



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Chlamydia are intracellular parasites that have many of the same physical characteristics as viruses. They cause inflammation of the urethra (the tube that allows urine from the bladder to pass outside the body), vagina, cervix, uterus, fallopian tubes, anus and ovaries. This is the most common sexually transmitted disease in the United States. *Chlamydia* infection may also be transmitted to the eyes or lungs of a newborn infant. If *Chlamydia* are found by microscopic exam and culture of discharge in any person who is sexually active, all sexual partners must be treated.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Sometimes no symptoms during early stages.
- Vaginal discharge.
- Urethral discharge (males).
- Anal swelling, pain or discharge.
- Reddening of the vagina or tip of the penis (males).
- Abdominal pain.
- Fever.
- Discomfort on urinating.
- Genital discomfort or pain.

CAUSES

Chlamydia trachomatis bacteria spread by:

- Vaginal sexual intercourse.
- Rectal sexual intercourse.
- Oral-genital contact.
- Vaginal infection during delivery of a newborn, which may infect the baby.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Unprotected sexual activity, particularly in young females.
- History of other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Multiple sex partners.
- Diabetes mellitus.
- General poor health.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Use of condoms during sexual activity.
- Treatment of all sexual partners of any infected person (usually 2 weeks of an oral antibiotic such as tetracycline).

EXPECTED OUTCOME

Complete cure with adequate antibiotic treatment.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Infertility and/or sterility in female.
- Infecting one's sexual partner.
- Secondary bacterial infections in pelvic organs, genitals or rectum.
- Ectopic pregnancy.
- Liver infection (perihepatitis).
- Reiter's syndrome.
- Abdominal adhesions (scarring).



TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Diagnostic tests may include vaginal smear, rectal smear and urethral smear for laboratory analysis.
- Keep the genital area clean. Use plain unscented soap.
- Take showers rather than tub baths.
- Wear cotton underpants or pantyhose with a cotton crotch. Avoid those made from non-ventilating materials, such as nylon.
- After urination or bowel movements, cleanse by wiping or washing from front to back (vagina to anus).
- Lose weight if you are obese.
- Avoid douches.
- If you have diabetes, adhere strictly to your treatment program.
- If urinating causes burning, urinate through a tubular device, such as a toilet-paper roll or plastic cup with the bottom cut out, or pour a cup of warm water over the genital area while urinating.
- A follow up medical examination is necessary after completing the prescribed treatment.
- Testing for other sexually transmitted diseases is recommended.

MEDICATION

Oral antibiotics, such as tetracycline or azithromycin (Zithromax) may be prescribed. Antibiotics may interfere with the effectiveness of some birth control pills. If you are currently taking birth control pills, discuss this with the doctor.

ACTIVITY

- Avoid overexertion, heat and excessive sweating.
- Delay sexual relations until treatment is completed and symptoms are gone.
- Allow about 3 weeks for recovery.

DIET

No special diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of *Chlamydia* infection.
- Symptoms persist longer than 1 week or worsen despite treatment.
- Unusual vaginal bleeding or swelling develops.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.