

CHLAMYDIA

WHAT IS CHLAMYDIA?

Chlamydia trachomatis is the most common bacterial sexually transmitted infection in our community. It affects both women and men, including men who have sex with men. In women it causes an infection of the cervix and in men it infects the urethra. Less commonly Chlamydia can infect the anus and can also cause conjunctivitis. (inflammation of the eye).

HOW IS IT TRANSMITTED?

Chlamydia is most often transmitted by vaginal or anal sex. Condoms prevent its transmission.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?

Most men and women do not have any signs and symptoms. When symptoms are present, the following may be noticed:

Men

- Redness at the opening of the penis
 - Stinging or burning when passing urine
 - A discharge from the penis (which is often clear in colour)
- If not treated, Chlamydia may occasionally cause pain and swelling in one or both testicles.

Women

- A change in vaginal discharge
- Irregular bleeding (especially after sex)
- Pelvic pain, including pain during sexual intercourse
- Stinging or burning when passing urine

If not treated, Chlamydia can cause Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) which is infection of the uterus and fallopian tubes. PID may lead to infertility.

HOW DO YOU TEST FOR CHLAMYDIA?

Chlamydia is tested for by taking a swab (a sample of secretions) from the cervix or vagina or by a urine sample. If an anal infection is suspected, a swab is taken from the anus.

HOW IS CHLAMYDIA TREATED?

Very effective treatment is available with antibiotics such as azithromycin or doxycycline. However, if complications of Chlamydia such as PID or testicular infection are suspected, a longer course of treatment is given.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE THE SYMPTOMS TO GO AWAY AFTER TREATMENT?

The symptoms will usually start to ease over a few days after treatment. If you are still experiencing problems after a week you should see your doctor again.

WHEN IS IT SAFE TO HAVE SEX AGAIN?

You should use condoms or abstain from sex for one week after treatment.

Do I need further tests after I've been treated?

Yes. To check that you haven't been re-infected with Chlamydia, it is recommended to have a repeat test in 3 months.

SHOULD MY SEXUAL PARTNERS ALSO BE TREATED?

Yes. If you are treated for Chlamydia but your sexual partner is not, you could be reinfected. It is extremely important to tell all sexual partners during the last three months, that you have been diagnosed with Chlamydia and ask them to be tested and treated.

If you have difficulty telling your partners, we have a website you can visit www.letthemknow.org.au. As well as general advice and sample conversations it has emails, SMSs and letters you can send to your partners either personally or anonymously.

HOW DO I AVOID GETTING INFECTED AGAIN?

Make sure that your current sexual partner(s) are tested and treated. Practising safe sex by always using a new condom for both anal and vaginal sex is the best way to prevent further infections.

This fact sheet is designed to provide you with information on Chlamydia. It is not intended to replace the need for a consultation with your doctor. All clients are strongly advised to check with their doctor about any specific questions or concerns they may have. Every effort has been taken to ensure that the information in this pamphlet is correct at the time of printing.