



SEXUAL HEALTH TESTING

# Chlamydia Information Sheet

## What is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted disease (STD) that is spread through sexual contact with the penis, vagina, mouth, or anus of an infected individual. Chlamydia can also be transmitted from a mother with an untreated cervical infection to her newborn during childbirth (1).

Chlamydia is caused by infection with the obligate intracellular bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

## Symptoms of Chlamydia

Most individuals infected with chlamydia remain asymptomatic, with only an estimated 10% of infected males showing symptoms and 5-30% of infected females (2). *C. trachomatis* initially infects the cervix of females and sometimes the urethra. In symptomatic females this can result in abnormal vaginal discharge, endocervical bleeding, increased urinary frequency, and dysuria.

Symptomatic males generally develop urethritis resulting in urethral discharge, dysuria, and testicular pain. Chlamydia infections of the rectum may lead to rectal pain, discharge and/or bleeding (3). Sexually acquired chlamydial conjunctivitis can also occur in both males and females (4).

Untreated chlamydial infections in females can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), and PID-associated infertility, ectopic pregnancy, and chronic pelvic pain. Untreated chlamydia during pregnancy has been associated with pre-term delivery. Chlamydial infections can be passed to newborns during delivery, increasing the risk of conjunctivitis (18-44% of cases) and pneumonia (3-16% of cases) (5).

Complications in untreated males are rare, but can include epididymitis and infertility. Chlamydial infections can also facilitate the transmission of HIV infection, and in rare cases can cause reactive arthritis (1).

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## Who is at risk of chlamydia?

Any sexually active individual is at risk of chlamydial infection, with an increased risk among younger individuals. Chlamydia is one of the most prevalent STDs in the United States, with annual chlamydia cases estimated to be around 2.86 million (6).

## How is chlamydia diagnosed?

Modern nucleic acid amplification testing (NAAT) provides the most sensitivity and specificity for a chlamydia diagnosis. These can be performed on vaginal swabs (either clinician- or patient-collected) or urine.

## How is chlamydia treated?

Chlamydia is easily cured with antibiotics. However, repeat chlamydial infections from sexual contact with an infected partner are common, increasing the risk of serious reproductive health complications. Antibiotics do not repair any permanent damage done by the disease (7).

## How do I reduce my risk?

Abstaining from vaginal, anal, or oral sex is the only way to completely avoid sexually transmitted diseases, such as chlamydia. Other ways to reduce the risk include being in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has tested negative for chlamydia, and using latex condoms correctly.

### References:

1. Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance, 2018. CDC. [Online] October 2019.
2. Asymptomatic sexually transmitted diseases: the case for screening. Farley, T A, Cohen, D A and Elkins, W. 4, April 2003, Prev Med, Vol. 36, pp. 502-509.
3. Chlamydia trachomatis Proctitis. Quinn, T C, et al. 1981, N Engl J Med, Vol. 305, pp. 195-200.
4. Ocular chlamydial infections: pathogenesis and emerging treatment strategies. Kalayoglu, M V. 1, March 2002, Curr Drug Targets Infect Disord, Vol. 2, pp. 85-91.
5. Longitudinal studies of chlamydial infection in the first year of life. Hammerschlag, M R, et al. 6, 1982, Pediatr Infect Dis, Vol. 1, pp. 395-401.
6. Sexually transmitted infections among US women and men: prevalence and incidence estimates. Satterwhite, C L, et al. 3, 2013, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Vol. 40, pp. 187-193.
7. Sexually Transmitted Diseases Treatment Guidelines, 2015. Workowski, K A and Bolan, G A. RR-03, June 5, 2015, MMWR Recomm Rep, Vol. 64, pp. 1-137.

## Where can I find more info?

Visit [www.genetrackdiagnostics.com](http://www.genetrackdiagnostics.com) for full test information, including specimen collection requirements.

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