



Gonorrhoea **March 2009**

While every effort has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information in this publication, it cannot replace medical advice. Please visit a health professional if you have any concerns with your health. Included below is a list of places where you can get more information.

What is gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea ('the clap') is an infection caused by the *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* bacteria.

How do you get gonorrhoea?

You can get gonorrhoea by having unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex with an infected person. An infected mother can pass gonorrhoea on to her baby during birth, which can cause blindness.

What are the signs and symptoms of gonorrhoea?

Most males get a yellow discharge from the penis and a burning sensation when passing urine, within one week of getting infected.

Most women have no symptoms at all. Some may notice unusual vaginal discharge or pain when passing urine. If the infection spreads to the uterus (womb) and fallopian tubes (which carry eggs to the uterus), it can cause lower belly pain, or pain during vaginal sex.

A sore throat or discharge from the rectum can also be symptoms of gonorrhoea in both men and women, especially after oral or anal sex.

Unless it's found and treated early, gonorrhoea can lead to infertility (so you can't have a baby) in both men and women. In rare cases, the infection can spread to the joints, heart and brain, causing permanent damage or even death.

How do I know if I have gonorrhoea?

Your doctor will test a sample of urine, and test areas likely to be affected using a swab. The samples will be tested in a laboratory.



What do I do if I have gonorrhoea?

See your GP or doctor of choice as soon as possible if you think you may have gonorrhoea. Once diagnosis is confirmed, don't have sex until after you have completed the full course of treatment. It's a good idea to have tests for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as chlamydia, syphilis and HIV at the same time. If you do have gonorrhoea, all your sex partners will also need to be checked. This is always done carefully, respecting everyone's confidentiality.

How do I get treated?

Gonorrhoea is treated with antibiotics. The treatment varies depending on where you caught the infection: interstate or overseas. After treatment is finished, you'll need another test to make sure you are cured. Don't have sex, even with a condom, until the treatment is finished and tests show you are cured.

How do I reduce the risks of getting gonorrhoea?

The safest ways to protect against gonorrhoea and other STIs are to:

- Always use condoms with a water-based lubricant. Condoms are the best way of protecting you both against gonorrhoea and other STIs. Always use a condom until you are totally sure that both you and your partner don't have an STI. Use a dental dam during oral sex.
- Have a long-term relationship where neither of you is already infected, and neither of you have other partners.
- Limit your sex partners. The fewer people you have sex with, the less chance of having sex with someone who has gonorrhoea
- Have regular STI check-ups.

Talking about STIs can be difficult, but any person you have sex with has a right to know if you have an STI. Discuss it when you are feeling relaxed and confident, not just before you have sex. Your partner will appreciate your honesty and that you don't want to infect him/her. You have the right to know if they are infected, too. Early treatment will cure the infection and stop it spreading.

Where can I find more information on gonorrhoea?

For further information contact your GP, a doctor of your choice, telephone Health Direct (1800 022 222) or the Sexual Health Helpline (9227 6178 for metropolitan callers or 1800 198 205 for country callers).

Produced by Communicable Disease Control Directorate
© Department of Health, Western Australia January 2009