

# CHLAMYDIAL INFECTION

(Chlamydia)



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

An infection caused by a bacterium. It causes inflammation of the urethra (the tube that allows urine from the bladder to pass outside the body), vagina, cervix, uterus, fallopian tubes, ovaries, penis, and anus. It is a common sexually transmitted disease in the United States. It can affect anyone who is sexually active. Chlamydial infection may also be transmitted to the eyes or lungs of a newborn infant.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Sometimes there are no symptoms during the early stages.
- Women commonly have more symptoms than men.
- Vaginal discharge.
- Urethral discharge (males).
- Anal swelling, pain, or discharge.
- Vagina or tip of the penis becomes reddened.
- Stomach pain.
- Fever.
- Pain when urinating.
- Genital discomfort or pain.

### CAUSES

*Chlamydia trachomatis* bacteria. Symptoms may appear 1 to 3 weeks after exposure. It is spread by:

- Vaginal sexual intercourse.
- Anal sexual intercourse.
- Oral-genital contact.
- Vaginal infection during delivery of a newborn, which may infect the baby.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Sexually active men and women.
- Unprotected sexual activity, especially in young females.
- Having other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Multiple sex partners.
- Diabetes.
- General poor health.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Practice safe sex. Do not have sexual intercourse with an infected partner. If unsure, have your sexual partner wear a condom for sexual activity.

### EXPECTED OUTCOME

Complete cure with adequate antibiotic treatment.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Infertility and/or sterility in female.
- Infecting one's sexual partner.
- Infections in pelvic organs, genitals, or rectum.
- Ectopic pregnancy.
- Liver infection (perihepatitis).
- Reiter's syndrome (a type of arthritis).



## DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do an exam of the genital area. Medical tests may include vaginal smear, rectal smear, and urethral smear for analysis. Testing for other sexually transmitted diseases is recommended.
- Treatment is with antibiotic drugs. All sexual partners must be treated.
- Keep the genital area clean. Use plain unscented soap. Take showers rather than baths.
- Women should wear cotton underpants or pantyhose with a cotton crotch. Avoid those made from non-ventilating materials, such as nylon.
- After urination or bowel movements, cleanse by wiping or washing from front to back (vagina to anus).
- Avoid douches.
- If urinating causes burning, urinate through a tubular device, such as a toilet-paper roll or plastic cup with the bottom cut out, or pour a cup of warm water over the genital area while urinating.
- A follow-up medical exam may be needed after completing the prescribed treatment.

### MEDICATION

Oral antibiotics are usually prescribed. Antibiotics may interfere with the effectiveness of some birth control pills. If you are currently taking birth control pills, discuss this with your health care provider.

### ACTIVITY

Avoid sexual relations until treatment is completed and symptoms are gone.

### DIET

No special diet.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of chlamydial infection.
- Symptoms last longer than one week or get worse.
- Unusual vaginal bleeding or swelling develops.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.

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Special notes:

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