

Gonorrhea

Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) that can cause infections in the genitals, rectum, throat, joints and it can even spread through the body. It is a common infection, especially among young people ages 15-24 years.

Most women with gonorrhea do not have any symptoms. The cervix is the reservoir where the bacteria can sit undisturbed for a while. Even when a woman has symptoms, they are often mild and can be mistaken for a bladder or vaginal infection. Symptoms include painful or burning sensation when urinating, increased vaginal discharge and bleeding between periods.

Women with gonorrhea are at risk of developing serious complications from the infection, even if they don't have any symptoms. In more advanced stages, it can cause moderate to severe pain in the lower abdomen and pelvis, caused by the spread of the bacteria to the fallopian tubes (Pelvic Inflammatory Disease, or PID). PID can then lead to infertility, increased risk of tubal pregnancy, or chronic pelvic pain. Fortunately, most cases are diagnosed before the infection has a chance to spread up from the vagina and cervix. A pregnant woman with Chlamydia, if untreated, can give the infection to her baby during childbirth.

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 been tested and has negative STD test results and using condoms the right way every time are the best prevention strategies

If you are a sexually active women younger than 25 years or an older woman with risk factors such as new or multiple sex partners, or a sex partner who has a sexually transmitted infection, you should be tested for gonorrhea every year.

To make a diagnosis, a swab for Gonorrhea (and Chlamydia) can be collected from the vagina (this is the most accurate), either as a self administered test or by a health care provider, or directly from the cervix (by a health care professional). The urine test for Gonorrhea is less accurate than the vaginal test.

If you or your sexual partner are diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection like chlamydia, you should have testing for other infections,

including HIV, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis, and syphilis.

Gonorrhea can be cured with the right treatment, although it is becoming harder to treat some gonorrhea, as drug-resistant strains of gonorrhea are increasing. Because they often coexist, treatment for Chlamydia is also provided.

To avoid getting infected with gonorrhea again or spreading gonorrhea, you and your sex partner(s) should be both treated, and avoid having sex for at least 7 days until you have each completed treatment.

If your symptoms continue for more than a few days after receiving treatment, you should return to be checked again.

It is recommended that anyone who received treatment have another vaginal swab for gonorrhea three to six months after their diagnosis, because many people (as many as 25 percent in some studies) are re-infected from untreated sexual partners.

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