



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY HEALTH CENTER

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Chlamydia

Chlamydia trachomatis is a unique species of bacteria. One of its strains causes urinary and reproductive organ disorders and is transmitted by sexual intercourse. Chlamydia infections are common, especially urethral and cervical infections described below.

1. Urethritis - Urethritis means inflammation of the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder to the outside. Urethritis can be caused by gonorrhea (GC) or much more commonly by other organisms. Chlamydia causes urethritis in males and females. Female urethritis is often called Urethral Syndrome. At least half of Nongonococcal Urethritis (NGU) is caused by Chlamydia.
2. Mucopurulent Cervicitis - Chlamydia infection in females can cause infection of the cervix which produces a pus-like mucous discharge. This is called Mucopurulent Cervicitis or MPC. It is sometimes associated with atypical cells of the cervix which can be seen when a Pap smear is done.

Symptoms:

Many women and up to 50% of men have no symptoms. Symptoms can be very mild.

Male symptoms

- Painful urination and/or
- Watery discharge from the penis
- Or no symptoms

Female symptoms

- Itching and burning in urethra or vagina
- Frequent urination
- Vaginal discharge
- Dull pelvic pain
- Pain during intercourse
- Bleeding between menstrual

periods

- Heavier periods
- Very often no symptoms

The incubation period is approximately three weeks but the period of communicability is unknown. Chlamydia can spread beyond the genital tract in both men and women causing complications.

Complications in Women:

- Inflammation of the lining of the uterus (endometritis).
- Inflammation of the fallopian tubes (salpingitis).
- Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).
- Chlamydia can cause eye infections in either sex.

Further complications may be recurring pain, infertility or tubal pregnancy:

Infants of infected mothers may develop eye infections or pneumonia passing through the birth canal. Symptoms may include longer, heavier, more painful periods, abnormal discharge, fever, weakness, lower abdominal pain, nausea and/or vomiting.

Complications in Men:

- Acute epididymitis (infection and swelling of the epididymis which is located in the scrotum).
- Reiter's syndrome which includes joint pain, eye inflammation and skin lesions.
- Chronic prostatitis (infection of the prostate gland).
- Chlamydia can cause eye infections in either sex.

Prevention

- Prevention of repeat infections requires partner treatment and detailed education about safer sexual practices.
- The use of a condom significantly

decreases the likelihood of getting Chlamydia and other STI's.

- Treatment of sexual contacts prevents recurrence.
- If you or a sexual partner has symptoms, seek testing.

Most physicians do not automatically screen for Chlamydia. It is important for sexually active women to get tested for Chlamydia annually during a routine pelvic exam since untreated infected individuals may become infertile.

Treatment

Persons with symptoms of the following conditions which are associated with Chlamydia should be treated for Chlamydia even without positive laboratory tests.

1. Nongonococcal urethritis (NGU)
2. Mucopurulent cervicitis (MPC)
3. Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)
4. Epididymitis

Treatment is usually antibiotics by mouth (Doxycycline or Azithromycin). If you are using birth control pills, you must use a back up method of birth control for the rest of the pill package. Erythromycin in high doses may be prescribed for pregnant women. Penicillin is not effective against chlamydia.

Douching is **NOT** recommended and could be harmful.

Sexual partners must be treated at the same time or the infection will return. Abstain from sex until all treatment of both partners is completed. Some people experience a recurrence of symptoms long after successful treatment. The cause is not entirely understood, but immediate reevaluation is recommended. Also a test of cure is recommended 3-6 weeks after treatment is completed. Revised 8.05

Published for the University of Maryland community.

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