

# Gonorrhoea The Facts



As this brochure contains only general information, professional advice from your medical practitioner should be sought before applying the information in this brochure to particular circumstances. You should not rely on any information contained in this brochure without first obtaining professional advice.



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# GONORRHOEA

## What is Gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the bacterium *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. The bacteria infects the reproductive tract, including the cervix (opening to the womb), uterus (womb) and fallopian tubes (egg canals) in women, and in the urethra (urine canal) in women and men. The bacterium has been shown to infect non-genital areas like the mouth, throat, eyes and anus.

## How do people get Gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is spread by unprotected oral, vaginal or anal sex. Gonorrhoea can also be spread from mother to baby during delivery. The likelihood of transmission per act of unprotected intercourse is approximately 20% to insertive partner and approximately 50% to receptive partner. Condoms have a high protective effect against the disease. A person with untreated gonorrhoea can remain infectious up to 12 months and therefore transmit infection to others.

## What are the signs and symptoms of Gonorrhoea?

You may have no symptoms at all. The best way to find out is to have an STI check-up.

**Women:** The symptoms of gonorrhoea are often mild, but most women who are infected have no symptoms. If symptoms are present they may include a painful or burning sensation when urinating, increased vaginal discharge or vaginal bleeding between periods, pain in the abdomen, sore throat and/or eye infection.

**Men:** Men may complain of burning or tingling sensation when urinating, stickiness or discharge from the opening of the penis, sore throat and/or eye infection.

## What are the complications of Gonorrhoea?

- Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID): can lead to long-lasting chronic pelvic pain and infertility.
- Ectopic pregnancy: a life-threatening condition in which a fertilised egg grows outside the uterus, usually in a fallopian tube.
- Epididymitis: a painful condition of the ducts attached to the testicles that may lead to infertility if left untreated.
- Gonorrhoea can spread to the blood or joints.
- People with Gonorrhoea can more easily contract HIV; the virus that causes AIDS.

## How is Gonorrhoea diagnosed?

Gonorrhoea can be easily diagnosed in the laboratory. The test can be performed on a urine sample and/or a swab collected by the doctor from the cervix, urethra, throat, rectum or eyes depending on the site of infection.

## What is the treatment for Gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is easily cured with antibiotics. It is important to trace sexual partners for evaluation, testing and treatment; otherwise, reinfection is possible. You should refrain from sexual activity till you and your partner have completed the course of the treatment. If symptoms persist after treatment, please see your doctor. Although medication will stop the infection, it will not repair any permanent damage done by the disease.

