Gonorrhea

Gonorrhea
Summary

- Gonorrhoea is a sexually transmissible infection.
- It may occur without symptoms, especially in women.
- Gonorrhoea can lead to infertility in women if left untreated.
- Use condoms (male and female) and dams to prevent gonorrhoea infection.
- Anyone who is sexually active should be tested for gonorrhoea.

What is gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is a sexually transmissible infection caused by the bacterium Neisseria gonorrhoeae. It usually affects the genital area, although the throat or anus (back passage) may also be affected. Gonorrhoea affects both men and women and is easily transmitted during vaginal sex. It can also be transmitted during anal or oral sex.

Symptoms of gonorrhoea

The symptoms of gonorrhoea are slightly different in men and women.

Symptoms of gonorrhoea in women

Often, women with gonorrhoea experience no symptoms. This can lead to gonorrhoea going undetected for longer in women than in men (who more often experience symptoms), if not tested for regularly.

Symptoms of gonorrhoea in women may include:

- an unusual discharge from the vagina
- pain while urinating
- pain during sex.

Symptoms of gonorrhoea in men

Gonorrhoea commonly infects the inside of the penis (the urethra). Symptoms of gonorrhoea in men may include:

- a burning sensation while urinating
- a white or yellow pus-like discharge from the penis (may be observed in underwear)
- swelling and pain in the testicles, which can occur if the gonorrhoea infection goes untreated.

In a small percentage of men there are no symptoms at all.

Symptoms of oral and anal gonorrhoea

In both men and women:

- Anal gonorrhoea often occurs without signs or symptoms.
- Gonorrhoea in the throat may cause a sore throat, however, it usually occurs without symptoms.

Treatment of gonorrhoea

Gonorrhoea is treated with antibiotics. Some strains of gonorrhoea are now resistant to many antibiotics.

Your GP will know what antibiotic to prescribe based on the current treatment guidelines. Tell your GP if you have been travelling overseas because many of the new resistant strains have originated outside Australia.

Untreated gonorrhoea can lead to infertility in women

If left untreated, gonorrhoea can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in women, which can cause infertility. Symptoms of PID include:

- lower abdominal pain and tenderness
- deep pain during sexual intercourse
- heavy and painful periods
- fever.
Women who have had PID need to be especially careful about gonorrhoea and chlamydia, because the risk of infertility increases with each bout of inflammation, especially if left untreated for long periods.

Test for gonorrhoea

Because gonorrhoea may not cause symptoms until PID has already developed, it is recommended that sexually active women who have recently had a change of sexual partner or feel they may be at risk of a sexually transmissible infection (STI) have a test for gonorrhoea.

Prevention of gonorrhoea

The best protection against gonorrhoea is to always use barrier protection such as condoms, female condoms and dams (a thin piece of latex placed over the anus or vulva during oral sex). Condoms and dams can be used for oro-vaginal sex and oro-anal sex to help prevent the spread of infection.

Where to get help

- Your doctor / GP
- Your school nurse or school welfare coordinator
- Some secondary schools provide access to an adolescent health trained GP on site
- Your local community health service
- Family Planning Victoria’s Action Centre Tel. 1800 013 952 or (03) 9257 0100 (also is youth friendly)
- Family Planning Victoria Tel. 1800 013 952 or (03) 9257 0100
- Melbourne Sexual Health Centre Tel. (03) 9341 6200 or 1800 032 017 or TTY (for the hearing impaired) (03) 9347 8619
- Thorne Harbour Health (formerly Victorian AIDS Council) Tel. (03) 9865 6700 or 1800 134 840
- The Centre Clinic, W Kilda Tel. (03) 9525 5866
- Equinox Gender Diverse Health Centre Tel. (03) 9416 2889
- PRONTO Tel. (03) 9416 2889
- Ballarat Community Health Sexual Health Clinic Tel. (03) 5338 4500
- Bendigo Community Health Sexual Health Clinic Tel. (03) 5434 4300 Or (03) 5448 1600
- Gateway Health Clinic M, Wodonga Tel. (03) 6022 8888 or 1800657 573
- Sunraysia Community Health Services Tel. (03) 5022 5444
- Barwon Health Sexual Health Clinic Tel. (03) 5226 7489
- Victorian SuperCare Pharmacies
- 1800MyOptions Tel. 1800 069 7684 is a statewide phone service for information about sexual health as well as contraception and pregnancy options

References

- Gonorrhoea diagnosis and management, 2016, SA Health, Government of South Australia.
- Gonorrhoea, Patient Information Sheet, North East Valley Division of General Practice, Victoria, Australia
- Australian STI Management Guidelines
- RACGP – Sexually Transmissible Infections.

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- ring NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24.

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More information

Sexually transmissible infections

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active Tab

- STIs explained
- Preventing STIs
- STI conditions
- HIV and AIDS

STIs explained

- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
  
  It is not difficult to avoid catching sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Preventing STIs

- Safe sex
  
  Safe sex is sexual contact that doesn't involve the exchange of semen, vaginal fluids or blood between partners.

STI conditions

- Chlamydia
  
  Chlamydia is often called the 'silent infection' because most people do not realise they have it.

- Genital warts
Genital warts are one of the most common sexually transmissible infections.

**Gonorrhoea**

Gonorrhoea, also spelt gonorrhea, affects both men and women and is transmitted during sex, it may lead to infertility in women if left untreated.

**Hepatitis B**

Hepatitis B is a viral infection that affects the liver and can lead to serious illness or death.

**HIV and women – having children**

Women living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), or women whose partner is HIV-positive, may wish to have children but feel concerned about the risk of transmission of the virus to themselves if...

**Molluscum contagiosum**

Molluscum contagiosum can be mistaken for genital warts or pimples, check with your doctor for an accurate diagnosis.

**Salpingitis**

Salpingitis is one of the most common causes of female infertility and may permanently damage the fallopian tubes.

**Syphilis**

If you are infected with syphilis and do not seek treatment, you can remain infectious for up to two years.

**Trichomoniasis**

Trichomoniasis during pregnancy may lead to low birth weight babies and prematurity.

**HIV and AIDS**

**HIV**

In Australia, HIV is most commonly spread when having sex without a condom and when sharing needles and other injecting equipment.

**HIV and men – safer sex**

HIV transmission can occur from men to women and from women to men as well as between men who have sex with men.

**HIV and women – having children**

Women living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), or women whose partner is HIV-positive, may wish to have children but feel concerned about the risk of transmission of the virus to themselves if...

**HIV and women – safer sex**

Practising safe sex is important, whether your partner is HIV-positive or not.

**HIV, hepatitis and sport**

People with HIV or hepatitis B or C participate in a wide range of sports without restrictions, and the risk of transmission to another player is extremely small.

**HIV - infection control in hospitals**

Hospitals follow strict infection control guidelines to prevent the spread of HIV to patients.

**Related Information**

**Bird flu (avian influenza)**

The symptoms of bird flu in humans are similar to those of regular influenza.

**Flu (influenza)**

Influenza (the flu) is caused by a virus. The flu is more than just a bad cold and can occasionally lead to serious complications, including death. Specific antiviral medication is available. It is...

**Genital warts**

Genital warts are one of the most common sexually transmissible infections.

**Genital herpes**

Many people with genital herpes are not aware that they have the infection, because they have no symptoms.

**Chlamydia**

Chlamydia is often called the 'silent infection' because most people do not realise they have it...
Whats going on down there

Most women at some stage in their lives experience a vaginal infection…and wonder ‘What’s Going On Down There?’

What's going on down there?
iSpy STI

iSpy STI provides an easy to use, sexual health symptom checker for people who may have a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

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