

## **CHLAMYDIA AND PELVIC INFLAMMATORY DISEASE (PID)**

- Chlamydia is a common condition that is easily spread through sexual contact
- Chlamydia infection can have serious consequences for women, such as Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)
- Chlamydia is easily prevented by using condoms during sex

### **WHAT CAUSES CHLAMYDIA AND PID?**

Chlamydia infection is a common sexually-transmitted disease. It has received more attention since it was linked to infertility in women.

The two most common causes of PID are chlamydia trachomatis and neisseria gonorrhoea.

In women either of these infections may spread upwards from the cervix (the opening to the uterus or womb) to the internal organs, the uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries, resulting in PID. This may lead to infertility or permanent pelvic pain.

In men, chlamydia commonly affects the urethra (the inside of the penis). This is classed as non-specific urethritis (NSU).

Less commonly, chlamydia infection can occur in either sex in the throat or anus, where it usually causes no symptoms.

Chlamydia infection in any location can be spread to sexual partners.

### **HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU HAVE CHLAMYDIA?**

In women, chlamydia infection often produces no symptoms in its early phases. Symptoms may include an unusual vaginal discharge or a burning sensation during urination.

The symptoms of PID include lower abdominal pain and tenderness, deep pain during sexual intercourse, heavy and painful periods and fever.

In men, chlamydia may also cause no symptoms, or may produce the symptoms of NSU: a white or clear discharge from the penis accompanied by stinging during urination. Anal chlamydia seldom produces symptoms: it is often detected only when a partner becomes infected.

### **HOW CHLAMYDIA IS SPREAD**

Chlamydia is readily transmitted during vaginal sex, and can also be spread during anal or oral sex, whether heterosexual or homosexual. If early symptoms appear, it is likely that infection has taken place during the previous few weeks. If infection is not detected until advanced symptoms like PID appear, the source of infection may have been a partner many months earlier.

Because chlamydia infection can have serious consequences for women, men have a particular responsibility not to pass the infection to their female sexual partners. Sexually-active men should have regular check-ups for chlamydia.

### **WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF CHLAMYDIA?**

#### ***For females***

- . there is an increased risk of ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy in the fallopian tube) if the tubes have been infected in the past.
- . pelvic inflammatory disease (P.I.D.) can persist, even if you have not been re-infected. This causes pain in the pelvic area and feeling generally unwell.

#### ***For males***

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

#### ***For both***

- . can cause permanent damage to the tubes which are vital in reproduction. It can cause infertility.

### **WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?**

Specific vaginal swabs need to be taken. The infection will not show up on a pap smear.

Early chlamydia infection in women and men can be treated with a 10-day course of antibiotics. Advanced cases and PID in women require longer courses of antibiotics, which in severe cases may need to be administered intravenously in hospital.

You should tell anyone with whom you have had sexual intercourse so they can get treated also.

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?**

- The use of condoms during vaginal and anal sex provides effective protection against chlamydia infection.
- Because of the lack of specific symptoms of early infection in women, sexually-active women are advised to have checks for chlamydia infection at least once a year.
- Women who have had PID need to be particularly careful about re-infection, since the risk of infertility increases greatly with renewed infection.

### **IT IS IMPORTANT .....**

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

\* Take all the prescribed treatment and medication.

\* Return to your doctor if symptoms do not improve.

\* Practice Safe Sex

### **For more information.....**

please call our  
Client Information & Support Service  
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NT HEALTH INFO LINE  
1800 186 026

CLINIC 34 - 89 992678

or visit [www.fpahealth.org.au](http://www.fpahealth.org.au)

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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*