

Gonorrhoea

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a healthcare professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

What is gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is a disease caused by germs or bacteria. The infection is usually found at the opening of the uterus, or in the tube that carries urine from the bladder. It can also infect the rectum, throat, and pelvic organs. To find out if you have gonorrhoea, you must be examined by a doctor or nurse and have tests taken.

How is it spread?

Gonorrhoea can be spread easily from one infected person to another by having unprotected sex - not using a condom - with someone who has this disease. Gonorrhoea can be spread at any time while a person is infected, whether or not he or she has symptoms. A person can still become infected again in the future even if the person and infection are treated.

What are the symptoms?

In some cases there are no symptoms, and a person can have gonorrhoea and not know it. When symptoms develop, they usually occur two to five days after the person becomes infected, but may not appear for up to thirty days.

Women may notice a change in the amount and colour of fluid from the vagina, pain while urinating, and/or unusual menstrual bleeding. Men may notice a creamy white or yellow fluid from the penis and a burning feeling while urinating. In both men and women, a gonorrhoea infection in the rectum may cause itching, pain, bleeding, or a stringy white fluid when having a bowel movement. Gonorrhoea infections in the throat may cause a sore throat.

What are the complications?

If treated early before any complications begin, gonorrhoea causes no lasting problems. Untreated gonorrhoea can lead to many complications. If this infection is left untreated, it can spread and damage organs in the body.

Women may have difficulty getting pregnant. Men may develop an infection in the testicles, which can make it difficult to make a woman pregnant. Pregnant women may pass the infection to their baby's eyes during childbirth. This may lead to blindness if the baby is untreated. In both men and women, untreated gonorrhoea can cause joint, skin and eye problems.

What is the treatment?

Both the person diagnosed with gonorrhoea, and their sexual partner(s) within the last sixty days, must take antibiotic pills. Any sexual partner(s) of the person diagnosed with gonorrhoea must be treated, regardless of their test results. Follow up tests are recommended six months after treatment.

Important: *Do not have sex until you and your sexual partner(s) have finished all the medication. Take all of the medication exactly as instructed.*

Should I be tested for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)? If you have different sexual partners, or if your partner has different partners, you should also be tested for other STIs including chlamydia, syphilis and HIV (the virus linked to AIDS). You should also consider getting vaccine shots to prevent hepatitis B infection.

Please remember: *The more sexual partners you have, the higher your risk of getting a STI.*

Ways to reduce your risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection

- Have sex with only one partner who has been tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), who has been treated if necessary and who is having sex only with you. The more partners you have, the higher your risk of getting an STD.
- Use a female or male condom every time you have sex. Condoms offer protection against STIs, but they must be used properly.
- Have regular check-ups for STIs.
- Decide not to have sex.
- Receive a Hepatitis B immunization.

Contact Information

For more information contact Yukon Communicable Disease Control at 667-8323. #4 Hospital Road, Whitehorse, Yukon

In the communities call toll-free 1-800-661-0408 extension 8323.

For information on Hepatitis B vaccination, talk to your doctor or contact your local health centre.

Adapted from BC HealthFiles