
Non-specific urethritis (NSU)

Summary

- Non-specific urethritis (NSU) is inflammation of a man's urethra that is not caused by gonorrhoea (a sexually transmissible infection).
 - Symptoms of NSU can be very mild and may be overlooked.
 - Untreated NSU can have serious complications.
 - NSU is treated with antibiotics.
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Non-specific urethritis (NSU) means any inflammation of a man's urethra (the tube that carries urine from the bladder to the outside) that is not caused by gonorrhoea (a sexually transmissible infection). It is sometimes called non-gonococcal urethritis (NGU). Several organisms can cause NSU but, in many cases, the specific organism can't be identified.

The infection can easily be caught through vaginal sex. It can also be acquired through anal or oral sex, although this is less common. NSU can sometimes occur without being sexually transmitted.

Symptoms of Non-specific urethritis (NSU)

Symptoms can be very mild and may be overlooked. They occur two to four weeks after infection and include:

- a clear or white discharge from the penis
- a burning sensation while urinating. Sometimes the pain occurs without the discharge
- pain and swelling in the testicles. This may be a sign of an advanced infection.

Complications of untreated NSU

If left undetected and untreated, NSU can lead to:

- spread of the infection into the prostate or testicles
- infertility – this can occur in extreme cases
- spread of the infection to a female partner who may develop pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which can cause infertility.

Treatment for NSU

NSU is treated with antibiotics. Remember that you must finish all the antibiotics prescribed for you, even if the symptoms have disappeared.

Recurrences of NSU

Although NSU is fairly easy to treat, in some cases, it is difficult to get rid of and symptoms may return. It will eventually clear up with the correct treatment.

Condom use effectively prevents NSU

The best way to prevent NSU is to always use condoms when you have sex. The rules for using condoms properly include:

- Open the packet carefully so that you don't tear the condom.
 - Pinch the tip of the condom before carefully rolling it down the entire shaft of the erect penis.
 - Do not use spit, Vaseline, baby oil or other oil-based lubricants.
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- Use water-based lubricants such as KY, Muko or Wet Stuff.
- Withdraw the penis before the erection is lost, so that the condom does not fall off. Hold the base of the condom to prevent spills.
- Store condoms in a cool dry place and check the expiry date.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Melbourne Sexual Health Centre Tel. (03) 9341 6200 or 1800 032 017 or TTY (for the hearing impaired) (03) 9347 8619
- Family Planning Victoria Tel. 1800 013 952 or (03) 9257 0100 or (03) 9257 0116
- Action Centre (for youth) Tel. (03) 9660 4700 or 1800 013 952

Things to remember

- Non-specific urethritis (NSU) is inflammation of a man's urethra that is not caused by gonorrhoea (a sexually transmissible infection).
- Symptoms of NSU can be very mild and may be overlooked.
- Untreated NSU can have serious complications.
- NSU is treated with antibiotics.

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

Department of Health and Human Services - RHP&R - Health Protection - Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit

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