



Chlamydia

(kla-mid-ee-ah)

What is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) caused by a bacterium (germ). It is the most commonly reported STI in the United States.

How can a person get Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is spread when someone has vaginal, anal or oral sex with someone who is infected. Chlamydia can also be passed from mother to child during birth. It is passed through vaginal fluids and semen.

You can increase your risk of infection by:

- Having sex without using a latex or polyurethane condom
- Having multiple sex partners
- Having a different STI or HIV
- Having sex while high on drugs or under the influence of alcohol can increase your risk as this makes it less likely that condoms will be used correctly

Who can get Chlamydia?

Anyone who is sexually active can get Chlamydia. Having unprotected sex (sex without a condom) increases the chance of getting Chlamydia. In Boston, women under 24 years of age have the highest rates of Chlamydia.

What are the symptoms of Chlamydia?

Most people do not have symptoms. Symptoms may start about 1-3 weeks after being infected. For those who do have symptoms, the most common ones are:

For Women:

- Unusual discharge (yellowish or whitish fluid) from her vagina
- Pain and/or burning when she pees or during sex
- Pain in the stomach or back
- Bleeding even when it's not her period
- In more serious infections, fever

For Men:

- Unusual discharge (thick white or watery fluid) coming from the penis
- Pain and/or burning when he pees
- Less common symptoms include:
 - Heavy feeling and/or pain in the testicles
 - Pain, swelling or redness around the scrotum

Symptoms from **Anal Sex** may cause pain, discharge or bleeding from the rectum (bum). Symptoms from Oral Sex are very rare but can result in a sore throat.

How long can an infected person spread Chlamydia?

A person can spread Chlamydia to others from the time they become infected (by having unprotected sex with an infected partner) until they are treated. A person can spread Chlamydia to others even if they do not have symptoms. If you are taking medicine, do not have sex for 7 days after your treatment is over. It is important to know that you can get infected with Chlamydia many times.

How can I find out if I have Chlamydia?

The only way to know for sure if you have Chlamydia is to **get tested**. A healthcare provider may ask for a urine (pee) sample or may wipe the infected area with a swab to test for Chlamydia .

How often should I be tested?

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends **annual testing** for:
 - All sexually active women under 25 and,
 - People at high risk, including:
 - Those who have had unprotected sex,
 - Sex with multiple partners, or with a new partner or
- All women during pregnancy
- 3 months after treatment for a Sexually Transmitted Infection
- Every time you have a new partner if you are unsure of the partner's status

Where can I get tested?

Most health care providers offer testing for Chlamydia and other STIs. To find a health care center in a neighborhood near you, call the Mayor's Health Line at **617-534-5050 and Toll-Free: 1-800-847-0710** or visit <http://www.hivtest.org/STDTTesting.aspx> and enter your zip code.

Can Chlamydia be treated?

Yes, Chlamydia is easily treated. A single dose of antibiotics can cure Chlamydia. See your healthcare provider again if you still have symptoms after you have taken your medicine. Alternative treatments are available if you are allergic to the medicine usually prescribed.

Should my partner get treated?

Yes. Recent (within the last 60 days) or regular sex partners **must be treated** before having sex again so it is best to be treated at the same time. New regulations in Massachusetts allow partner's of patients with Chlamydia to be treated without needing to be tested. Ask your health care provider about this during your visit and for more information, read the **Expedited Partner Therapy** fact sheet available at www.bphc.org. It is important to know that you can get infected with Chlamydia many times and if your partner is not treated, you can be re-infected.

What happens if Chlamydia is not Treated?

If left untreated, Chlamydia can cause very serious health problems. Women can develop Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) which can cause infertility (unable to have children). Chlamydia can also increase your chances of getting other sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV or gonorrhea.

How can you protect yourself from getting Chlamydia?

The only 100% effective way to prevent Chlamydia is to not have sex.

If you do have sex, you can limit your risk by taking the following steps:

- Always use a latex or polyurethane condom or barrier (dental dam) when having anal, vaginal and/or oral sex
 - Condoms made from "natural" materials may protect against pregnancy but NOT STIs
- Reduce your number of partners if you choose to have sex
- Talk with your partner about their STI status and getting tested
- Talk with your health care provider about sex safety and getting tested
- Understand that having sex while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol can increase the likelihood of unprotected sex
- Contact your health care provider if you experience any symptoms



**For more information contact
Boston Public Health Commission
Infectious Disease Bureau
617-534-5611 or www.bphc.org**