

Live Well to

Learn Well

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## What is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections, affecting nearly 3 million Americans each year. It is caused by the bacterium, *chlamydia trachomatis*, and is easily cured with specific antibiotics.

## How do you get it?

In short: from unprotected vaginal and anal sex. Chlamydia is contracted by exposure of a mucous membrane such as the vagina, urethra, anus, and—very rarely—the throat, to an infected person’s mucous membranes or body fluids (e.g., semen, vaginal fluids). You can’t get it from casual contact such as kissing or hugging.

Any sexually active person can get chlamydia, but people with multiple sexual partners, men who have sex with men, and women under the age of 25 are at higher risk due to increased rates of infection in these groups. Chlamydia can also be transmitted to an infant during childbirth if the mother is infected.

Men and women who use condoms consistently, who are in mutually monogamous relationships, or who abstain from vaginal, anal or oral sexual activity are at lower risk for infection.

## How would I know if I have it?

Unfortunately, most chlamydia infections cause no symptoms. In fact, about 75% of infected women and 50% of infected men are asymptomatic. That’s why it’s so easy to spread the infection without knowing it. If symptoms do occur, they usually start 1–3 weeks after being exposed.

Infected women may notice an abnormal vaginal discharge, pain with urination, lower abdominal pain, pain with sexual activity, fever, or bleeding between menstrual periods.

Men with chlamydia may develop a discharge from the penis, burning with urination, itching at the tip of the penis, or pain or swelling in the testicles.

Men and women who engage in anal sex may notice rectal pain, bleeding or discharge if infected.

## How can I get tested?

A simple urine test can detect chlamydial infections of the penis or vagina, and swab testing can be used for the penis, vagina, and rectum. As most chlamydia infections have no symptoms, we recommend yearly testing for all sexually active women under age 25, women with new or multiple sex partners, and men who have sex with men. All pregnant women should be screened as part of routine prenatal care.

# Chlamydia



*Chlamydia is a common bacterial STI, but it often has no symptoms. Be sure to get screened.*

If you’ve been exposed to chlamydia, you may have also been exposed to other sexually transmitted infections. Talk with your health care provider about testing for other infections such as gonorrhea, HIV and syphilis.

If you want a routine test, and have no symptoms, call us or visit [myCornellHealth](http://myCornellHealth) to schedule an appointment online. If you do have symptoms or you believe you have been exposed to chlamydia, please call (607-255-5155) for an appointment.

## What if I don’t treat the infection?

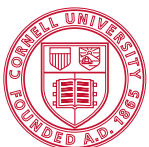
Untreated chlamydia in women can result in serious damage to the reproductive organs. It is a common cause of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) which can scar the fallopian tubes and lead to infertility and ectopic pregnancies in the future.

Untreated chlamydia in men can cause epididymitis (an infection of the tube that carries sperm to the testes) resulting in pain, fever and rarely sterility. Both men and women can have a rare complication called Reiter’s syndrome, which causes arthritis, inflammation of the eye and skin lesions.

Additionally, untreated persons can transmit the infection to others, who may also be unaware of their infection, and can subsequently pass it on to others.

## How do I get rid of it?

Treatment is easy. Because chlamydia is a bacterium, specific antibiotics prescribed by your health care provider usually cure the infection. Both you and any sexual partners you have had contact with in the past 2 months should be treated at the same time. This prevents partners from continuing to re-infect one another.



It's important that all partners abstain from sexual contact (no oral, vaginal or anal contact with a partner's genitals) until at least 7 days after finishing treatment. If you had symptoms of chlamydia and they do not go away 1-2 weeks after treatment, come back to be evaluated again.

Otherwise, it is important that you repeat your chlamydia test no sooner than 6 weeks, and no longer than 3 months after you have been treated. Previous infection with chlamydia does not confer immunity, and so individuals can be infected again if re-exposed.

### How do I find out more?

Talk with your health care provider about concerns or questions you may have.

Online information can be found at:

- American Social Health Association: [ashastd.org](http://ashastd.org)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)