

GONORRHOEA

– other names include “gono” or “the Clap”

Gonorrhoea often has no symptoms and can lead to infertility if left untreated. It is easily passed on through unprotected sex.

CAUSE

Gonorrhoea is caused by a bacterium called *Neisseria gonorrhoea*.

SYMPTOMS

Some people with gonorrhoea may have no symptoms.

Women may experience:

- Pain when urinating
- Unusual vaginal discharge
- Abdominal pain/pain during vaginal sex

Men may experience:

- A burning feeling when urinating
- A pus-like discharge from the penis

Both women and men may experience a sore throat or discharge from the rectum if either of these areas are infected.

HOW IS GONORRHOEA TRANSMITTED?

It is transmitted through an exchange of body fluids (vaginal fluids, semen, blood) during unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sexual activity

Gonorrhoea can also be spread from a mother with gonorrhoea at birth and is a cause of blindness in newborns.

You will not get it from toilet seats, swimming pools or sharing towels.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE IT?

The only way to know if you have gonorrhoea is to get tested by a nurse/doctor.

If you have no symptoms, usually a urine test is all that is required, though a vaginal swab is often recommended for women (you may be able to take this yourself). If a man has symptoms such as a discharge from the penis, swabs are taken of the discharge and possibly from the opening at the end of the penis.

Your nurse or doctor may test for Chlamydia, as it is often present at the same time as gonorrhoea.

It is important to remember that a Pap smear *only* tests for changes to the cervix. You can be tested for STI's at the same time as your pap smear. Discuss this with your clinician.

TREATMENT/MANAGEMENT

Gonorrhoea is treated with a course of antibiotics. All sexual partners are treated at the same time, as reinfection from untreated partners is quite common. You should avoid sex for seven days after the treatment.

If gonorrhoea is left untreated it can lead to infertility in both women and men, and can sometimes cause infections in joints and skin.

For women, the most serious danger from gonorrhoea is that it can spread into the fallopian tubes and cause pelvic inflammatory disease (blocked tubes).

In men, inflammation of the epididymis (the thin tube leading from the testes to the vas deferens where the sperm mature) may develop, causing it to become

swollen and painful. This can lead to infertility if not treated.

Having gonorrhoea also increases your chances of contracting other infections, such as HIV.

PREVENTION

Using dams (a dam is a thin latex square which is held over the vaginal or anal area during oral sex) and condoms helps to reduce the risk of contracting gonorrhoea as they stop body fluids (vaginal fluids, semen, blood) from being exchanged.

If you have had unprotected sex in the past, get tested by your GP or Family Planning Clinic. Many people with gonorrhoea don't have any symptoms and are unaware of the risk of passing it on.

Gonorrhoea is a **Notifiable Disease** and by law, must be reported. You must advise your partner/partners that you have tested positive for gonorrhoea. They are advised to see a Family Planning Clinic or GP for testing and treatment.

Practising safe sex reduces the risk of contracting other sexually transmissible infections (STI's) and HIV

For more information.....

- please call our Client Information & Support Service 8948-0144
- or NT HEALTH INFO LINE 1800 186 026
- or visit www.fpahealth.org.au

IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY WE CAN BE FOUND AT:

Darwin Head Office
Unit 2, The Clock Tower,
Dick Ward Drive
Coconut Grove
Telephone: (08) 89480144

Clinics only at:
Palmerston Community Care
Centre
Telephone: (08) 8948 0144

Katherine Community Care Centre
Telephone: (08) 8971 3153

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Family Planning
Welfare Association of NT Inc.

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GONORRHOEA

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