
▶ **What is gonorrhea?**

Gonorrhea is a common sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by a bacterium called *Neisseria gonorrhoea*.

▶ **How do I get gonorrhea?**

You can get gonorrhea:

- through unprotected oral, vaginal, or anal sex
- through infected fluid that comes in contact with your eyes, either directly or spread by hand

Gonorrhea can also be passed from mother to baby during childbirth.

▶ **How can I tell if I have gonorrhea?**

Many people who have gonorrhea do not have any signs of infection. You can pass gonorrhea to someone else without even knowing it.

Men might notice one or more of the following:

- a discharge from the penis
- a burning feeling when you pee
- pain in the testicles
- itching at the end of the penis

Women might notice one or more of the following:

- an unusual discharge from the vagina
- a burning feeling when you pee
- pain in the lower abdomen
- abnormal vaginal bleeding, for example, between periods, during or after having sex
- pain during sex

In both men and women:

- With an oral infection- you may have a sore throat.
- With an anal infection- you may have symptoms such as pain, bleeding and discharge.

▶ **How do I get tested for gonorrhea?**

Both men and women can have a test for gonorrhea simply by giving a urine sample or by having a swab taken from the affected area.

For the urine test, it is important not to pee for two hours before the test is taken.

A test for chlamydia, (which is often present when you have gonorrhea), can be done at the same time.

▶ **How is gonorrhea treated?**

When you test positive for gonorrhea you and your partner(s) must be treated. A health care provider will prescribe two antibiotics that will treat and cure gonorrhea.

It is important to:

- be treated to avoid serious infection, re-infection, complications and spread to others
- complete the required treatment
- abstain from unprotected oral, vaginal or anal sex until treatment of partners is complete (i.e. for seven days after both you and your partner have been treated) and as instructed by your health care provider

▶ **Is follow-up necessary?**

You may need follow-up if:

- you had unprotected sex too soon after the treatment
- there is a chance you were re-infected
- you are pregnant
- your symptoms did not go away

If you test positive:

A public health nurse will call you to talk about:

- treatment and prevention
- partner notification
- the recommendation to have repeat testing in six months

▶ **How do I protect myself and others?**

Talk with your partner and make informed decisions BEFORE having sex and plan to:

- abstain or limit your number of sex partners
- ask your partners to be tested before you have sex
- always use condoms or barriers for vaginal, oral and anal sex
- get an STI check-up—especially if either of you have had more than one sex partner or think you have an infection
- consider the effect that alcohol and drug use can have on sexual decision-making
- Consider getting immunized for STIs such as hepatitis B and Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

▶ **Are there any special concerns about gonorrhea?**

- Because there are often no symptoms, you may not seek medical attention. If the infection is not treated you may develop serious health problems.
- Gonorrhea can increase the risk of getting HIV.

For women:

- The infection can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), causing pain and increasing the risk of scarring in the fallopian tubes which can lead to

tubal (ectopic) pregnancy and/or infertility

- If you are pregnant and have untreated gonorrhoea your baby could get eye and other serious infections.

For Men:

The infection can:

- cause pain and swelling in the testicles
- occasionally cause sterility

For both men and women:

- Untreated gonorrhoea can spread to your joints and cause arthritis (called Reiter's syndrome) or spread to other areas of your body.

▶ **References**

[Canadian Guidelines for Sexually Transmitted Infections](#)

Updated August 2015

Gonorrhoea

▶ ***Who can I talk to if I have more questions?***

If you have concerns or questions, call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit the health unit website below.



**simcoe
muskoka**
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

Tel: 705-721-7520
Toll free: 1-877-721-7520
www.simcoemuskokahealth.org

