

Gonorrhea is an infection spread by bacteria. Also known as “the clap” or “the drip”, it affects both women and men. Women can get it in moist, warm areas such as the vagina, reproductive organs, anus, mouth, throat, and eyes.

Gonorrhea

How is it spread?

Women get gonorrhea from sexual contact with someone who is infected. Anyone who has gonorrhea can spread it to others. Gonorrhea can be spread through oral, vaginal, and sexual contact between:

- ◆ Men and women.
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What are signs of gonorrhea in women?

Some women and men can have gonorrhea without any signs. For women, signs include:

- ◆ Painful or burning urination.
- ◆ Increased vaginal discharge.
- ◆ Bleeding between periods or after sex.
- ◆ Vaginal itching and irritation.
- ◆ Discomfort or pain during sex.

See your health care provider to be tested if you have signs of gonorrhea.

- ◆ Urgent or increased need to urinate.
- ◆ Anal discharge, pain, bleeding or itching.
- ◆ Fever, abdominal pain, rashes, and swelling or pain in joints over time.
- ◆ Sore throat.
- ◆ Red or itchy eyes.
- ◆ Eye discharge.

Women can get or spread HIV more easily if they have gonorrhea.

How do you know if you have gonorrhea?

The only way to know if you have gonorrhea is by a medical exam. Your health care provider can examine you and test for it. Lab samples may be taken from the vagina, bladder, bowels, throat, urine, or eyes. Your health care provider may ask to test you for other infections at the same time. See your health care provider to be tested for gonorrhea each year if you:

- ◆ Are age 25 or younger and are sexually active.
- ◆ Are older than 25 with new or multiple sex partners.
- ◆ Do not practice safe sex.
- ◆ Are having sex with someone who might be having sex with others.
- ◆ Are pregnant.

Get tested for gonorrhea if your sex partner has it.

How is it treated?

Gonorrhea can be treated and cured with antibiotics. Always finish antibiotic treatment, even if signs of gonorrhea go away. Do not have sex until after treatment and signs of it are gone. See your health care provider if your signs do not go away after finishing treatment.

What can happen if you have gonorrhea for a long time?

Some women have no signs of gonorrhea until they are very sick and have permanent damage to their health. If untreated, gonorrhea can cause severe problems that include:

- ◆ Problems getting pregnant.
- ◆ Pregnancy outside of the uterus.
- ◆ Pain and infections in the abdomen.
- ◆ The spread of gonorrhea to the blood, heart and joints.

Tell current and most recent sex partners of the infection.

If you have gonorrhea:

- ◆ Always finish all antibiotic treatment.
- ◆ Do not have sex with someone who has gonorrhea or has not finished treatment (to prevent re-infection).
- ◆ Tell current and recent sex partners of the infection so they can get checked.
- ◆ Know that it can raise the risk of getting and spreading HIV.

How can you avoid gonorrhea?

- ◆ Avoid sexual contact.
- ◆ Have safer sex:
 - Reduce the number of sexual partners.
 - Condoms, when used correctly, can reduce the risk of getting gonorrhea. Each time you have sex use a condom (male or female type):
 - Before vaginal sex.
 - Before anal sex.
 - Before oral sex.
 - Have sex with only one partner who does not have sex with others and does not have gonorrhea.
- ◆ Know that other forms of birth control do not protect against gonorrhea.



What about pregnancy?

Gonorrhea can cause miscarriages or early labor in pregnant women. If you are pregnant and have gonorrhea, you can pass the infection to your baby during birth. Your baby can have:

- ◆ Blindness.
- ◆ Joint infections.
- ◆ Blood infections.

All pregnant women should be tested for gonorrhea. If treated, most problems in pregnancy and birth can be avoided.

Mothers who have gonorrhea can spread it to their own newborn babies.

For more on gonorrhea see:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

Gonorrhea – CDC Fact Sheet

www.cdc.gov/std/gonorrhea/stdfact-gonorrhea.htm

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID/NIH):

Gonorrhea

www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/gonorrhea/Pages/default.aspx

U.S. National Library of Medicine:

Gonorrhea

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/gonorrhea.html

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office on Women's Health:

Gonorrhea fact sheet

www.womenshealth.gov/faq/gonorrhea.cf