

# CHLAMYDIA FACT SHEET

## ■ WHAT IS CHLAMYDIA?

Chlamydia is caused by the bacterium called *Chlamydia trachomatis*. It is the most commonly reported sexually transmitted disease (STD) in the US, California, and Los Angeles County. In Long Beach the population with the highest rates of chlamydia are in the 20-24 age range, followed by 25-29. Women account for two-thirds of all chlamydia cases. Of those infected with chlamydia, at least 75% of women and 50% of men experience no symptoms. Additionally, having chlamydia can increase your chances of transmitting or acquiring HIV.

## ■ HOW CAN A PERSON GET CHLAMYDIA?

You can get chlamydia by having unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex with a person who has chlamydia. It is passed through contact with semen, vaginal fluids or discharge. Most people with chlamydia do not know they have it due to the absence or unnoticed symptoms, however they can still infect others. In women, chlamydia infects the cervix and can be found in the vaginal fluids. As for men, chlamydia infects the urethra (where urine and semen come out). This STD can also infect the rectum. It is also possible for an infected pregnant woman to pass it on to her newborn baby during childbirth.

## ■ WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF CHLAMYDIA?

Most people with chlamydia experience no symptoms. But if symptoms develop, they are often mild and may appear 1-3 weeks after being infected.

Symptoms may include:

- Pain during urination.
- A white, cloudy, or watery discharge from the penis.
- Increased discharge from the vagina.
- Women may also have pain in the abdomen, fever, unusual heavy periods or bleeding between periods, or pain during sex.

If chlamydia is left untreated, it can spread in the reproductive organs. In women, untreated chlamydia can cause scarring and inflammation of the fallopian tubes and ovaries, which is a condition called Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). PID can cause infertility and chronic pelvic pain and can increase the risk of a life threatening ectopic (tubal) pregnancy. As for men, untreated chlamydia can lead to a painful infection of the testicles known as epididymitis, which can cause sterility. A

newborn baby to a mother with chlamydia may develop infections in the eyes or lungs.

## ■ WHAT CAN A PERSON DO TO PREVENT PASSING CHLAMYDIA?

Using latex condoms provides excellent protection against chlamydia. The female condom and polyurethane (plastic) condoms are equally effective. Sexually active persons under age 25 should test for chlamydia every six months to a year. If you do test positive for chlamydia refrain from sex until you and your sexual partner(s) have been treated. Infected pregnant women should seek prenatal care early, to prevent passing chlamydia to their newborn.

## ■ HOW DO I GET TESTED FOR CHLAMYDIA?

To get tested for chlamydia, a person should go to a doctor or health clinic.

- For women, the cervix is swabbed during a pelvic exam.
- For men, the inside of the urethra is swabbed.
- If you engage in oral or anal sex you should get tested for chlamydia in your throat and rectum.

Newer chlamydia tests, which require only a urine sample from the patient, are now available at many clinics.

## ■ WHAT IS TREATMENT FOR CHLAMYDIA?

Chlamydia can be treated and cured with certain antibiotics (taken orally). It takes one week for the medicine to completely cure chlamydia. Make sure both you and your sex partner(s) are cured before having sex again. Since different antibiotics cure different diseases, see a doctor before taking any medications. You should not attempt to diagnose yourself or take any medicine that was not prescribed to you. Do not share medications.

## ■ WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT CHLAMYDIA?

California Department of Public Health:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Chlamydia.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/Chlamydia/STDFact-Chlamydia.htm>

For additional questions, call the **HIV/STD Surveillance Program at (562)570-4321**

