

# Chlamydia - Patient information leaflet

## Key points

Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted infection  
It is easily passed from one person to another during sex, including oral sex  
It often causes no symptoms  
Treatment is simple  
If chlamydia is not treated it can cause serious long term health problems  
You can protect yourself by ALWAYS using condoms when you have sex

## What is chlamydia?

- ❖ Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted infection. It is caused by a bacterium called *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

## How do you get chlamydia?

- ❖ You can catch chlamydia when you have sex with someone who already has the infection. This can be by vaginal sex, oral sex or anal sex.
- ❖ The infection is more common in young people, people who frequently change sexual partners and people who do not use condoms during sex.
- ❖ Even if you have had chlamydia before, you can still catch it again

## What are the symptoms of chlamydia?

More than 70% of women and 50% of men who have chlamydia do not have any genital symptoms when they are infected. Infection in the rectum and throat usually causes no symptoms at all.

- ❖ The most common symptoms in women are
  - A change in the colour or smell or amount of discharge from the vagina
  - Bleeding between periods or heavier periods
  - Bleeding after sex
  - Burning feeling when passing urine
  - There may be pain or discomfort in the lower abdomen
- ❖ The most common symptoms in men are
  - Burning when passing urine
  - Discharge from the end of the penis
  - There may be pain or discomfort in the testicles

## Do I need any tests?

- ❖ Yes, a sample from the genital area is needed to make the diagnosis. In some places a urine test may be used.
- ❖ If you think you have been in contact with chlamydia, or other infections, or have symptoms that could be chlamydia you should visit your family doctor or local sexual health or venereology/dermatology clinic.

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- ❖ The doctor or a specialist nurse will take a swab (sample) from the penis, vagina or cervix (neck of the womb) and send it to a laboratory where it will be tested for *Chlamydia trachomatis*. If you have had oral or anal sex, the doctor may also take swabs from your throat and anus. In some situations you may be able to take the swab yourself.
- ❖ If you have chlamydia, you should also be tested for other sexually transmitted infections such as HIV, syphilis, hepatitis B and gonorrhoea, as you can have more than one infection at the same time.

### What is the treatment for chlamydia?

- ❖ It is important to receive treatment for chlamydia as quickly as possible, as the infection can cause complications and serious health problems if it is left untreated.
- ❖ Chlamydia is treated with antibiotic tablets, usually azithromycin or doxycycline.

### Should I have sex if I have chlamydia?

- ❖ You should avoid any sex, even with a condom, until after both you and your partner have finished all your treatment and your symptoms have gone.

### What are the possible complications of chlamydia?

- ❖ Chlamydia is unlikely to lead to any long-term problems if it is treated quickly. However, without treatment chlamydia can cause serious problems.
- ❖ Women can develop pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). This can cause abdominal and pelvic pain. It can also lead to infertility and ectopic pregnancy (a pregnancy that occurs outside the womb). Men may develop a painful infection in their testicles.
- ❖ In rare cases, chlamydia may cause other symptoms such as arthritis (swollen joints) and inflammation of the eyes. This is more common in men.

### Chlamydia and pregnancy

- ❖ If you are pregnant, chlamydia can be passed from you to your baby during birth. This can lead to an infection of their eyes (conjunctivitis), and / or a chest infection.

### Do I need to tell my partner?

- ❖ If you do have chlamydia, it is essential that your current sexual partner, and any other sexual partner you have had over the last two months, is tested and treated.
- ❖ This is to stop you getting the infection again, and to prevent your partner(s) getting complications.

### Further help and information

- ❖ If you suspect that you have chlamydia or any other sexually transmitted infection, then see your family doctor or local sexual health or venereology/dermatology clinic.