

What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted disease caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

Who is at risk for chlamydia?

Any sexually active person can be infected with chlamydia. Chlamydia can be transmitted during vaginal, oral and anal sex. Those who have multiple sex partners and unprotected sex are at greatest risk of infection. Since chlamydia can also be spread by oral or anal sex, men who have sex with men are also at risk for infection. The highest rates of infection occur among sexually active adolescents and young adults. Women aged 24 years and younger and older women and all males at high risk are recommended to be screened annually.

What are the symptoms of chlamydia?

The majority of infected females and males have no signs or symptoms. In females, symptoms may include abnormal vaginal discharge, burning or pain during urination, lower abdominal pain, lower back pain, nausea, fever, pain during intercourse, bleeding between menstrual periods or anal discomfort. In males, symptoms may include discharge from the penis, burning or pain during urination or anal discomfort. If oral sex is performed, infections can also occur in the throat and often show no symptoms. If untreated, chlamydial infections can progress to serious reproductive and other health problems with both short-term and long-term consequences including infertility for both men and women. Conjunctivitis and pneumonia can occur in infants born in infected mothers.

How soon do symptoms appear?

If symptoms do occur, they may appear several weeks after exposure.

How is chlamydia spread?

Chlamydia is spread by vaginal, oral or anal sex. Chlamydia can also be passed from an infected mother to her baby during childbirth.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

A person can spread the infection as long as he or she is infected and untreated. Without treatment, infection can persist for months.

How is a person diagnosed?

Laboratory tests are available to diagnose chlamydia. Some can be performed on urine, while others require that a specimen be collected from a site such as the cervix or penis.

What is the treatment?

Chlamydia can be treated and cured with antibiotics. To avoid reinfection, all sex partners should be tested and treated.

Does past infection make a person immune?

No. A person can be reinfected after treatment.

Should adolescents or others be excluded from school, work or other activities if they have chlamydia?

No. Since chlamydia is transmitted through sexual contact only, exclusion is not necessary.

What can be done to prevent the spread of chlamydia?

The most effective way to reduce the spread of chlamydia is to abstain from sexual activity or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and is known to be uninfected. Condoms, when used consistently and correctly, can reduce the spread of chlamydia. A condom and other protection barriers such as a dental dam, should be used for oral, vaginal and anal sex. Limiting the number of sexual partners an individual has also reduces the risk of becoming infected with chlamydia. Routine screening for at-risk individuals is recommended on a yearly basis. Infected individuals and all of their sexual partners need to be treated immediately at the time of diagnosis to prevent the spread of infection to others.

Additional Information:

Additional information is available at www.ndhealth.gov/disease or by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

This disease is a reportable condition. As mandated by North Dakota law, any incidence of this disease shall be reported to the North Dakota Department of Health.

Resources:

Academy of Pediatrics. [Section 3, Summaries of Infectious Diseases]. In: Kimberlin DW, Brady MT, Jackson MA, Long SS eds. *Red Book: 2015 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*. 30th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2015:[pages 288-294]

Heymann, D.L (ed). 2015. *Control of Communicable Diseases Manual* (20th edition). Washington: American Public Health Associates.

