

Fact Sheet: Chlamydia

What is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by a bacterium called *Chlamydia trachomatis* which infects the urinary tract and genital area. Chlamydia is the most common STI in the United States and can infect men and women; however, the disease is most dangerous for women because it can lead to infertility if left untreated.

Signs & Symptoms

Chlamydia is a “silent infection” because most people with chlamydia are unaware they are infected due to a lack of symptoms. If symptoms do appear, they can include:

- Abnormal discharge from the vagina or penis
- Burning feeling during urination
- Rectal pain, discharge, and/or bleeding
- Swollen testicles resulting in pain (Men)
- Abdominal/Pelvic pain due to Pelvic Inflammatory Disorder (PID) (Women)
- Eye infections or pneumonia can result in infants

Untreated Chlamydia in women can spread to the uterus and fallopian tubes causing PID. PID can cause permanent damage to the uterus and fallopian tubes causing long-term pelvic pain, pregnancy issues (like pre-term birth) and ectopic pregnancies (pregnancy outside the uterus).

How is it spread?

Chlamydia is spread from person-to-person during anal, vaginal, or oral sex with an infected partner. Chlamydia can be transmitted even if a man does not ejaculate. Because the immune system cannot develop resistance to chlamydia, a person can be infected numerous times if they do not take the appropriate precautions. Mothers can also spread chlamydia to their child during birth from contact with the cervix.

Treatment

Chlamydia can be treated and cured with antibiotics, such as doxycycline and azithromycin. Infected individuals should abstain from sex for 7 days after single-dose antibiotics or during the 7 day course of antibiotics. Those infected should also notify sex partners from the last 2 months, so they can get treated as well. Repeat chlamydia infection is common and all individuals should be re-screened 3 months after treatment.

Prevention

- As always, abstaining from anal, vaginal, and oral sex is the most effective way to prevent chlamydia and other STIs.
- Use a condom appropriately every time you have vaginal or anal sex, and use a dental dam during oral sex.
- Be part of a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship with someone who has been tested and is uninfected.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care professional. For more information about communicable disease, speak to your health care provider or call the Ingham County Health Department at (517) 887-4308.

Visit our website at <http://hd.ingham.org>

or Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/DiseasesConditions/>
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