

I'M CHLAMYDIA Positive, Now What?

What Is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a common, easily cured sexually transmitted disease (STD) that can infect both men and women. You can get chlamydia by having vaginal, anal or oral sex with someone who has chlamydia. It is estimated that one in 20 sexually active young women aged 14 to 24 years has chlamydia.

What Does Having Chlamydia Mean for My Health?

Most people who have chlamydia have no symptoms. If you do have symptoms, they may not appear until several weeks after you have sex with an infected partner. Even when chlamydia causes no symptoms, it can damage your reproductive system. Females may experience an abnormal vaginal discharge and males may have a discharge from the penis. Men and women may also have a burning sensation when urinating and can also get infected with chlamydia in their rectum, either by having receptive anal sex or by spread from another infected site (such as the vagina). While these infections often cause no symptoms, they can cause rectal pain, discharge or bleeding. With proper treatment, you can be cured. When medication is taken properly, it will stop the infection and could decrease your chances of having complications.

What Are the First Steps I Should Take to Manage My Infection?

If you test positive for chlamydia, you should visit with your doctor or health care provider to discuss treatment for you and your sexual partners, as well as additional testing you may need.

How Do I Find a Doctor?

Many different types of health care providers can treat chlamydia. The health care provider that tested you will be able to treat your chlamydia infection. Additional providers can be found at this website:

www.ndhealth.gov/STD/FindProvider.

Is There a Cure for Chlamydia?

Yes, chlamydia can be cured with the right antibiotics.

How Is Chlamydia Treated?

Chlamydia infections can be cured with antibiotics. It is important that you take all the medication your doctor prescribes to cure your infection. You should not have sex again until you and your sex partner(s) have completed treatment. If your doctor prescribes a single dose of medication, you should wait seven days after taking the medicine before having sex. If your doctor prescribes a medicine for you to take for seven days, you should wait until you have taken all of the doses before having sex.

Repeat infection with chlamydia is common. You should be tested again about three months after you are treated, even if your sex partner(s) was treated.

What Happens If I Don't Get Treated?

The initial damage that chlamydia causes often goes unnoticed. However, chlamydia can lead to serious health problems. If you are a woman, untreated chlamydia can spread to your uterus and fallopian tubes (tubes that carry fertilized eggs from the ovaries to the uterus), causing pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID often has no symptoms; however, some women may have abdominal and pelvic pain. Even if it doesn't cause symptoms initially, PID can cause permanent damage to your reproductive system and lead to long-term pelvic pain, inability to get pregnant and potentially deadly ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside the uterus). Men rarely have health problems linked to chlamydia. However, infection sometimes spreads to the tube that carries sperm from the testicles, causing pain and fever. Untreated chlamydia may also increase your chances of getting or giving HIV—the virus that causes AIDS.

How Can I Protect Myself and Others?

Taking your medication as instructed and also not having sex for seven days after treatment will ensure that you have been appropriately treated. In addition,

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ensuring that your current and past sexual partners (for the last three months) have been treated will decrease your chance of becoming re-infected with chlamydia.

The only way to avoid STDs is to not have vaginal, anal or oral sex. If you are sexually active, being in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has negative STD test results and using latex condoms the right way every time you have sex are the best ways to protect yourself. If you continue to be at risk for chlamydia, you should be tested at least annually.

I'm Pregnant. How Does Chlamydia Affect My Baby?

If you are pregnant and have chlamydia, you can pass the infection to your baby during delivery. This could cause an eye infection or pneumonia in your newborn. Having chlamydia may also increase the likelihood of an early delivery.

If you are pregnant, you should be tested for chlamydia at your first prenatal visit. Testing and treatment are the best ways to prevent health problems.

Does Being Treated Mean I Am Immune to Chlamydia?

No. Repeat infection with chlamydia is common. All persons who are at risk should be screened at least annually for chlamydia.

Do I Need to be Excluded from Work, Child Care, School or Other Activities?

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

Who Do I Need to Tell About My Infection?

You should tell your current sexual partners and all sexual partners that you have had in the last three months so they can be tested and treated for

chlamydia. It may be awkward, but telling partners about STDs is the right thing to do.

How Do I Tell Others?

Being diagnosed with an STD while in a relationship can bring up lots of emotions. You may question your trust in your partner. Your partner may be upset, even angry, and that can be hard to deal with. Before blaming your partner for infidelity, keep in mind that some STDs don't always show up right away. It's possible that you or your partner got the STD in a previous relationship without even knowing it. The most helpful thing you can do is listen to your partner's concerns and fears and offer information about the STD and its symptoms. Give your partner time to take in the information. The most important thing to remember is that you and your partner both need to get medical care as soon as possible. If you and your partner have already had sex, stop having sex until you can both get tested. Talk to a doctor. You will probably need to take medicine as part of your treatment. Take all the medicine exactly as your doctor prescribes.

The North Dakota Department of Health can contact your partners without releasing your information to notify them that they have been exposed to an STD and provide information on how to get tested. Your health care provider may be able to help you notify your sexual partners as well. There are also anonymous partner notification tools such as <https://dontspreadit.com> or www.inspot.org that can notify your partners through email or text message. Telling partners about STDs is the right thing to do.

Additional Information

- www.ndhealth.gov/STD
- North Dakota Department of Health
 - 800.472.2180
- www.cdc.gov/STD