

What is gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is a bacterial sexually transmitted infection (STI). It is spread through vaginal, anal or oral sex, or by the fingers and hands from the genitals to the eyes. It is less common in the general community than other STIs such as chlamydia. Gonorrhoea can infect the throat, rectum (back passage), urethra (urine passage), cervix (neck of the womb) and eyes. Gonorrhoea can be treated with antibiotics. Gonorrhoea can sometimes spread to the uterus and fallopian tubes in women causing pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and infertility. In rare cases it can also cause infertility in men.

How do you get gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is spread by having unprotected sex with someone who is infected. This means sex without a condom. This can include vaginal, anal or oral sex. Because the infection may have no symptoms, you won't be able to tell if your partner has it. You cannot get gonorrhoea from toilets, swimming pools, spas or normal contact with people.

How can I protect myself from gonorrhoea?

The best way to prevent getting gonorrhoea and other STIs is to have safe sex.

- use a condom every time you have vaginal, oral or anal sex
- don't have sex with someone who knows they have gonorrhoea, even with a condom, until after they have completed their treatment
- have regular testing if you are at risk of STIs

What are the symptoms of gonorrhoea infection?

Symptoms may appear 3-5 days after contact with the infection. Many women and some men may have no symptoms at all.

Men may experience:

- pain when passing urine
- a discharge from the penis
- pain in the testes (balls)
- redness around the opening of the penis
- anal discharge or discomfort

Women may experience:

- an unusual vaginal discharge
- pain when passing urine

- pelvic pain
- pain during sex
- irregular bleeding - bleeding in between periods or bleeding after sex
- anal discharge or discomfort

If gonorrhoea has infected the throat there are generally few symptoms. In some rare cases, gonorrhoea may cause other symptoms such as joint pain and swelling, and conjunctivitis (eye inflammation).

How do I get tested for gonorrhoea?

Men can have a urine test and, if there is a discharge, they can also have a swab taken from the end of the penis. Men who have sex with men should have regular swabs taken from the throat and anus. Women can have a urine test or have a swab taken from the vagina or cervix. A swab from the anus and throat may be taken when there has been anal or oral sex. These tests are not painful.

How is gonorrhoea treated?

Gonorrhoea is usually treated with an antibiotic injection. Sometimes a longer course of antibiotics is needed if you have a condition such as pelvic inflammatory disease. Your doctor may also recommend treatment for chlamydia at the same time - if a person has gonorrhoea it is common for them to have chlamydia as well. Chlamydia is treated with antibiotic tablets.

You should not have sex for 7 days after treatment, even using a condom, so that you don't pass on the infection to someone else, or get gonorrhoea again yourself. Your doctor may advise a follow-up test 2 weeks later and you should have another test for gonorrhoea 3 months after treatment to make sure you have not got the infection again.

What is contact tracing?

Your doctor will explain who needs to be contacted and treated if you have a gonorrhoea infection and can also help you with contact tracing. It is important to let your sexual partners know if you have gonorrhoea so that they can also get tested and treated. Contact tracing can be done confidentially. There are websites that let you send a free anonymous text message or email – just ask your doctor or nurse about it.

For more information

Family Planning NSW Talkline –

www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline or 1300 658 886

National Relay Service (for deaf people) –

13 36 77

TIS National's interpreting service –

131 450

Family Planning NSW Chlamydia Factsheet –

<https://www.fpnsw.org.au/health-information/individuals/stis/chlamydia>

Visit your nearest Family Planning NSW clinic –

www.fpnsw.org.au/clinics

NSW Sexual Health Infolink –

www.shil.nsw.gov.au or 1800 451 624

Let Them Know –

www.letthemknow.org.au