

CHLAMYDIA

Patient Fact Sheet

Introduction

Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*, which can cause damage to both women and men's reproductive organs. Even though symptoms of chlamydia are usually mild or absent, serious complications from infection by chlamydia can cause irreversible damage, including infertility (lack of being able to have a child). Chlamydia can be cured.

The symptoms that you might notice include:

Chlamydia is known as a 'silent' disease because about three-quarters of infected women and about half of infected men have no symptoms. Symptoms of chlamydia, if they do occur, show up about 1-3 weeks after being infected and include a fluid oozing from the vagina or penis and pain when passing urine.

Treatment

- Chlamydia is treated with drugs called antibiotics.
- Take all of the medications provided to you by your health care provider even if you begin to feel better.
- Inform anyone you have had recent sex with that you have chlamydia so they can be tested and treated.
- If chlamydia is left untreated, women may develop an infection of the female sex organs called pelvic inflammatory disease, which may cause female infertility. Men may develop an infection of the tubes that carry sperm, called epididymitis, which may cause male infertility.

Prevention

- The surest way to avoid getting chlamydia is to avoid sexual contact or be in a long-term relationship with just one person who has been tested and is known to be uninfected.
- When in a relationship, always use condoms correctly with a spermicidal jelly or foam during intercourse.
- Chlamydia screening is recommended each year for all sexually active women 25 years of age and younger. A yearly screening test is also recommended for older women with risk factors for chlamydia (a new sex partner or multiple sex partners).
- All pregnant women should have a screening test for chlamydia.
- If you are being treated, avoid having sex until your medical treatment with antibiotics is completed.

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