

## WHAT IS CHLAMYDIA?

- Pronounced "cla MID ee-uh", is a common sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by the bacterium, *Chlamydia trachomatis*, which can damage a woman's reproductive organs.
- Even though symptoms of Chlamydia are usually mild or absent, serious complications that cause irreversible damage, including infertility, can occur "silently" before a woman ever recognizes a problem.
- Chlamydia also can cause discharge from the penis of an infected man.
- It is recognized especially in the NT, as the highest transmissible STI.

## HOW DO YOU GET IT?

- Chlamydia can be transmitted during vaginal, anal, or oral sex.
- Chlamydia can also be passed from an infected mother to her baby during vaginal childbirth.

## HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU HAVE CHLAMYDIA

**Sometimes there are no symptoms. You could have Chlamydia and pass it on to someone else, without knowing that the infection is in your body.**

- In women, the bacteria initially infect the cervix and the urethra (urine passage).
- Women who have symptoms might have an abnormal vaginal discharge or a burning sensation when urinating.
- When the infection spreads from the cervix to the fallopian tubes (tubes that carry fertilized eggs from the ovaries to the uterus), some women still have no signs or symptoms; others have lower abdominal pain, low back pain, nausea, fever, pain during intercourse, or bleeding between menstrual periods.

- Chlamydia infection of the cervix can spread to the rectum.
- Men with signs or symptoms might have a discharge from their penis or a burning sensation when urinating.
- Men might also have burning and itching around the opening of the penis. Pain and swelling in the testicles are uncommon.
- Men or women who have anal intercourse may acquire a Chlamydia infection in the rectum, which can cause rectal pain, discharge, or bleeding.
- Chlamydia can also be found in the throats of women and men having oral sex with an infected partner.

## WHO IS AT RISK?

- Any sexually active person can be infected with Chlamydia.
- The greater the number of sex partners, the greater the risk of infection.

## WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF CHLAMYDIA?

**In both males and females Chlamydia can cause infertility.**

### In females:

- There is an increased risk of ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy in the fallopian tube) if the tubes have been infected in the past and fertility.
- Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (P.I.D.) can persist, even if you have not been reinfected. This causes pain in the pelvic area and feeling generally unwell.

### In males:

- Chlamydia may cause an illness called Reiter Syndrome with inflammation of the eyes, joints and urethra.

## WHAT IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE IT?

- For women, an STI test usually includes samples of vaginal secretions, taken with what looks like a long cotton bud. This is called a swab, and can be done at the same time as a Pap smear if this is due.
- In some situations a urine test may be needed for women or men, so don't go to the toilet for at least 2 hours before your appointment. This is because passing urine can wash away infected cells from the bladder opening, which can then take a couple of hours to build up again.



**Either of these collection procedures will be used to test for Chlamydia**



## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO KNOW THE RESULTS?

Test results usually take about a week to come back.

Sometimes someone with symptoms of an STI can be given treatment without waiting for results.

**If results show you have an infection, sexual partners also need to be tested and treated, otherwise re-infection can occur**

### WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

- Antibiotics - tablets or capsules taken by mouth.
- Take all the prescribed treatment and medication.
- Return to your doctor if symptoms do not improve.
- It is important for the person with the infection to be treated and also for the sexual partner/partners to be examined.
- Sexual intercourse should be avoided during treatment.

### HOW DO PEOPLE FEEL WHEN THEY HAVE CHLAMYDIA?

- Often, people suffer a degree of shock and surprise when they find out that they have a sexually transmitted infection.
- Sometimes there are difficulties in their relationship as a result of this.
- Professional counselling may be appropriate to resolve some of these problems.

### HOW DO YOU PREVENT THE EFFECTS OF CHLAMYDIA?

- Recognise if you are at risk and seek diagnosis promptly.
- If you have had unprotected sex, then you're at risk.
- You are at risk if you have more than one sexual partner, or if your partner has more than one sexual partner.
- If you are found to have chlamydia, be sure to take all your treatment as prescribed.
- You should tell anyone with whom you have had sexual intercourse so that they can get treated also.
- The **use of condoms** help prevent the spread of chlamydia.

### IT IS IMPORTANT .....

\* If you feel you are at risk see your Doctor or Family Planning Clinic.



For more information..... please call our

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or visit [www.fpwnt.com.au/links](http://www.fpwnt.com.au/links)

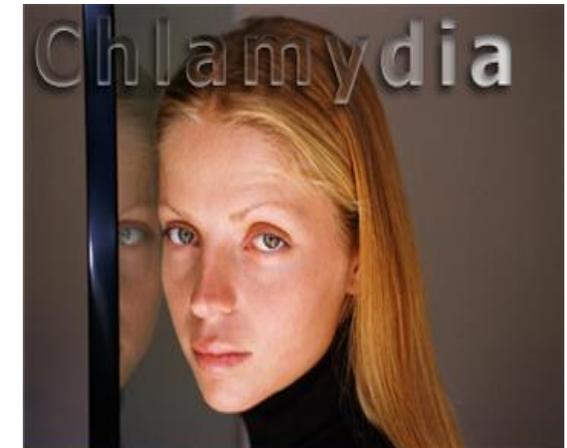
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### MISSION STATEMENT

*Family Planning Welfare Association of the NT exists to provide quality health care and education services in sexual and reproductive health.*