



**[The Lambda Clinic - Sexual Health Advice - Patient Information Leaflet](http://www.lambdaclinic.co.uk/chlamydia.html)**  
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## **Chlamydia Infection**

### **What is Chlamydia?**

Chlamydia is a commonly sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by a germ called *Chlamydia trachomatis*. The bacteria is found in the cervix (neck of the womb), the urethra (tube where urine comes out), the rectum (back passage) and sometimes the throat and eyes. Often you do not know if you have the infection or it is minor that you are unaware that it exists. Sometimes you can have Chlamydia for months, even years, without realising it. You can also easily pass on chlamydia on to others.

### **How common is Chlamydia infection?**

Approximately 1 in 20 sexually active women in the UK are infected with Chlamydia infection and most commonly for women under 25. The number of chlamydia cases has risen in the past few years.

### **How do you get Chlamydia infection?**

- Chlamydia is easily transmitted between people during vaginal, anal or oral sex or sharing sex toys.
- Transfer of chlamydia infection can also occur from the genital area to the eyes and for a pregnant woman to infect her baby during childbirth.
- It is not possible to catch Chlamydia from kissing, sharing cups, hugging, plates or cutlery, from swimming pools or toilet seats and sharing baths or towels.

### **How can I avoid catching Chlamydia myself?**

- The safest method is by using condoms (male and female) every time during anal, vaginal or oral (covering penis) sex.
- Avoid sharing sex toys, but if they are used to wash them or cover them with a new condom before reusing them.

### **What happens if Chlamydia is not treated?**

- Chlamydia infection can spread to other parts of the body if not treated properly and it can cause serious long-term complications. This can occur months or even years after you are first infected.
- In women Chlamydia can spread to the uterus and fallopian tubes causing pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). This can either develop slowly over months or years without causing problems (PID) or suddenly. The result is damage and scarring to the fallopian tubes causing long-term pelvic pain, infertility and ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy occurring outside the womb).
- Rarely infection can spread to the liver causing pain and inflammation
- Untreated Chlamydia infection during childbirth may result in your baby developing Chlamydia infection of their eye or lungs during birth.



- In men Chlamydia can spread to the testes and prostate causing inflammation and pain and possibly reduced fertility.

### **Can Chlamydia go away without treatment?**

Chlamydia infection does not usually go away without treatment. Delaying treatment risks the infection causing long term damage and at the risk of passing on the infection to someone else.

### **How long will I have had Chlamydia?**

It can be difficult to know how long one has had Chlamydia as most people do not get any problems. Also you may have got Chlamydia from your current or a previous sexual partner. These issues can be difficult to address. We at the Lambda Clinic can help with these issues.

### **Common symptoms of Chlamydia**

- About 50% of infected men and 80% of infected women have no symptoms at all
- Symptoms can show up 1 – 3 weeks after being infected with Chlamydia. Sometimes it can be many months later or not until the infection spreads to other parts of the body. If you do get symptoms, they may include:

#### *Women:*

- Vaginal discharge
- Pain or burning when passing urine
- Bleeding or spotting between periods
- Bleeding after sex
- Pain and/or bleeding during sex
- Pain in lower abdomen

#### *Men:*

- Watery white / cloudy discharge from the penis
- Pain or burning when passing urine
- Soreness inside the penis
- Wanting to pass urine more often
- Painful swelling of one or both testes

#### *Both women and men:*

Infection in rectum – discomfort in rectum or discharge from rectum  
Infection in eyes – pain, swelling, irritation, discharge (conjunctivitis)

### **How is Chlamydia diagnosed?**

It is possible to do a Chlamydia test within a few days of having sex. However, if you have no symptoms it is often advised to wait up to 2 weeks after having sex.



There are different ways of testing for chlamydia:

*Women:*

- A swab for chlamydia from the cervix during an internal examination
- A swab for chlamydia taken from inside the vagina. This may be done by yourself or by the doctor

*Men:*

- Urine sample to test for chlamydia. You will be advised not to pass urine for 1-2 hours before the

*Men and Women:*

- Swab for chlamydia taken from the urethra (tube joining from the bladder to pass urine)
- Swab for chlamydia from throat if you have oral sex
- Swab for chlamydia from your rectum if you have anal sex
- Swab for chlamydia from discharge from your eyes if you have symptoms of conjunctivitis

**How is Chlamydia treated?**

Either a single dose or a short course of antibiotics will treat chlamydia. If complications have occurred other treatments may also be required. If you are (or may be) pregnant a different choice of antibiotics is prescribed.

**Does my partner need to be treated for Chlamydia infection?**

- Yes, your current sexual partner and any others within the past six months.
- They should be tested for infection, even if they do not have any symptoms
- A course of antibiotics is usually advised for sexual partners, even if the tests are negative
- If you have not had sex within the last 6 months then your latest partner should be tested and treated
- It is important that you avoid vaginal, anal or oral sex until both you and your partner have finished the treatments prescribed (or after 7 days with the 'single dose'). Using a condom will reduce this risk but it does not guarantee it. This is to prevent you re-infecting each other.
- We strongly advise you to tell your partner(s), but it is not compulsory if this is difficult. The Lambda Clinic can give you a contact slip to send to your partners. With permission the Lambda clinic can do this for you. This slip explains to the person they may have been exposed to a sexually transmitted infection and suggest they go for a check up. It does not say what the infection is, or have your name on it. This protects your confidentiality. This is called partner notification.

[The Lambda Clinic](#)

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