

# PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

## Chlamydia



### Burlington County Health Department

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**Public Health**  
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Burlington County Health Department  
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### **What is chlamydia?**

Chlamydia is a common bacterial sexually transmitted disease (STD) that can infect both men and women. It can cause serious, permanent damage to a woman's reproductive system, making it difficult or impossible for her to get pregnant later on. It can also cause a potentially fatal ectopic pregnancy (fetus develops outside the womb).

### **How do people get chlamydia?**

Chlamydia is spread by having vaginal, penile, anal, or oral sex with a person who has chlamydia. If your sex partner is male you can still get chlamydia even if he does not ejaculate (cum). Chlamydia can also possibly spread from an untreated mother to her baby during childbirth. If you had chlamydia and were treated in the past, you can still get infected again if you have unprotected sex with someone who has chlamydia.

### **What are the symptoms of chlamydia?**

Chlamydia is known as a "silent" infection because most infected people have no symptoms. For those who do get symptoms, they usually do not appear until several weeks after you became infected. Women who are infected may have an increase in vaginal discharge and a burning sensation while urinating. Men will notice a discharge from their penis, a burning sensation while urinating, and possible pain and swelling of their testicles. Rectal infections can cause pain, discharge, and bleeding from the anus. Chlamydia can still damage your reproductive system, even without showing symptoms.

### **What problems can result from an untreated chlamydia infection?**

In women, untreated chlamydia can spread to the uterus or fallopian tubes and cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID can cause permanent damage to the fallopian tubes, uterus, and surrounding tissues leading to long-term or life-long pelvic pain, inability to get pregnant, and possible fetal ectopic pregnancy. In pregnant women, untreated chlamydia has been connected to pre-term delivery, as well as conjunctivitis (pinkeye) and pneumonia in the newborn. Men rarely have health problems linked to chlamydia. The infection can sometimes spread to the tubes that carry sperm from the testicles, causing pain and fever. Rarely, chlamydia can prevent men from being able to have children. Untreated chlamydia may also increase your chances of getting or giving HIV – the virus that causes AIDS.

### **How will my doctor know if I have chlamydia?**

There are laboratory tests to diagnosis chlamydia. Your doctor or health care provider may ask you to provide a urine sample or may use (or ask you to use) a cotton swab to get a sample of bodily fluid from your vagina or penis to test for chlamydia.

## Can chlamydia be cured?

Chlamydia is cured with antibiotics. It is important that you take all of the medicine your doctor prescribes to cure your infection. When taken properly it will stop the infection and could decrease your chances of having complications later on. Medication for chlamydia should not be shared with anyone. People with chlamydia should not have any sexual contact for 7 days after receiving single-dose antibiotics or until completion of a 7-day course of antibiotics, to prevent the person from spreading the infection to partners. Repeat infection with chlamydia is common. You should be tested again about 3 months after you are treated, even if your sex partner(s) was treated.

## How can chlamydia be prevented?

The best way to avoid chlamydia is to not have vaginal, anal, or oral sex. If you are sexually active, use a latex condom the right way every time you have sex. Being in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and has a negative STD result will also reduce your chances of getting an sexually transmitted infection. Lambskin condoms are **not** recommended to prevent of STDs.

## Where can I get more information?

- Your doctor, nurse or clinic
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/chlamydia>
- The Burlington County Department of Health at (609) 265-5533
- The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDoH) at 1-800-624-2377 or on the NJDoH Website at <http://www.nj.gov/health/>

