

Gonorrhea

Description

Gonorrhea ("the clap") is a bacterial infection caused by the *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* bacterium. Although it can be contracted through sexual intercourse as well as oral sex, infection is not limited to the sexual organs. The bacteria can infect the throat as well as the uterine tubes, vagina, urethra, rectum, epididymis and eyes. The most common occurrence of infection is a man's urethra and a woman's vagina or cervix.

Gonorrhea is one of the most common STDs in the United States. It is now the second most common STD behind Chlamydia. It is most prevalent in sexually active teenagers and young adults.

Transmission

Gonorrhea is most commonly transmitted by unprotected vaginal, oral, or anal sexual activity. The bacteria can also be transmitted from mother to newborn during delivery.

In addition to the male and female genital organs, the eyes and pharynx (throat area) may also become infected if they come into contact with infected secretions.

N. gonorrhoeae bacteria require a warm, moist environment such as the mucous membranes of the urinary tract, the vagina, or the anus (both men and women). Outside of the body, the bacteria survive for only about one minute.

It is possible to contract gonorrhea repeatedly; having been infected once does not ensure immunity against future exposure.

Symptoms

Symptoms usually appear within 5 days for men, but can take up to 30 days. For women, symptoms usually appear within 10 days.

Women:

- Most women have no symptoms.
- Symptoms for women may include an abnormal vaginal discharge (change in texture and or odor), spotting between periods, abdominal pain (sometimes with fever and nausea), and burning during urination.
- Gonorrhea can affect the urethra, rectum, throat, tonsils, eyes, and reproductive organs.
- It most commonly affects the vagina.

Men:

- Some men have no symptoms.
- Symptoms include pain or burning during urination and a milky white or yellowish discharge from penis.
- Can affect the urethra, rectum, throat, tonsils, eyes, and reproductive organs.
- It most commonly affects the urethra.

Complications

If left untreated, gonorrhea can cause:

Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in women
Infertility in both men (extremely rare) and women

Diagnosis

A culture is taken of the discharge with a swab from the vagina (in women). There is a urine test for men; however, occasionally a urethral swab is used.

Treatment

Since it is a bacteria, gonorrhea can be treated with antibiotics. It is important to receive treatment in the early stages of the disease to prevent more serious complications. It is very important for partners of infected persons to be tested and treated to prevent reinfection.

DANGERS!

Since the majority of people have no symptoms and don't know they're infected, gonorrhea can spread and cause permanent damage to the fallopian tubes in women and to the epididymis (the tube which acts as a storage facility for sperm) in men. This scarring can affect fertility.

Eye infection can result from contact with infected secretions.

Gonorrhea is the causative agent for many cases of pelvic inflammatory disease in women.

Prevention

- **ABSTAINING FROM SEXUAL ACTIVITY IS THE BEST PROTECTION FROM ALL STDs.**
- **FOR PEOPLE WHO CHOOSE TO BE SEXUALLY ACTIVE, LATEX BARRIERS, INCLUDING DENTAL DAMS AND CONDOMS (WHEN USED CORRECTLY AND CONSISTENTLY) PROVIDE THE BEST PROTECTION.**
- The polyurethane female condom offers more protection to female's labia region than the male condom.
- Spermicides and silicone or water based lubricants can be used to enhance sexual pleasure when using latex barriers and will increase the effectiveness of condoms by lowering the chance of breakage.
- Lubricants also prevent tearing which can cause fluid transmission that can lead to HIV and other STD transmission.

For More Information:

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