



## CITY OF PHILADELPHIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION OF DISEASE CONTROL

# *CHLAMYDIA* (Chlamydia trachomatis)

### **What Is *Chlamydia*?**

*Chlamydia* is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) that is caused by a bacterium. It is the most common STD in the United States. There are more than three million new cases each year.

### **Who gets *Chlamydia*?**

Anyone who has unprotected sex with someone infected with *Chlamydia* can become infected.

### **How do you get *Chlamydia*?**

*Chlamydia* is most often spread by sexual contact with an infected person. This includes penis to vagina, penis to mouth, penis to rectum and mouth to vagina contact.

*Chlamydia* can be spread from a mother to a child during birth if the mother has this infection.

### **For how long is a person able to spread *Chlamydia*?**

From the time a person is infected with *Chlamydia*, he or she can spread the disease. A person can continue to spread the infection until they have completed treatment.

### **What are the symptoms of *Chlamydia*?**

Many people who have *Chlamydia* do not have any symptoms. The only way to know for certain, whether you have *Chlamydia* or not is to be tested. Some men may experience a runny white discharge or burning with urination. Some women may notice a change in their vaginal discharge, itching, or burning on urination. Most women have no signs or symptoms until complications such as pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) develop.

## How soon do symptoms appear?

[Many people who have \*Chlamydia\* never develop symptoms.](#)

*Chlamydia* is a very slow growing bacterium and if symptoms occur, they may take a few weeks to appear. People with no symptoms are at greater risk for developing complications related to *Chlamydia*. These people also spread this infection unknowingly.

## How is *Chlamydia* diagnosed?

*Chlamydia* is diagnosed with laboratory testing. Some laboratory tests use specimens from the cervix or penis; some laboratory tests use urine specimens.

## What is the treatment for *Chlamydia*?

*Chlamydia* is treated with antibiotics (pills or shots). *Chlamydia* is not treated with Penicillin. It is important to see a doctor to get the correct treatment. You must take all the prescribed medicine, otherwise more persistent strains of the infection can result.

## What happens if *Chlamydia* goes untreated?

If a person is not treated for *Chlamydia*, there is a good chance complications will occur. Because women do not always have symptoms, *Chlamydia* frequently goes unnoticed for a long time. This can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). Symptoms of PID may include: pain during sex, pain in the lower back or pelvis, unusual vaginal discharge, nausea and fever.

PID can lead to sterility (not being able to have babies), ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy in the tubes), and chronic pelvic pain.

Unfortunately, treatment with antibiotics at this stage may be too late to offset some of *Chlamydia*'s complications.

Men may suffer from swelling of the testicles and penis.

## How can *Chlamydia* be prevented?

Abstinence is the only sure way to prevent *Chlamydia*. If you choose to have sex you should limit the number of sexual partners you have and use a condom each and every time you have sex.

If you are diagnosed with *Chlamydia* make sure all of your sexual partners seek medical attention and are treated.

## IT IS IMPORTANT TO GET SCREENED!

Because *Chlamydia* often has no symptoms if you are sexually active you should get tested for *Chlamydia* regularly.