

Patient Information:

Gonorrhea Questions and Answers

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What is gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is a curable infection caused by the bacteria neisseria gonorrhea. Gonorrhea is transmitted during vaginal, anal or oral sexual contact. The bacteria targets the cells of the mucous membranes including the surfaces of the urethra, vagina, cervix, anus, rectum, the lining of the eyelid and the throat.

How can I keep from getting gonorrhea?

Abstaining from sexual contact (vaginal, oral, or anal) can prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections. Limiting the number of partners reduces the risk of any sexually transmitted disease. You can get the disease more than once and antibiotics will not protect you from getting gonorrhea again. Don't douche; it removes the normal flora in the vagina that protects you from infection. Correct and consistent use of latex condoms helps prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. The condom needs to be in place before any sexual contact, to prevent infection. A condom should be used with every act of sexual intercourse. Several barrier methods can be used to reduce the risk of transmission of gonorrhea during oral sex; a non-lubricated condom cut-up and opened flat, household plastic wrap or a dental dam.

Are there ever signs and symptoms?

Yes, both men and women may have burning with urination. Men may have a yellow-white discharge from the penis and can also have painful swollen testicles. Women can have a vaginal discharge that is yellow or sometimes bloody, bleeding between menstrual periods, heavy bleeding with periods, nausea, fever, pain when having sex and lower abdominal pain. Rectal gonorrhea can cause discharge, anal itching, soreness, bleeding, and sometimes painful bowel movements. gonorrhea infections of the mouth and throat are usually without symptoms. If gonorrhea infects the eye, you might experience redness, itching and discharge from the eye.

Why should I get tested for gonorrhea?

Most women infected will remain asymptomatic (without symptoms) and symptoms are often mistaken

for bladder or vaginal infection. Most men exhibit symptoms within two to five days after exposure. If left untreated gonorrhea can cause complications in women such as pelvic inflammatory disease, inflammation of the urinary bladder, chronic menstrual difficulties, chronic pelvic pain and infertility. In men, gonorrhea can cause a painful condition with the testicles called epididymitis, infertility and scarring inside the urethra making it hard to urinate. gonorrhea can spread to a person's blood or joints when not treated and become life threatening.

How can I get tested?

Women may visit the Women's Clinic at Schiffert Health Center and request a test or have the test done as part of their annual exam. The test involves using a cotton swab to collect a specimen from a women's cervix. It is not the same as the pap test. Men may visit the Medical Clinic at Schiffert Health Center and request a test. A swab can be taken from the urethra (opening in the penis). Test results are usually available in two days. Results are not given over the phone. Schiffert Health Center requires a second appointment for anyone who tests positive for gonorrhea. You will be called and a follow-up appointment will be scheduled if your test result is positive. You will only be notified if your result is positive.

Is there a charge for testing?

No, there is not a charge for gonorrhea testing.

Can it be treated?

Yes, but all sexual contacts must be treated simultaneously whether they have symptoms or not, to prevent re-infection of partners. Partners should abstain from sexual activity until both people have completed their medication. An antibiotic will be prescribed and should be taken in its entirety even if symptoms go away before it is finished.

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RESOURCES: 1.The National Women's Health Information Center. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Woman's Health, <http://www.4woman.gov/>
2.asha, American Social Health Association, www.ashastd.org/stdfaqs/gonorrhia: Facts and Answers About STD's