

Chlamydia

Causative Agent

Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

Mode of Transmission

Chlamydia is usually transmitted through sexual contact, including:

- Vaginal, anal, or oral sex with an infected partner
- Contact with infected genital secretions

Perinatal transmission from mother to baby during childbirth is also possible.

Symptoms

Chlamydia is often asymptomatic, but when symptoms occur, they typically appear 1 to 3 weeks after exposure. Common symptoms include:

- In Women:** Abnormal vaginal discharge, painful urination, pelvic pain, pain during intercourse, abnormal bleeding between periods
- In Men:** Penile discharge, painful urination, testicular pain or swelling
- Rectal Infection:** Pain, discharge, or bleeding
- Oral Infection:** Sore throat (less common)
- Untreated chlamydia can lead to serious complications, such as pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in women, epididymitis in men, and infertility in both sexes.
- If you are pregnant and have chlamydia, you can give the infection to your baby during delivery. This can cause serious health problems for your baby.

Exposure Sources and Risk Factors

- Chlamydia is common.
- Women have double the infection rates than men (especially in 15-25 age group).
- Anyone who is sexually active can get an STI. But some groups are at a more risk including unprotected sex with multiple partners, previous history of STIs, being sexually active at a young age, inconsistent condom use, having a partner with an untreated STI

Screening and Diagnosis

- Because chlamydia is often asymptomatic, regular testing is the only way to find out an infection.
- If you are sexually active, have an honest and open talk with your healthcare provider. Ask them if you should get tested for chlamydia or other STIs.
- If you are a sexually active gay or bisexual man, you should get tested for chlamydia every year. If you are a sexually active woman, you should get tested for chlamydia every year if you are:
 - Younger than 25 years
 - 25 years and older with risk factors, such as new or multiple sex partners, or a sex partner who has a sexually transmitted infection
- Testing is also recommended during pregnancy in some cases.
- Laboratory tests can diagnose chlamydia. Your healthcare provider may ask you to provide a urine sample for testing, or they might use (or ask you to use) a cotton swab to get a vaginal sample.

Preventive Measures

The only way to completely avoid STIs is to not have vaginal, anal, or oral sex.

If you are sexually active, preventing chlamydia involves practicing safe sexual behaviors:

- Using condoms the right way every time you have sex
- Regular STI screening and early treatment
- Avoiding sexual contact with infected individuals until treatment is complete
- Being in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and does not have chlamydia

Treatment

- Chlamydia is curable with inexpensive antibiotics.
- A course of oral antibiotics, usually azithromycin or doxycycline, is the most common treatment for chlamydia infection.
- You should complete the full course of antibiotics as prescribed, even if symptoms disappear before the medication is finished. This ensures that the infection is completely cleared and reduces the risk of complications or transmission to others.
- After treatment, abstain from sexual activity for at least seven days to prevent spreading the infection.
- Additionally, sexual partners should be informed and tested to ensure they receive treatment if necessary.
- Retesting after three months is also recommended, as reinfection is possible.
- If you are pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about getting the correct examination, testing, and treatment. Early detection and treatment during pregnancy will lead to healthier outcomes for your baby.

