

What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by bacteria. It can affect people of all genders and is particularly common in people under 30. Chlamydia can infect the throat, bottom (rectum or anus), genitals (such as urethra and cervix) and eyes. Most people with chlamydia don't have any symptoms, so they can pass it on to others without knowing. That's why regular sexual health check-ups are important.

Why is chlamydia serious?

If left untreated, chlamydia can spread to the uterus and then into the fallopian tubes. This can lead to a condition called pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID can damage the fallopian tubes, making it difficult to become pregnant. Untreated PID can also lead to long-term pelvic pain. If someone is pregnant and has chlamydia, the infection can be passed to their baby during birth. This can cause problems for the baby, like eye or lung infections.

Untreated chlamydia can also infect the urethra and cause an infection of the testicles, and, possibly affecting fertility.

How do you get chlamydia?

Chlamydia is spread by having unprotected sex with someone who is infected. This includes vaginal, anal, or oral sex. You can protect yourself from getting chlamydia by using condoms. Because the infection often has no symptoms, you won't be able to tell if your partner has it. You cannot get chlamydia from toilets, swimming pools, spas, or touching or hugging with other people.

How can I protect myself from chlamydia?

The best way to prevent getting chlamydia and other STIs is to have safer sex.

- use a condom every time you have vaginal, oral, or anal sex
- don't have sex with someone who knows they have chlamydia (even with a condom) until after they have completed their treatment
- get tested regularly if you are sexually active or at risk of STIs

What are the symptoms of chlamydia infection?

Most people have no symptoms at all. If you do get symptoms, you will usually get them about 7-14 days after having unprotected sex.

Symptoms of chlamydia can include:

- a stinging or burning feeling when passing urine
- unusual discharge from the vagina
- abnormal bleeding or spotting from the vagina especially after sex
- pain in the lower belly (pelvic pain)
- pain during sex
- a watery or milky discharge from the penis
- redness at the tip of the penis
- pain or swelling in one or both testicles
- pain or discharge from the bottom (anus)

If you are pregnant and have chlamydia:

- you might have a higher risk of miscarriage or having your baby too early (premature birth)
- your baby could be born with lung or eye infections

How do I get tested for chlamydia?

Chlamydia testing is quick and easy. It can be done with a pee (urine) sample or a swab. You don't need a physical examination if you don't have symptoms. If symptoms do show up, your doctor or nurse will recommend an examination so they can offer appropriate tests and treatment.

Types of Chlamydia Tests

Urine test: You will be asked to collect the first part of your pee in a jar. Try not to pee for at least 20 minutes before giving the sample.

Swab test: Swabs may be taken from different parts of the body, depending on your sexual activity:

- **Penis:** Only if there is a discharge.
- **Vagina:** You can do this yourself if you don't have any symptoms. Your doctor or nurse will show you how.
- **Cervix:** Done by a doctor or a nurse during an internal examination.
- **Bottom (Anus) or throat**



How is chlamydia treated?

Chlamydia can be easily treated with antibiotics. Your doctor will recommend the most effective treatment, which usually involves taking tablets twice a day for one week. If you have symptoms, your doctor may start treatment before your test results are available. If you have PID, testicular infection, or pain or discharge from the bottom (anus), you may need a longer course of antibiotics.

During the treatment, you will be advised to have no sex at all, not even with a condom, until 7 days after your antibiotics. Your sexual partner(s) need treatment too, even if they feel fine. Don't have sex with anyone you have recently been with, until they have been tested and treated. 3 months after the treatment, you should have another test for chlamydia to make sure you have not got the infection again.

Do I need to tell my sexual partners?

Yes. It is important to let your recent sexual partners know if you have chlamydia so that they can also get tested and treated. Your doctor or nurse will explain who needs to be contacted if you have a chlamydia infection and they can also support you with contact tracing. Sometimes your doctor can give you an extra prescription or medication for your partner. Contact tracing can be done confidentially. There are websites that let you send a free anonymous text message or email – just ask your doctor or nurse about it.

For more information

- Visit your nearest Family Planning Australia clinic fpnsw.org.au/clinics
- Chat to a nurse via Talkline – 1300 658 886 or fpnsw.org.au/talkline
- National Relay Service (for people who are d/Deaf, hard of hearing or have speech communication difficulties) – 133 677
- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) – 131 450
- NSW Sexual Health Infolink – www.shil.nsw.gov.au or 1800 451 624
- Let Them Know – www.letthemknow.org.au
- Play Safe – <https://playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au/>