

Gonorrhea

What is gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea (gon-oh-REE-uh) is a sexually transmitted disease, or STD, that can affect the penis, vagina, throat, or rectal area. If it is not treated, it can spread to the blood and joints. Women who have gonorrhea may not be able to have children if the disease is not treated.

Who gets it?

Anyone who has sex with an infected person can get gonorrhea. It can spread through oral, vaginal, or anal sex. You are more likely to get it if you have unprotected sex or have more than one partner.

How do I know if I have it?

Symptoms may include discharge from the penis in men, or from the vagina in women. However, women usually do not have symptoms unless the infection is bad. Men should see their doctor if they have discharge. Women should see their doctor if they have discharge or pain in the lower stomach. Women who are younger than 25 years or who live in areas where infection is common should be tested yearly. Your doctor will test a sample from your vagina or urine if he or she thinks you may have gonorrhea.

How can I lower my risk of getting it?

Not having sex is the best way to avoid gonorrhea and other STDs. If you have sex, use condoms to lower your risk. You should get tested if you have had unprotected sex. If you have an STD, don't have sex until you and your partner have been treated. You can get infected again if your partner is not treated.

How is it treated?

It can be treated with antibiotics. As many as 40 percent of people with gonorrhea also have chlamydia, another STD. Because of this, if you have gonorrhea, you will also be treated for chlamydia. If you have a bad infection, you may need to be admitted to the hospital to get medicine through an IV.

Where can I get more information?

AAFP's Patient Education Resource
<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/sexually-transmitted-infections.html>

American Social Health Association
<http://www.ashastd.org/std-sti/gonorrhea.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/std/gonorrhea/default.htm>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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