



CHLAMYDIA FACTSHEET

WHAT IS CHLAMYDIA?

Chlamydia is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in Australia. It is especially common among young adults and is important to get tested for. It can occur in the vagina/cervix, penis, rectum (bum), throat, and sometimes in the eyes.

Chlamydia can be passed between people by vaginal, anal or oral sex. It is possible to have rectal chlamydia without having had anal sex. Using condoms during sex will help to protect you from chlamydia.

Chlamydia can last for months, even years, and can cause complications. In women*, chlamydia can cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) if left untreated, which can go on to cause pelvic pain and increase the risk of ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside of the uterus) and infertility. In men*, chlamydia can cause epididymitis (inflammation of the tube at the back of the testicle) which can cause severe pain and affect the quality of sperm.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Over 80% of people infected with chlamydia will have **no symptoms**. This means that you cannot tell if your sexual partners have chlamydia or not. It also means you cannot tell yourself if you have chlamydia. If symptoms occur, they can include:

In the vagina

- Bleeding after sex or between periods
- Changes in vaginal discharge (fluid)
- Pelvic pain, including pain during sex
- Pain when passing urine

In the penis

- Redness at the opening
- Pain or stinging when passing urine
- Discharge from the penis, often watery or milky

In the rectum (bum)

- Discharge (fluid), bleeding or pain

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A CHLAMYDIA TEST?

Your doctor or nurse practitioner may ask you for a urine sample or take a swab from the vagina or anus. Sometimes you are able to take the swab yourself. Ask your doctor about this.

If you have a Medicare card and attend an STI clinic or general practice (GP) that offers bulk billing, you may be able to have a test for free. You can call your clinic to check.

HOW DO YOU TREAT CHLAMYDIA?

Chlamydia is easily cured with a course of antibiotics.

It is very important that you don't have sex, even with condoms, for one week after treatment. It's important that you don't have sex with your partners until one week after they are treated in case they could re-infect you.

If you had any symptoms, they should begin to ease a few days after treatment and disappear after a week. If you still have any symptoms after a week, you will need to see your doctor again.

The cost of antibiotics varies, but it is usually not very expensive. If you have a healthcare card you may be able to just pay for the dispensing fee. You can contact your pharmacy for more information.

*In this factsheet woman refers to a person with a uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries and man refers to a person with a penis and testicles; however, we recognise that people who identify as men can also have female reproductive organs and vice versa.

Been diagnosed with chlamydia? Follow these key steps:

- ✓ Take medication (follow your doctor's advice)
- ✓ Don't have sex for 7 days
- ✓ Let your sexual partners from the past 6 months know that they should be tested and treated
- ✓ Have a retest after 3 months

Remember, if you are sexually active and under 30 years you should get an STI test at least once per year. You should also be tested if you are pregnant.

IF MY TEST IS POSITIVE, DO I NEED TO TELL MY SEXUAL PARTNERS?

Yes, telling your partners is very important. It's important to tell **all** your sexual partners from the past 6 months that they need to get tested and treated, even if they have no symptoms. It will reduce your partner's risk of complications, as well as stop them from passing it back to you or anyone else.

HOW DO I TELL MY PARTNER?

You can tell your partners directly; this could be face-to-face, through a phone call, or by text or message.

If you feel uncomfortable about telling your partner directly, you can use the below websites to send a text or email to your partner. If you prefer, this can be anonymous:

<https://letthemknow.org.au/>

<https://www.bettertoknow.org.au>

<https://www.thedramadownunder.info>



Example message for your partner/s:

Hey, my chlamydia test is positive and you might have it too. You should head to your GP for a STI test. Sorry to give you this news but I thought it was better that you knew.

You can also ask your doctor for help if you need.

Telling your partners is the right thing to do. It may be difficult or awkward, but your partner will appreciate being told.

TIPS FOR TELLING PARTNERS

- Think about what you are going to say to your partner before contacting them
- Have some extra information for your partner on hand, for example a brochure or link to a useful website
- If you are notifying them over the phone, check you have called at a good time, so that they can receive the news privately
- Try to avoid blame. Focus on your health and getting the infection treated

CAN I GET CHLAMYDIA AGAIN?

Yes. It is not uncommon for people who have had chlamydia to get another chlamydia infection (reinfection). Multiple chlamydia infections can increase your risk of developing complications such as pelvic inflammatory disease.

DO I NEED TO BE TESTED AGAIN AFTER TREATMENT?

You should be tested for chlamydia **3 months** after treatment to check that you have not been reinfected. If you have anal chlamydia or you are pregnant you should be tested about **1 month** after treatment instead.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING REINFECTION:

- Make sure you have told your partners from the past six months, and that your current partner/s get tested for chlamydia
- Avoid sex for one week after your treatment (and for one week after your partner's treatment, too)
- Use condoms with all future partners, and get tested regularly

WHERE CAN I GO TO FOR TESTING AND FURTHER ADVICE?

Have a chat to your GP, they can give you advice specific to your situation. You can also seek advice from sexual health or family planning services in your area.

FOR FURTHER STI AND SEXUAL HEALTH INFORMATION:

<https://playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au>

<https://www.mshc.org.au>

<https://www.true.org.au/Health-information/sexually-transmitted-infections-stis>

SOME COMMON QUESTIONS:

I don't have symptoms, are you sure I have it?

You can still have chlamydia without symptoms, it's actually very common to have none at all.

Does this mean my partner cheated on me?

People can have chlamydia for a long time (months or even years) without realising. It's possible that you or your partner already had the infection before you started your relationship.

I think I might have chlamydia. Can I go to a pharmacy and get treatment without seeing a doctor?

Medication to treat chlamydia requires a prescription, so you will need to see a doctor in order to access treatment. Your GP may be able to give you another prescription or some antibiotics for your partner. If you are interested you can ask them if this is possible for you.

Disclaimer: This factsheet was developed for the Management of Chlamydia Cases in Australia (MoCCA) study. The information in this factsheet is adapted from resources developed by Melbourne Sexual Health Centre and Family Planning NSW.

It is designed to provide you with information on chlamydia and is not intended to replace the need for a consultation with your doctor. All clients are strongly advised to check with their doctor about any specific questions or concerns. All effort has been taken to ensure that the information in this factsheet is correct at the time of printing.

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