



Gonorrhea

(Clap)

What is gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted disease caused by the bacterium *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*.

Who is at risk for gonorrhea?

Any sexually active person can be infected with gonorrhea. The greater the number of sex partners, the greater the risk of infection. Since gonorrhea can also be spread by oral or anal sex, men who have sex with men are also at risk for infection.

What are the symptoms of gonorrhea?

Most females have mild or no symptoms. If symptoms do occur in females, they may include abnormal vaginal discharge, burning or pain during urination or bowel movement, lower abdominal pain, bleeding between menstrual periods or anal discomfort. Although many men may have no symptoms, symptoms may include discharge from the penis, burning or pain during urination or bowel movement or anal discomfort. If untreated, gonorrhea infections can cause serious and permanent reproductive and other health problems in both females and males.

How soon do symptoms appear?

If symptoms do occur, they usually appear two to seven days after exposure.

How is gonorrhea spread?

Gonorrhea is spread by vaginal, oral or anal sex. Gonorrhea also can be passed from an infected mother to her baby during delivery.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

A person can spread the infection as long as he or she is infected and untreated.

How is a person diagnosed?

Laboratory tests are available to diagnose gonorrhea. Some can be performed on urine, while others require that a specimen be collected from a site such as the cervix, penis, rectum or throat.

What is the treatment?

Gonorrhea can be treated and cured with antibiotics. All sex partners should be tested and treated at the same time.

Does past infection make a person immune?

No. A person can be reinfected again and again after treatment.

Should adolescents or others be excluded from school, work or other activities if they have gonorrhea?

No. Since gonorrhea is transmitted through sexual contact only, exclusion is not necessary.

What can be done to prevent the spread of gonorrhea?

The most effective way to reduce the spread of gonorrhea is to abstain from sexual contact or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and is known to be uninfected. Latex condoms, when used consistently and correctly, can reduce the risk of gonorrhea. A latex condom should be used for oral sex on the penis, and a latex barrier should be used for oral sex on the vagina or anus. Additionally, to reduce the spread of infection, the number of sex partners should be limited, and a person should be tested if infection is suspected. Sex partners should be notified, tested and treated immediately if a person is infected.

Additional Information:

Additional information is available at www.ndhealth.gov/disease or by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

This disease is a reportable condition. As mandated by North Dakota law, any incidence of this disease shall be reported to the North Dakota Department of Health.

Resource: American Academy of Pediatrics. [Section 3, Summaries of Infectious Diseases]. In: Pickering LK, ed. *Red Book: 2003 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*. 26th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2003:[page 285]

