

Gonorrhea

What is gonorrhea?

- Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by bacterium *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*.
- Most cases are in young adults (<30 years).
- Over the years, gonorrhea has become harder to treat because there are more drug-resistant strains of gonorrhea in many parts of the world and Canada.

How is gonorrhea spread?

- Gonorrhea is spread through unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex with an infected person.
- A pregnant woman with gonorrhea can pass the infection to the baby during pregnancy or childbirth.

What are the signs and symptoms of gonorrhea?

- Many people who are infected with gonorrhea do not know it because they don't have symptoms.
- Symptoms can occur in different parts of the body where the infection is (genitals, throat, rectum).
- Males who have symptoms may have pain or burning when peeing or white, yellow or green discharge from the penis. Sometimes they may have painful or swollen testicles.
- Females who have symptoms may have different vaginal discharge, pain during sex, pain or burning when peeing or pelvic pain.
- Females may have spotting between periods or after sex.
- Infections in the throat do not usually cause symptoms.
- Symptoms of rectal infections may include discharge, anal itching, soreness, bleeding or painful bowel movements.
- Symptoms may appear 2-7 days after contact.

What are the long-term problems if gonorrhea is not treated?

- In women, the reproductive body parts (fallopian tubes and ovaries) may become infected, which may lead to chronic pelvic pain, tubal pregnancy or infertility (not being able to have a baby).
- Men can have swelling of the urethra and testicles, which can cause infertility.
- The infection may spread to the blood or joints and can be life-threatening.
- People with gonorrhea can get human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) more easily.
- People with HIV can spread it more easily if they are also infected with gonorrhea.
- A pregnant woman can pass the infection to her baby at birth. This can cause blindness, joint infection, or a life-threatening blood infection in the baby.

How is gonorrhea diagnosed?

- Usually, a urine sample is sent for testing.
- A swab of the urethra, cervix, throat or rectum may also be taken to determine the most appropriate treatment.
- Regular STI testing is recommended for most people having unprotected sex, especially for those with multiple sexual partners.
- Talk to your public health nurse, nurse practitioner or doctor about your risk for sexually transmitted infections (including HIV) and how to get tested.

How is gonorrhea treated?

- Antibiotics can cure gonorrhea;
- However, there are drug-resistant strains of gonorrhea in many parts of the world and Canada making successful treatment more difficult.
- Antibiotics are available **free of charge** from health care providers or sexual health clinic.
- In most cases, the medication is an injection.
- You may be given a second medication to treat a common infection that may not be diagnosed.
- Your sexual partner(s) must be tested and treated.
- You and your partner must abstain from unprotected sex for seven days after both of you have finished antibiotic treatment or you will get the infection again.

For more information contact your local public health/community health office, your physician, nurse practitioner, HealthLine at 811. OR find a local sexual health clinic near you at

<https://sexlifesask.ca/local-clinics>

Will I need to be re-tested?

- Re-testing is important to make sure the infection is gone and usually should be done 4-5 days after treatment has been completed. It is especially important if:
 - Second choice medications were used
 - The infection was in the throat or rectum
 - You are pregnant
 - The infection was caused by a resistant strain of gonorrhea
 - Treatment failure has occurred previously
 - There is a re-exposure to an untreated partner
 - If symptoms continue after treatment

What will decrease my risk of getting gonorrhea?

- The surest way to prevent all STIs is to abstain from any sexual contact or to have sex with one partner who has been tested for STIs and is not infected (mutually monogamous).
- Use condoms each time you have sex (including oral, anal and vaginal sex).
- Limit the number of sexual partners you have.
- Get tested before each new partner.