

## FACTSHEET: Chlamydia

**Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted bacterial infection caused by *Chlamydia trachomatis*. It is treatable and curable.**

### How is Chlamydia spread?

Chlamydia is the most common bacterial sexually transmitted infection (STI) in Canada. It is caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*. Chlamydia infections are most common in youth/young adults 15-24 years of age. Chlamydia is spread through unprotected vaginal, anal and oral sex with an infected partner.

### What are the symptoms?

Most people do not have symptoms. Chlamydia can affect the cervix and urethra and occasionally the rectum, throat and eye. Some people may have the following symptoms two to six weeks after exposure:

- Increased discharge from vagina or penis
- Painful urination
- Lower abdominal pain
- Frequent urination
- Pain during sex
- Testicular pain or inflammation
- Inflammation around tip of penis

### How is Chlamydia diagnosed?

Testing can be done at a family physician's office, public health unit, walk-in clinic or

emergency department.

The test is usually a urine sample but sometimes a physician may request a swab taken from the infected area (cervix, vagina, urethra, anus and throat).

Ask your health care provider to take a swab while a pap test is being performed.

### Is follow-up important?

Repeat testing is recommended 6 months after treatment since you may be at increased risk of reinfection. Tests of cure are not necessary if treatment was taken correctly, symptoms (if any) have resolved, and there has been no re-exposure to an untreated partner.

### How is Chlamydia treated?

Chlamydia is treated with a specific antibiotic (free at a public health unit) that is prescribed by a doctor. In order to cure chlamydia, it is important to take medication as directed. It is also important to avoid unprotected sexual contact (use a condom or dental dam) for 7 days after you and your partner(s) have received treatment.

Treatment is appropriate for people who tested positive for chlamydia, people who have had contact with a confirmed case of chlamydia, and people who have tested positive for gonorrhea.

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## Considerations and possible complications

If left untreated, chlamydia infections can cause:

- Pelvic inflammatory disease
- Inflammation around testicles or prostate
- Reiter's syndrome (rash, sores, joint pain)
- Infertility
- Chronic pelvic pain
- Risk of ectopic pregnancy
- Increased risk of acquiring HIV

## How can I reduce my chances of getting and spreading Chlamydia?

Consider not having sex with a new partner until test results come in. Use condoms or a dental dam every time, even if you are using another form of birth control. Talk to your partner about testing and barriers to using condoms. Do not share sex toys.

If you are under the age of 25, consider getting screened every year.

## When should I get tested?

Get tested after your last partner, when starting a new relationship, every year or with a physical exam, or if the condom broke or after having unprotected sex.

## What if I'm pregnant?

It is possible to pass a Chlamydia infection on to a baby during birth. All pregnant women are screened on the first prenatal visit. There is treatment available which is safe for mother and baby.

Source: Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections 2010 Update Edition

## For more information contact:

### Woodstock

Sexual Health Department  
410 Buller St.  
Woodstock, ON

Call 519-539-4431 or toll-free: 1-800-922-0096

### St. Thomas

Sexual Health Department  
1230 Talbot St.  
St. Thomas, ON

Call 519-631-9900 or toll free: 1-800-922-0096 x1278

