

Protecting yourself & your partner

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

- **Always use condoms.** Condoms are the best way of protecting you both from chlamydia and some other STIs. Always use a condom until you are totally sure that you and your partner do not have an STI.
- **Have a long-term relationship** where neither you nor your partner is already infected, and neither of you have other partners.
- **Limit your sex partners.** The fewer people you have sex with, the lower the risk of having sex with someone who has an infection.

Talking about STIs can be really difficult, but any person you have sex with has a right to know if you have an STI. Plan to discuss it when you are feeling relaxed and confident, and not just before you have sex. Your partner will appreciate your honesty and that you don't want to infect him/her.

If you suspect that you have been exposed to chlamydia or another STI, get tested at a doctor's surgery or any of the places listed at the end of this pamphlet.

Feelings

People who learn they have chlamydia, NSU or PID sometimes feel guilty, depressed, anxious or angry.

Talk with your doctor, a counsellor or others who have the same problem. Whatever you say to them will be kept private.

Where to go

Confidential tests and treatment are available from:
(Most of these services are free. Please telephone first to see if you need an appointment)

Your GP or a doctor of your choice or

Fremantle Hospital

Infectious Diseases, B2 Clinic
Alma Street, Fremantle
Telephone: (08) 9431 2149

Royal Perth Hospital

Sexual Health Clinic
Wellington Street, Perth
Telephone: (08) 9224 2178

FPWA

(Family Planning WA)
70 Roe Street, Northbridge
Telephone: (08) 9227 6177
1800 198 205 toll-free

Quarry Health Centre

(For under 25's)
Rear, 7 Quarry Street,
Fremantle
Telephone: (08) 9430 4544

Women's Health Care House

100 Aberdeen Street
Northbridge
Telephone: (09) 9227 8122
1800 998 399 toll-free

Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service

(Perth Aboriginal Medical Service)
156 Wittenoom Street, Perth
Telephone: (08) 9421 3888

And some regional Public Health Units and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.

For more information on these and other STIs contact:

HealthInfo 1300 135 030

Communicable Disease Control Branch

Department of Health, Telephone: (08) 9388 4999
<http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/>

Regional Public Health Units

(those in bold provide clinical services)

Albany	(08) 9892 2662
Bunbury	(08) 9792 2500
Carnarvon	(08) 9941 0560
Derby	(08) 9191 1144
Geraldton	(08) 9956 1950
Kalgoorlie-Boulder	(08) 9021 2622
Northam	(08) 9622 4320
South Hedland	(08) 9140 2377



Department of Health
Government of Western Australia

Produced by Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program
Population Health Division, © Department of Health 2002

OA 2801

Chlamydia, Non-Specific Urethritis (NSU) & Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)

Your
sexual
health

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is a disease you can catch from having unprotected sex with someone who is infected with the chlamydia bacteria.

Though many people have never heard of it, chlamydia is now one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in Australia, particularly among women and men between 15 and 25 years of age.

The trouble is, you might not know you've got it. Often people with chlamydia don't see or feel anything wrong, so they can accidentally pass on chlamydia to their partners.

Pregnant women can pass chlamydia on to their babies. These babies can have infections of the eye, nose or throat, or pneumonia. Sometimes the mother may have infections in the womb.

Infection with chlamydia can also decrease fertility and lead to sterility in both men and women.

Having chlamydia, gonorrhoea or other STIs also makes it easier for you to catch HIV. If you already have HIV, you can become more infectious.

Fortunately, there are tests for chlamydia, and the infection is easy to treat.

Could you have chlamydia?

You are most at risk of chlamydia if you are under 25 and:

- you have changed your sexual partner in the last 2 to 3 months
- you are not using condoms
- you or your sex partner has another STI.

Females

More than half of all girls and women who have chlamydia don't notice any signs at all. Others notice:

- a burning feeling when urinating
- unusual vaginal discharge (pus or stained underpants)
- lower abdominal (tummy) pain, or pain during sex
- unusual bleeding, or spotting, between periods.

Males

Most males who have chlamydia will get some signs, but over a quarter of infected males have mild or no signs at all.

Signs to watch for:

- clear, whitish or grey discharge from the penis
- burning or pain when urinating
- irritation or soreness around the urethra (opening of the penis)
- pain in the rectum or testicles, or with ejaculation.

Chlamydia can also be passed on by oral or anal sex.

If you fit into any of the risk categories – or have any of the signs described – visit a doctor as soon as possible for an STI check-up.

Tests and treatment

To test for chlamydia, your doctor will ask you for some urine, or take a swab (with a cotton bud) from your cervix and/or urethra, and sent it to a laboratory.

The treatment is usually a single dose of tablets. Your sexual partners should also get tested and treated. **Do not have sex** while you or your partner are taking the treatment, as you could infect each other again.

Do not drink alcohol while taking the treatment as the alcohol will stop the treatment from working as well as it should, and you might also forget about avoiding sex.

If you do have chlamydia, all your sexual partners will also need to be checked. However, this is done carefully, respecting everyone's confidentiality.

Non-specific urethritis (NSU)

NSU is the name given to a group of common, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) that affect men. They are *non-specific* because there can be many different causes.

NSU is often called *non-gonococcal urethritis*.

Urethritis is an infection of the urethra, the tube that empties urine from the bladder. NSU commonly causes a discharge (pus) from the penis or pain when urinating.

People with any of these signs should be tested for chlamydia, gonorrhoea and other diseases.

Although you may have an infection, it's not always possible to tell exactly what's causing it.

If you do have NSU, it's important for your partner to get tested, and treated if necessary, whether or not he/she has any signs. You should not have sexual intercourse until all treatment is completed.

If these infections are not found and treated, they can lead to serious diseases and/or be passed on to your sexual partner. Women can develop pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and damaged fallopian tubes, which can cause infertility (unable to have children). Men can develop prostatitis (infection and swelling of the prostate gland), epididymitis (inflammation in the testicles) and infertility.

Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)

Women and girls who have an infection, such as genital chlamydia or gonorrhoea, are at risk of getting infections in their uterus (womb) and fallopian tubes. The risk is even higher if these infections are not found and treated early.

Symptoms may be lower abdominal (tummy) pain, a vaginal discharge, pain during sex, or unusual vaginal bleeding or spotting. One or more attacks of PID can damage the fallopian tubes, which become scarred. This damage can prevent fertilisation. Sometimes if an egg is fertilised, it can't travel along the damaged tube. This causes the egg to stop and grow in the fallopian tube instead of the uterus. This is called an *ectopic pregnancy*, which is very serious and requires emergency medical care.

If you are diagnosed with PID, your partner should also be tested and treated.