

# Chlamydia Fact Sheet

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## SOURCES:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- ❖ [Chlamydia fact sheet](#)
- ❖ [Chlamydia: The Facts](#)
- ❖ [2010 STD Treatment Guidelines](#)

National Institute for Allergies & Infectious Diseases

- ❖ [Understanding Chlamydia](#)



**What is chlamydia?**

Chlamydia is a common bacterial infection that is sexually transmitted and often causes no symptoms. If not treated, chlamydia can damage reproductive organs and make it difficult for a woman to have a baby. Women age 25 and under who are sexually active should be tested for chlamydia at least once a year.

**How common is chlamydia?**

Over 1 million cases of chlamydia are reported in the U.S. each year to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than any other STD. Most cases are never reported, though, and experts think the actual number of new cases annually in the U.S. is closer to 3 million.

**How do people get chlamydia?**

People can get chlamydia through vaginal and anal sex. While less likely, it's also possible to get the disease through oral sex. A pregnant woman can also give chlamydia to her baby during delivery.

Chlamydia is not passed through casual contact like shaking hands, or toilet seats.

**What are the symptoms?**

Most people with chlamydia don't have symptoms and, as a result, may not know they have it. If symptoms arise, they can start within a few weeks after exposure to chlamydia.

Women may experience:

- ❖ Unusual discharge or drip from the vagina
- ❖ Burning and pain when they urinate
- ❖ If chlamydia spreads to the reproductive organs (like the fallopian tubes) a woman may have pain in the abdomen or lower back; pain during sex; fever; or bleeding between her periods.

Men may experience:

- ❖ Discharge or drip from the penis
- ❖ Burning when they urinate

Men or women who have anal sex can also get chlamydia, and may have pain, discharge, or even bleeding from the rectum.





## Testing/Diagnosis

There are several lab tests for chlamydia that are reliable. Some are urine tests, while others take a swab from the penis or cervix. Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about testing options.

All sexually active women age 25 and under should be tested at least once a year for chlamydia. Pregnant women and women over 25 with risk factors (a new partner, more than one partner, or unprotected sex) should also be tested. Anyone with genital symptoms (such as discharge, burning urination, or bleeding) should see their healthcare provider and be evaluated for STDs.



## Treatment

Chlamydia is easily cured with antibiotics. Treatment can be a single dose or may be given over a course of one week.

To maximize effective treatment:

- ❖ Take all of your medicine
- ❖ All partners should be tested and treated
- ❖ Re-infection is common, so get tested again about three months after completing treatment, especially if you don't know if your partner was treated.



## What happens if chlamydia is untreated?

In women, chlamydia that isn't treated may cause:

- ❖ Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). This can happen when the infection spreads to the uterus or fallopian tubes. PID can cause chronic pelvic pain and tubal (ectopic) pregnancies. PID can even damage the reproductive organs and make it hard for a woman to have a baby.
- ❖ Increase vulnerability to HIV infection. Chlamydia can also make it easier for a woman to contract HIV infection if she is exposed.
- ❖ Adverse effects in pregnancy. A pregnant woman can pass chlamydia to her baby during delivery, which can cause serious problems in a newborn (such as pneumonia and eye infections). Pregnant women with chlamydia may also be more likely to have premature babies.

It isn't common for men to have complications with chlamydia, but sometimes an untreated infection can lead to epididymitis- pain and inflammation within the tube that carries sperm from the testes, (the epididymis).





## Reduce your risk

There are several things that can lower the risk of chlamydia:

- ❖ Use a condom or other latex barrier (such as a dental dam) for each sex act (oral, anal, and vaginal). A barrier should be put on before any sexual contact takes place.
- ❖ Have sex with only one uninfected partner (who only has sex with you).
- ❖ Appropriate STD testing and treatment. Talk with your healthcare provider to see what tests might be recommended for you.



## Talk to your partner

It can be hard to tell a partner that you have chlamydia, but keep in mind that your partner can have it and not know. Tell all recent sex partners so they can be tested and receive treatment appropriately.

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*This fact sheet was reviewed by: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | Content last reviewed: 5/31/12 | Content last updated: 10/19/2012*



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