



# Gonorrhea

(Gon-or-E-aa)

## What is Gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is a bacterial sexually transmitted infection (STI) that is passed from an infected person through fluids (saliva, vaginal secretions, and semen) during vaginal, oral, or anal sex. Additionally, it is possible for an infected person to transmit this infection to their baby during vaginal birth.

## What Are the Signs of Gonorrhea?

Most people who are infected do NOT experience any symptoms. This infection is much more likely to cause symptoms for those with a penis, than for those with a vagina. An infected person CAN transmit this infection when they are NOT experiencing symptoms.

For infected people who do experience symptoms, they may report the following:

- Abnormal vaginal bleeding
- Lower abdominal pain
- Painful intercourse
- Difficulty urinating/burning sensation
- Abnormal vaginal discharge
- Rectal pain/discharge
- Fever/chills/"flu-like" symptoms
- Discharge from the urethra (tip of the penis)
  - Urethral Itch
- Testicular pain and swelling

If you experience any of these symptoms, see a doctor as soon as possible. These symptoms can also be indicators of an infection other than Gonorrhea.

## How Long Will It Take for Symptoms to Appear?

If symptoms are present, they will generally appear three to five days from exposure. **Remember:** Many infected people do NOT experience any symptoms. The only sure way for an infected person to know they have Gonorrhea is to get tested.

## **When Should I be Tested for Gonorrhea?**

If you are sexually active (or have been in the past) you should be getting tested for STIs on a yearly basis. If you are changing sexual partners frequently, you should be getting tested more frequently. A person should be tested immediately if they are experiencing symptoms, and/or if their partner has tested positive for Gonorrhea.

## **How Will a Doctor Test for Gonorrhea?**

- A swab during a pap test.
- A swab can also be taken from the urethra (inside the tip of the penis).
  - Testing via urine sample is also an option.

## **What Happens if I Test Positive for Gonorrhea?**

The most common strains of Gonorrhea are curable with antibiotics. However, in some cases, symptoms may still remain for a short time after treatment.

If **you have** symptoms, you should start to see improvements in a few days. It is recommended that have a follow-up test either after you have finished your medication and had one period, or one month after finishing the medication. The only way to be sure you do not have Gonorrhea and do not pass it on is to finish all the medication and have a follow-up test!

## **How Do I Talk to My Sexual Partner(s) About Gonorrhea?**

If you test positive for Gonorrhea and you currently have a sexual partner, they should be treated by a doctor as well. Tell them that you have been diagnosed with Gonorrhea, and let your partner know what their risks are. Your health professional or Planned Parenthood can help you with this! Talk to a health professional about how long to refrain from sexual activity once the medication is finished.

If you cannot avoid having sex for this period of time, use protection for vaginal, oral and anal sex at all times.

**Remember** that no type of sexual protection offers 100% protection against STIs. Therefore, if you are sexually active during your treatment time, you are at risk of passing the infection to your partner or contracting it again. Since a person can have Gonorrhea more than once, you and your partner should continue with yearly testing.

## **What Happens if Gonorrhea is Left Undiagnosed?**

- Gonorrhea can lead to the development of Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). PID is an infection of the uterus and fallopian tubes that can cause pain and lead to the buildup of scar tissue. This scar tissue can cause infertility (inability to have biological children).

- Gonorrhoea can lead to the development of Epididymo-orchitis. This can include pain, swelling, tenderness, and fluid around the testicles and epididymis. In rare cases, untreated Gonorrhoea can also lead to infertility in those with a penis.

## **How Can I Protect Myself from Gonorrhoea?**

You will never be 100% protected from Gonorrhoea when engaging in any type of sex. However, there are ways to help protect you and your partner(s):

- **Vaginal Sex (including sex toys):** external (penis) or internal (vaginal) condom (latex is best).
- **Oral Sex (penis):** Non-lubricated external (penis) condom (with water-based lubricant used on penis and on outside of condom.) The lubricated condoms can have an unpleasant taste.
- **Oral Sex (vagina):** Dental dam. *Please see Planned Parenthood's pamphlet on Dental Dams for more info on how to make and use these!*
- **Oral Sex (anus):** around the anus (also called anninlingus or "rimming"): condom or dental dam.
- **Anal Sex (including sex toys):** Latex external (penis) condom **OR** non-latex external (penis) condom.
- **Mutual Masturbation:** Washing hands after masturbating your partner and before touching your own mouth and/or boxer short area.

If you would like further information on STIs, testing and/or safer sex practices, please feel free to drop by our Centre or contact us by phone or email. If you want to see a doctor for confidential STI testing, please call us to make an appointment.

## **Sexual Health Questions? We have Answers!**

### **Location:**

47 St. Clare Avenue, St. John's, NL, A1C 2J9

### **Hours:**

Monday: 9am - 4:30pm  
 Tuesday: 9am - 4:30pm  
 Wednesday: 9am - 4:30pm  
 Thursday: 12pm – 6:00pm  
 Friday: 9am - 4:30pm

### **Phone:**

709-579-1009  
 Toll Free: 1-877-NO MYTHS  
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**Website:**

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