

Gonorrhea

What is Gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is a common sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the bacterium *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. It can infect the genitals, rectum, and throat and is prevalent among people aged 15-24 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2023a).

Signs and Symptoms

- **Penis owners may experience:**
 - Burning sensation during urination
 - White, yellow, or green urethral discharge
 - Pain or swelling in one or both testicles (Mayo Clinic, 2023)
- **Vulva owners may experience:**
 - Painful urination
 - Increased vaginal discharge
 - Vaginal bleeding between periods
 - Mild symptoms mistaken for a bladder or vaginal infection (CDC, 2023a)
- **Rectal Infection Symptoms (in both penis and vulva owners) include:**
 - Discharge, anal itching, soreness, or pain
 - Bleeding and painful bowel movements (Planned Parenthood, 2023)

Note: Gonorrhea infections can sometimes be asymptomatic, especially in vulva owners, making it important to undergo regular STI screenings if sexually active.

Incubation Period

Gonorrhea symptoms typically appear within 2 to 10 days after exposure but may take up to a month (Mayo Clinic, 2023).

Transmission

Gonorrhea is transmitted through vaginal, anal, or oral sex with an infected person. It can also be passed from mother to baby during childbirth, potentially causing severe eye infections in newborns (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023).

Complications of Untreated Gonorrhea

- Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) in vulva owners, which can lead to infertility, ectopic pregnancy, and chronic pelvic pain.
- Epididymitis in penis owners, causing pain and, in rare cases, infertility (CDC, 2023b).
- Disseminated Gonococcal Infection (DGI), where the infection spreads to the bloodstream, potentially causing joint pain, inflammation, or skin rashes (WHO, 2023).

Gonorrhea and Antibiotic Resistance

Gonorrhea has become increasingly resistant to many antibiotics, making it harder to treat. The CDC now recommends a single dose of ceftriaxone as the primary treatment, and, in some cases, combination therapy is considered (CDC, 2023b).

Prevention

1. **Use of Condoms and Dental Dams:**
 - Consistent use of condoms or dental dams during vaginal, anal, and oral sex reduces the risk of transmission (American Sexual Health Association [ASHA], 2023).
2. **Communication with Sexual Partners:**
 - Discuss STI testing and safer sex practices with partners, and consider mutual monogamy with partners who have tested negative for STIs (Planned Parenthood, 2023).



Gonorrhea

Prevention continued

3. Regular Screenings:

- **The CDC recommends annual gonorrhea screenings for:**
 - Sexually active vulva owners under 25
 - Pregnant vulva owners at risk for STIs
 - Penis owners who have sex with penis owners (CDC, 2023b; WHO, 2023).

Testing and Treatment

- **Testing:** Gonorrhea can be diagnosed through urine tests or swabs from the affected area, such as the urethra, cervix, throat, or rectum.
- **Treatment:** Gonorrhea is treated with antibiotics, typically ceftriaxone. It's crucial to complete the full course of antibiotics, even if symptoms resolve early, to ensure the infection is fully eradicated (CDC, 2023b).

Note: Sexual partners should also be tested and treated if necessary to prevent reinfection. Avoid sexual activity until treatment is completed and symptoms have resolved (Mayo Clinic, 2023).

Key Takeaways

- Gonorrhea is preventable through consistent use of protection, regular screenings, and open communication with sexual partners.
- Early treatment is essential to avoid severe complications and reduce the spread of the infection.
- Stay informed about antibiotic resistance and follow prescribed treatments carefully to ensure effectiveness.

For more information on gonorrhea prevention, symptoms, and treatment options, speak with your healthcare provider or visit reliable health resources.

References

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