



# Gonorrhea Fact Sheet

Gonorrhea is a Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) caused by a type of bacteria called *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. Gonorrhea can infect men, women, and newborns. Gonorrhea is one of the most common bacterial STDs in the United States.

## Q: How is gonorrhea spread?

**A:** Gonorrhea passes from one person to another during vaginal and anal sex. It also passes to the throat through oral sex (penis in mouth) – or from the throat to the penis. A pregnant woman can pass gonorrhea to her baby during birth, causing serious eye infections.

## Q: What are the signs and symptoms of gonorrhea?

**A:** Most **WOMEN** with gonorrhea have **NO SYMPTOMS!**  
If you do have symptoms, they could include:

- Fluid from the vagina that smells, looks, or feels different;
- Bleeding from the vagina or the anus that is not normal;
- Pain with urination (peeing);
- Lower stomach pain, especially when having sex.

**Most MEN with gonorrhea have NO SYMPTOMS!**

If you do have symptoms, they could include:

- Fluid from the head of the penis or the anus that is not normal;
- Pain or itching on the head of the penis;
- Pain with urination. (peeing)

 **EVEN WITHOUT SYMPTOMS, A PERSON WITH GONORRHEA CAN GIVE GONORRHEA TO A SEX PARTNER(S).**

## Q: Is gonorrhea serious?

**A:** **Yes!** Even without symptoms, gonorrhea can cause serious damage.

**Women** who have gonorrhea can get pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), a very bad infection in the lower abdomen. PID happens when the bacteria move up into the womb, female organs, and surrounding areas. PID can cause scars and other damage that make women infertile (unable to have children). PID can also make women more likely to have a “tubal pregnancy”, which can cause death.

**Men** can sometimes develop an infection of the testicles that causes pain and swelling.

**Newborns** can develop serious eye infections.

 **PLUS, A PERSON WITH GONORRHEA HAS A GREATER CHANCE OF GIVING OR GETTING HIV.**

## Q: How is gonorrhea treated?

- A:**
- Your health care provider will give you medicine to cure gonorrhea infection.
  - If you have gonorrhea, your partner(s) must be treated even if they have no symptoms. If they are not treated, they can give the infection back to you, or infect others.
  - It is important to get tested again for gonorrhea about 3 months after your treatment.
  - If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant, be sure to tell your doctor or nurse.
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## Q: How can I avoid getting gonorrhea?

- A:**
- Abstinence (not having sex) is the only sure way to avoid infection.
  - Plan Ahead:** Think about protecting yourself. Talk with your sex partner(s) about STDs and the need to protect yourself. Then, you can choose not to have sex (abstinence), or decide to:
    - Use a male condom with each sex partner.
    - Use a female condom when a male condom cannot be used.
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### HIV IS ALSO A STD!

When you catch gonorrhea, you could also be getting HIV.  
Birth control pills or a birth control shot cannot protect you against gonorrhea or other STDs.



**USING LATEX CONDOMS CORRECTLY EVERY TIME YOU HAVE SEX CAN REDUCE THE CHANCE FOR TRANSMISSION OF GONORRHEA, HIV, AND OTHER STDs.**

## Q: Where can I get more information about STDs and referrals for STD testing?

- A:**
- **Phone:** Talk to a trained operator who can answer your questions and provide information about STD testing. **In English and Español 24 hours/day, 7 days/week:** Toll-free: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636); TTY for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing: 1-888-232-6348
  - **Internet:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/>  
[http://www.cdc.gov/std/healthcomm/fact\\_sheets.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/std/healthcomm/fact_sheets.htm)

**Talk to your own health care provider, or call your county health department by looking for the telephone number in the phone book (white pages) under county government. Ask to speak to someone in the STD clinic or STD program for more information about gonorrhea.**