

Auckland Sexual Health Service  
Free phone 0800 739 432

## What is Chlamydia?

- Chlamydia *trachomatis* is a sexually transmitted bacterial infection.
- In males it infects the urethra (tube inside the penis) and in women it infects the urethra and cervix (neck of the womb).
- It can also infect the rectum and sometimes the eyes and throat.

## How does someone get Chlamydia?

- Chlamydia is transmitted through contact with genital fluids from the penis and vagina.
- If you have vaginal sex or anal sex without a condom you may become infected. Sometimes oral sex can transmit the bacteria.
- Other sexual practices such as mutual masturbation or fingering may also result in the spread of infection.
- Chlamydia can be passed from mother to baby during birth. The baby may develop an eye or lung infection as a result.

## What are the symptoms?

- Many people do not develop any symptoms from a chlamydia infection.
- It can remain for months or even years if it is not treated.
- Chlamydia can be transmitted to others whether a person has symptoms or not.
- **Symptoms for Men can include:**
  - Soreness or redness at the opening of the penis.
  - Discomfort when passing urine.
  - Clear or whitish discharge from the penis.
- If not treated, chlamydia can spread to the testicles, leading to pain and swelling.
- It may occasionally cause infertility in men.
- Sometimes a condition called Reiter's disease or Sexually Acquired Reactive Arthritis (including arthritis, conjunctivitis and urethritis) can occur causing inflammation of eyes, skin and joints.
- Many men do not have any symptoms.

- **Symptoms for Women can include:**
  - Unusual vaginal discharge.
  - Unusual vaginal bleeding, especially after sex.
  - Lower abdominal pain, including pain during sexual intercourse.
  - Discomfort when passing urine.
- Most women do not have any symptoms.
- If not treated, Chlamydia may spread into the uterus (womb) and tubes resulting in Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), a condition that may cause infertility.
  
- Both men and women can have infection with Chlamydia in the rectum if they have anal sex. This may cause rectal discharge or discomfort, but often no symptoms occur.
- Chlamydia infection of the throat may occur, but is uncommon and usually does not cause any symptoms.

## How do I know if I have Chlamydia?

- The best way to find out if you have chlamydia is to have a sexual health check-up.
- Women need to have an examination if a full check-up is being done but sometimes just a urine sample is enough.
- Men need to give a urine sample to test for chlamydia.
- If rectal infection is suspected, a swab is taken from just inside the anus.

## How is Chlamydia treated?

- Chlamydia is easily treated with antibiotic tablets.
- This may be a 7-day course or a single dose treatment.
- It is important to finish all the antibiotics; otherwise the infection may not be properly treated.

## Does my partner need treatment?

- If you have had sex without a condom with your sexual partner(s) it is very likely that they are infected with Chlamydia.
- It is important that they have a sexual health check-up and treatment for Chlamydia even if they have no symptoms and even if they have a negative Chlamydia test.

## Important advice for someone infected with Chlamydia?

- Finish all the antibiotics – symptoms may resolve in a few days but the bacteria may still be there.
- Sexual intercourse without a condom during treatment should be avoided because the infection can still be transmitted.
- If you receive single dose therapy you should avoid sex without a condom for 7 days after treatment and until 7 days after your partner(s) have been treated.
- If you are using a combined oral contraceptive pill you need to use a condom for 14 days as antibiotics can affect the reliability of the pill. Ask your doctor or nurse if unsure.
- We recommend you have a Chlamydia test as part of a sexual health check-up 3 months after you have completed treatment to check you have not been re-infected.

This fact sheet is designed to provide you with information on disease. It is not intended to replace the need for a consultation with your doctor. All clients are strongly advised to check with their doctor about any specific questions or concerns they may have. Every effort has been taken to ensure that the information in this pamphlet is correct at the time of publishing (June 2007).