

# GONORRHEA



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

An infection caused by a sexually transmitted disease (STD). In males, it usually involves the urethra (urine canal). In females, it usually involves the cervix and, sometimes, the urethra. In both sexes, the rectum, throat and other body parts may be involved. Gonorrhea can affect anyone (even young children) who has sexual contact with an infected person. It most often occurs in younger persons (ages 15 to 29), and in men more than in women.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Symptoms usually begin 2 to 5 days, or up to 30 days after being exposed. Females have few or no symptoms. Males usually have symptoms.
- Burning sensation when urinating.
- White to yellow-green discharge from the urethra.
- Rectal discomfort and discharge (sometimes).
- Sore throat (mild).
- Females may have abdominal cramps.
- Conjunctivitis (eye inflammation). This occurs when the person touches infected genitals and then the eyes.
- If the infection spreads to other body parts: joint pain, low fever, rash, headache, neck pain, and stiffness.

### CAUSES

Infection from *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, a bacteria. It grows easily on delicate, moist tissue. The bacteria is transmitted sexually (vaginal, anal, or oral sex). It can be spread from mother to child during birth.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Any sexually active persons.
- Having sex with an infected person.
- Multiple sexual partners, whether heterosexual or homosexual.
- Child sexual abuse.
- Passage of newborn through the infected birth canal of the mother.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Abstain from sexual activity.
- Avoid sexual partners whose health practices and status are uncertain.
- Use a latex condom during sexual intercourse.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Usually curable in 1 to 2 weeks with treatment.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Persons who have no symptoms are at risk for complications and can unknowingly spread the infection.
- Spread from mother to child during birth. This can cause serious complications in the newborn.
- Blood poisoning (gonococcal septicemia).
- Infectious arthritis.

- Pelvic inflammatory disease in females (PID), which can lead to infertility.
- Heart inflammation or infection around the liver.
- Epididymitis (which can lead to infertility), prostate problems, and urethral scarring in males.
- Risk of getting HIV is higher.



## DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and a pelvic exam. Medical tests may include blood and urine studies and studies of the discharge from the vagina, urethra, rectum, throat, or eyes. Tests for other sexually transmitted diseases are usually done. Other tests may be done if complications are suspected.
- Treatment is with antibiotic drugs. Follow-up tests may be done to confirm a cure. If the eyes are involved, an eye doctor (ophthalmologist) should be consulted. Hospital care may be needed for severe symptoms.
- Inform all sexual contacts so they can seek treatment.
- For self-care:
  - Use separate towels, washcloths, and disposable eating utensils during treatment.
  - Wash hands often, especially after using the bathroom.
  - Don't touch your eyes with your hands.
- To learn more: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) National STD Hotline (800) 227-8922; website: [www.cdc.gov/std](http://www.cdc.gov/std).

### MEDICATIONS

- Antibiotics will be prescribed. Take complete dosage.
- You may take nonprescription drugs, such as acetaminophen or aspirin (for adults), to reduce discomfort.

### ACTIVITY

No limits on physical activity. Don't resume sexual activity until treatment is complete.

### DIET

No special diet.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of gonorrhea.
- Symptoms don't improve with treatment.

Special notes:

---

---

---

More notes on the back of this page