

Gonorrhea

What is Gonorrhea?

- ◆ Gonorrhea is a bacterial infection that can be transmitted through sexual contact, vaginal, oral, and anal.
- ◆ Many men infected with gonorrhea exhibit symptoms, while most women are asymptomatic. Even when women do have symptoms, they can be mistaken for a bladder infection or other vaginal infection. If untreated, Gonorrhea can spread to the uterus and fallopian tubes and cause PID (Pelvic Inflammatory Disease), a serious infection that can lead to infertility in women. Women may also experience chronic menstrual difficulties, postpartum endometritis, cystitis (inflammation of the urinary bladder).
- ◆ If untreated in men, gonorrhea may cause prostatitis (inflammation of the prostate gland), scarring of the urethra, infertility, inflammation of the epididymis.

What are the symptoms of Gonorrhea?

Women's symptoms may include:

- ◆ painful or burning sensation when urinating
- ◆ abnormal vaginal discharge that is yellow or sometimes bloody
- ◆ more advanced symptoms such as abdominal pain, bleeding between menstrual periods, vomiting, and fever

Men's symptoms may include:

- ◆ watery-milky discharge from penis
- ◆ ache in testicles, abdomen, or bladder
- ◆ burning sensation during urination or urinating more often than usual

Remember, many people have no symptoms at all. Gonorrhea can also infect the eyes, mouth, throat, and anus. It can be passed from mother to newborn as the baby passes through the infected birth canal. This can result in eye infections, pneumonia or other complications.

How can I get it?

Gonorrhea is transmitted through:

- ◆ vaginal/ penile sex
- ◆ anal sex
- ◆ oral sex

It can also be transmitted to infants during childbirth or cause complications while you are pregnant. Gonorrhea can be transmitted even if there are no visible symptoms.

How can I prevent or protect against Gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea can be prevented through:

- ◆ abstinence
- ◆ monogamy with an uninfected partner

You can reduce your risk of contracting Gonorrhea through:

- ◆ using a latex condom every time you have sex
- ◆ avoiding sexual contact with partners who have visible signs of infection

Am I at risk? Should I be tested?

If you do not consistently use condoms, if you have had more than one sexual partner, or if your partner has ever had sex with someone else, it may be a good idea to be tested for Gonorrhea. Gonorrhea is curable with antibiotics once it's diagnosed, but if you do not get tested you may not know that you have an infection. Gonorrhea often occurs together with another infection, Chlamydia, so your health care provider will usually test for both infections at the same time. You can get tested for Gonorrhea during a routine physical exam. The Gonorrhea test does not hurt. If Gonorrhea is left untreated it can cause serious infections of the reproductive organs and may prevent you from having children in the future.

What can I do to treat Gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is easily treated with the following antibiotic.

Rocephin (ceftriaxone) 250 mg. will be given as an injection (shot).

- ◆ You should not be given this medication if you are allergic to it, or to penicillin, or to other cephalosporins. Do not take it if you are breastfeeding. Patients allergic to penicillins will be prescribed an alternative medication.
 - ◆ Please remain in the waiting area of the clinic for 20 minutes after your injection. This is very important to be sure you do not have a reaction to the medication.
 - ◆ A test of cure to be sure the infection does not remain in your system is very important, especially if you have received an alternative medication.
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- **Call your doctor if you have severe side effects from any of the medicine or if you vomit within one hour of taking the medicine.**
 - **Your antibiotic may decrease the effectiveness of your oral contraceptives. Use a back-up method of birth control for 2 weeks after taking your antibiotic.**

*******You should be tested again in three months.*******

Should my partner be treated?

Yes. If your culture has come back positive, your partner is assumed to be positive as well and needs to be treated. It is essential that your partner be treated so that you do not get re-infected with Chlamydia. **It is very important to abstain from sex while you and/or your partner are being treated and for at least one week (7 days) after you have both finished the medication.**

For more information visit:

American Social Health Association at <http://www.ashastd.org/>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/std/>