



## ADVICE AND FACTS ABOUT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

DET HÄR ÄR EN ÖVERSÄTTNING TILL ENGELSKA AV FAKTABLADET RÅD OCH FAKTA OM SEXUELLT ÖVERFÖRDA INFEKTIONER – KLAMYDIA.

# Chlamydia

Chlamydia is caused by a bacterium which is transmitted sexually. It attacks cells in the mucus membrane, in the urethra, and in women also in the vagina as well as the cervix. During anal sex it is easy to become infected in the rectum. It is sometimes also found in the throat.

Chlamydia is very infectious and is normally spread via unprotected vaginal and anal intercourse. It is more uncommon for it to be transmitted via oral sex, although it does happen. Even during mutual masturbation and the use of sex toys, secretions from an infected mucus membrane can transmit an infection to another person.

### Symptoms of chlamydia

Chlamydia normally does not cause much discomfort. This is true for both men and women. You can therefore infect your sexual partner or get an infection from your partner without either of you being aware of this. If you have symptoms, it can take anything from less than a week to three weeks from being infected to actually feeling any discomfort. For men, this is normally a burning sensation in the urethra when urinating. There may also be itching or irritation in the urethra. A clear discharge (like thin mucus) is also common. The most common problem for women is changes in discharge. Bleeding between menstruation and during intercourse are also common problems. Sometimes the epididymis can become infected, causing pain and swelling in the scrotum. Chlamydia can also be transmitted to the eyes from genitalia via fingers and result in inflammation of one or both eyes. Chlamydia infections can sometimes result in arthritis in one or more joints, e.g. the knee joint.

### Get tested for chlamydia

Get tested for chlamydia if you have had unprotected sex. Testing is free as chlamydia is covered by the Communicable Diseases Act. For men, a urine sample is normally enough to show signs of chlamydia. In women, a self-administered vaginal swab test is normally sufficient. During a gynaecological examination, a section sample is sometimes taken from the external orifice of the uterus. Sometimes, the vaginal swab test or cervical swab is combined with a urine sample.

In examinations carried out at STI clinics, tests are often run for several STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections) at the same time. They use secretion samples from the urinary meatus which can be taken very carefully. The taking of these samples is thus not painful, although it can feel a bit uncomfortable. The cervical smear is used for microscopic examination so as to rule out (or confirm) gonorrhoea, which can produce similar symptoms, and to decide whether or not treatment should be administered straight away. It may also be taken so that the doctor can decide if an extra urine sample is required in order to check for another bacterium known as *Mycoplasma genitalium*. Double infection is possible, and treatment of the different infections differs. If you have had unprotected anal sex, a rectal swab should be taken.

If you have only had unprotected oral sex, a throat swab is sometimes taken.

It can take up to a week from you being infected to the test showing that you have chlamydia. You should therefore wait at least one week after having unprotected sex before you get tested. If you make a self-diagnosis of chlamydia via the internet and the result indicates you are infected, you must always contact a doctor so as to be offered treatment (in accordance with the Communicable Diseases Act).

### Treatment

Treatment is free if you have chlamydia. The infection is treated with antibiotics and it is important that you refrain from having sex during the course of the treatment so that the infection can be fully cured. If you have chlamydia, your sexual partner also needs to be examined and treated for the infection, to ensure that either of you get reinfected. If you have several sexual partners, all of them need to be examined and offered treatment if it is discovered that they have chlamydia.

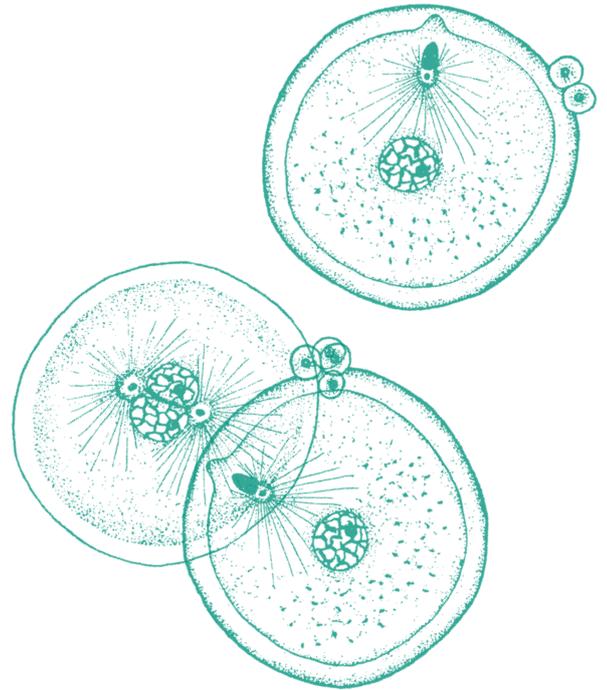
### Important points about chlamydia

You can get chlamydia several times. If you have taken the entire course of antibiotics and refrained from having sex during the treatment, you normally will not need to take a diagnostic test following completion of treatment as chlamydia can be cured effectively with antibiotics. If you wish to have this nevertheless, e.g., because you have forgotten to take tablets, you should consult the clinic that prescribed the treatment. However, a new test cannot be taken until

four weeks after the treatment started, in order to ensure that the results are reliable.

We know that it is normal for a person who has had chlamydia to get chlamydia again within a year or so. This is almost always a result of becoming infected again by a new partner. It is therefore important to always use a condom when having sex with a new partner. Untreated or repeated chlamydia infections can result in complications which in women can lead to sterility or ectopic pregnancy due to oviduct infection. In men, chlamydia can probably have a negative effect on the quality of the sperm. The risk of complications is reduced if you receive treatment quickly after being infected.

The venereal disease *mycoplasma genitalium* is caused by a bacterium that can produce symptoms similar to those of chlamydia. This is more difficult to treat and is usually treated with an antibiotic other than the one used for a chlamydia infection. If you have residual problems after completing a course of treatment for chlamydia, you must once more contact the clinic that prescribed the treatment so that a test for *Mycoplasma genitalium* can also be taken, and perhaps even for other infections that could explain the problems.



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