sperm). In both sexes, chlamydia can infect the rectum, mouth and conjunctiva (eyes). Children born through an infected birth canal can develop chlamydia pneumonia and conjunctivitis.

Some people may harbor chlamydia for a number of years with no symptoms, and still pass it on to their sexual partner(s). If there are visible signs, they usually occur within 1 to 3 weeks after having sex with someone who is infected. Chlamydia is the most common cause of female infertility. As a result, many healthcare providers now screen all young female patients at the time of annual examinations. Ask your healthcare provider about screening for chlamydia infection.

Men may see a discharge from the penis, often clear, or a slight crusting at the tip of the penis. There may also be burning with urination, often near the tip of the penis.



Women may have a discharge from the vagina, pelvic and abdominal pain or painful and frequent urination. Occasionally there is irregular spotting during the month or bleeding after intercourse.

If a man or woman has had anal and/or oral sex with an infected partner, infections can occur rectally and/or orally, with symptoms of inflammation (both areas) and discharge (rectally, far less commonly orally).

Testing for chlamydia can be done at Emory University Student Health Services (EUSHS) for both men and women. Samples of discharge are obtained from the vagina, rectum or throat as symptoms designate. Urine samples can be used to diagnose urethral infections and chlamydia testing can also be performed as part of an annual pap smear. In addition, chlamydia can be cultured from conjunctivitis (infections of the eye). These specimens are examined in the laboratory.

Chlamydia is treatable with an antibiotic, usually of the tetracycline or doxycycline group or azithromycin (Zithromax).

Sometimes the EUSHS clinical provider will recommend a follow-up chlamydia test after treatment to ensure that the infection has been eliminated, particularly in patients with symptoms after treatment. In addition, women may be asked to be retested three to four months after treatment due to the high rate of re-infection. If so, it is important to keep that follow-up appointment. It will also be recommended that you abstain from intercourse until treatment is completed and, if required, follow-up testing is done.

Because the symptoms of chlamydia are similar to those of gonorrhea, and because a person can be infected with both, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that people with chlamydia be treated for both diseases.

If you are diagnosed as having a chlamydial infection, your sexual partner(s) should also be examined and treated. Partners who are students should come to Student Health Services; non-students should seek care at their private physician's office or at the DeKalb County Health Department. Chlamydia is a reportable infection in the State of Georgia, and therefore the Student Health Services and the laboratory are required by law to report your infection to the Health Department. It is possible that you may be contacted by a Health Department nurse or health worker.

#### **PREVENTION:**

The only way to absolutely insure that you won't get chlamydia, or another sexually transmitted infection (STI), is to abstain from contact with another person's genitals. However, there are several ways to decrease your chances of getting, or spreading, chlamydia or other STIs:

- **Use Condoms:** Use of a latex condom decreases the risk of getting or spreading STIs. Condoms are available for free at EUSHS, or you can buy them at pharmacies, supermarkets and other locations without a prescription.
- **Know Your Partner:** The more partners you have, the greater your risk of getting an STI. Don't have close contact with a person until you know about their sexual history and their health. After abstaining, the least risky sexual practice is to find one faithful and uninfected partner.

- **Don't Use Alcohol or Drugs in Potentially Intimate Situations:** If your judgment is impaired, the chance of making a bad decision about sex is much higher.
- **Get Regular Check-ups:** Anyone having sex should be tested regularly. Remember, chlamydia and other STIs often have no symptoms. The only way to be sure is to be checked.

For more information about chlamydia and other sexually transmitted infections, check-out the American Social Health Association's excellent STI page at <http://www.ashastd.org/stdfaqs/index.html> or the Centers for Disease Control's STI information at <http://www.cdc.gov/std/Chlamydia/STDFact-Chlamydia.htm>.

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