

What happens if chlamydia is left untreated?

If your chlamydia is untreated, it can be passed on to your sexual partners.

Women and people with a vagina

Chlamydia can spread from the neck of the womb (cervix) up into the womb (uterus) the fallopian tubes and ovaries. This is called pelvic inflammatory disease, or PID. PID can increase the risk of infertility and ectopic pregnancy (a pregnancy that occurs outside the womb, usually in one of the fallopian tubes).

Men and people with a penis

Chlamydia can spread from the urethra (the tube through which you pass urine) to the testicles, causing pain and swelling of the testicles. This is known as epididymo-orchitis.

Everyone

In rare cases, chlamydia may cause pain and swelling in joints such as the ankles or knees. This is known as sexually-acquired reactive arthropathy (SARA) and is more common in men. Sometimes it can cause your eyes to become inflamed (conjunctivitis).

How can I prevent myself from getting chlamydia again?

Using condoms correctly and every time you have sex will reduce your risk of getting other and STIs.

If you have a new partner it is a good idea for both of you to have an STI test before any condomless sex.

Chlamydia in pregnancy

If you are pregnant and you have chlamydia, it is important that you get it treated to prevent your baby getting the infection during childbirth. In newborn babies, chlamydia may cause redness of the eyes (conjunctivitis) or inflammation of the lungs (pneumonia).

If you need to be treated while you're pregnant, your doctor or nurse will make sure that the antibiotic prescribed is safe to take while you are pregnant.

If you need treatment while you're pregnant, you should make sure that you are re-tested after finishing your chlamydia treatment. This is to make sure that you have a negative chlamydia test before you give birth, ensuring that your baby will not be infected.

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A guide to Chlamydia

What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted infection (STI). It is caused by a type of bacteria.

Many people with chlamydia don't have any symptoms.

Chlamydia can infect the cervix (neck of the womb), urethra (the tube through which you pass urine), the uterus (womb), fallopian tubes, ovaries, testicles, rectum (back passage), pharynx (throat) and sometimes the eyes.

If the infection is untreated, a person with chlamydia risks health problems. This is particularly true for and people with a vagina.

How common is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is the most commonly diagnosed sexually transmitted infection in Ireland. Most cases occur in young people under the age of 25.

How do I get chlamydia?

In most cases, chlamydia is passed from one person to another from:

- condomless sex (oral, vaginal, anal)
- using unwashed sex toys
- to babies during delivery.

You cannot get chlamydia by:

- hugging
- kissing
- swimming
- sitting on toilet seats
- sharing cutlery or towels.

What symptoms would I have with chlamydia?

Most people with chlamydia don't experience any symptoms.

If symptoms do occur, they are more likely to develop between one and 28 days after sexual contact with someone who has the infection.

If you do have symptoms, how they show will depend on where the infection is.

Men and people with a penis

- Half have no symptoms
- Discharge from the tip of the penis
- Pain or discomfort passing urine
- Pain and swelling in one or both testicles.

Women and people with a vagina

- 7 in 10 have no symptoms
- Bleeding after sex
- Bleeding between periods
- Change in your normal vaginal discharge
- Pain passing urine
- Pain in your abdomen (tummy).

Some people may have bowel symptoms such as diarrhoea, pain, mucus discharge or bleeding from the back passage.

How can I find out if I have chlamydia?

Testing for chlamydia is simple and painless.

Chlamydia is diagnosed by taking a urine sample or a vaginal swab. Sometimes a swab is also taken from the rectum (back passage) or pharynx (throat).

How is chlamydia treated?

Chlamydia infections are easily treated with antibiotics.

Will I need a repeat test to make sure the infection has cleared?

In most cases, no, but your healthcare provider will tell you if you need to come back for a repeat test.

What about my partner?

If you have chlamydia, your partner(s) will also be offered testing and treatment.

It is important that all of the people you have recently been in sexual contact with are given the option to be tested and treated. Your healthcare provider will discuss this with you.

When can I have sex again?

You should avoid sex (even oral sex or sex with a condom) with anyone until after you have finished your treatment. In certain circumstances you will be asked to wait until after you have had a repeat test. Your healthcare provider will speak to you about this.

Make sure your partner is tested and treated too.

It's really important that you don't have sex with your partner(s) before they are tested and treated as you could become infected again.