

## Keep an eye out for Chlamydia and Gonorrhea... AKA THE CLAP

Summer may be over -- and wild events like Burning Man are in our rear view mirror -- but that doesn't mean that we should stop looking out for STIs. Part of the problem with STI prevention is that we're all conditioned to be not the lookout for the biggest threats. But we also need to be aware of the diseases that are not life threatening, as they cause other health problems such as infertility. Two of these widespread diseases are Chlamydia and Gonorrhea. Often the butt of many a sitcom joke, these two diseases are far from a laughing matter, and it's vital to know about them.

Gonorrhea is an STI triggered by the bacteria *Neisseria Gonorrhoeae*, infecting the mucous membranes of the reproductive tract. *Neisseria Gonorrhoeae* is also known to infect the mucous membranes of the mouth, throat, eyes, and rectum. The usual symptoms for this STI in men are dysuria and discharge from the penis. Women are known to have vaginal discharge and/or pelvic pain. In both men and women, if Gonorrhea is left untreated, it may spread locally, causing Epididymitis in men or Pelvic Inflammatory Disease in women. Gonorrhea can also spread through other parts of the body, even affecting the joints and heart.

Also known as "The Clap", instances of Gonorrhea have been recorded since the sixteenth century. Nowadays Gonorrhea is unfortunately all too common, and no one is applauding. The Center for Disease Control estimates that approximately 820,000 new Gonorrheal infections occur in the US every year, and that less than half of these infections are actually detected and reported.<sup>1</sup> The CDC also estimates that 570,000 of those infected were between 15-24 years old. In 2014,

350,062 cases of Gonorrhea were reported.<sup>2</sup> Any sexually active person can be infected with the Clap. The Clap is incidentally transmitted through sexual contact with the penis, vagina, mouth, or anus of an infected partner. It's also important to know that ejaculation does not have to occur for the disease to be transmitted or acquired. The Clap may also be spread from mother to baby during childbirth.

Many men with Gonorrhea are actually asymptomatic<sup>3</sup><sup>4</sup>. When present, the signs and symptoms of urethral infection in men may include dysuria or a white, yellow, or green urethral discharge that usually appears one to fourteen days after infection<sup>5</sup>. In cases where urethral infection is complicated by Epididymitis, men with Gonorrhea have also experienced testicular and scrotal pain. Most women with Gonorrhea are asymptomatic<sup>6</sup><sup>7</sup>. Even when a woman has symptoms, they are often so mild and nonspecific that they are mistaken for a bladder or vaginal infection<sup>8</sup><sup>9</sup>. The initial symptoms and signs in women include dysuria, increased vaginal discharge, or vaginal bleeding between periods. Women with the Clap are also at risk of developing serious complications from the infection, regardless of the presence or severity of symptoms. Symptoms of rectal infection in both men and women may include discharge, anal itching, soreness, bleeding, or painful bowel movements<sup>10</sup>. Rectal infection also may be asymptomatic. Pharyngeal infection may cause a sore throat, but usually is asymptomatic<sup>11</sup><sup>12</sup>.

When untreated, this STI can cause serious and permanent health problems in both sexes. In

women, Gonorrhea can spread into the uterus or fallopian tubes and cause Pelvic Inflammatory Disease. These symptoms may be quite mild, or can be very severe, including abdominal pain and fever [13](#). Pelvic Inflammatory Disease can lead to internal abscesses and chronic pain. The disease can also damage the fallopian tubes enough to cause infertility or increase the risk of ectopic pregnancy. In rare cases, this may lead to infertility [14](#). If left untreated, Gonorrhea may also spread to the blood and cause Disseminated Gonococcal Infection. This infection is usually characterized by arthritis, tenosynovitis, and/or dermatitis [15](#). This condition can be life threatening.

If a pregnant woman has Gonorrhea, she may give the infection to her baby as the baby passes through the birth canal during delivery. This can cause blindness, joint infection, or a life-threatening blood infection in the baby [17](#). Prompt treatment should reduce the risk of these complications. When untreated, the Clap can also increase the risk of acquiring or transmitting HIV.

The CDC recommends dual therapy for the treatment of Gonorrhea. It is important to take all of the medication prescribed to cure Gonorrhea. Medication for Gonorrhea should not be shared with anyone. Although medication will stop the infection, it will not repair any permanent damage done by the disease. Antimicrobial resistance in Gonorrhea is of increasing concern, and successful treatment of Gonorrhea is becoming more difficult [21](#). If a person's symptoms continue for more than a few days after receiving treatment, he or she should return to a health care provider to be reevaluated.

Infecting both men and women, Chlamydia is triggered by the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*. Chlamydia may cause serious and permanent damage to the female reproductive system, preventing future pregnancy. The STI may also be a factor in fatal ectopic pregnancies. People may contract Chlamydia through participating in vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who also has this STI. People treated for Chlamydia may contract it in the future if they come in contact with a carrier. Most people who have Chlamydia have no symptoms. If you do have symptoms, they may not appear until several weeks after you have sex with an infected partner. Even when Chlamydia causes no symptoms, it can damage your reproductive system.

Women with Chlamydia symptoms may notice an abnormal vaginal discharge or a burning sensation when urinating. Chlamydia symptoms in men can include a discharge from their penis, burning sensation when urinating, and in some cases, pain and swelling in their testicles. Men and women can also get infected with Chlamydia in their rectum, either by having receptive anal sex, or by spread from another infected site. While these infections often cause no symptoms, they may cause rectal pain, discharge, and bleeding.

If you are pregnant and have Chlamydia, you can pass the infection to your baby during delivery. This could cause an eye infection or pneumonia in your newborn. Having Chlamydia may also make it more likely to deliver your baby too early. If you are pregnant, you should be tested for Chlamydia at your first prenatal visit. Testing and treatment are the best ways to prevent health

problems.

Sexually active young people are at a higher risk of getting Chlamydia. This is due to behaviors and biological factors common among young people. Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men are also at risk since Chlamydia can be spread through oral and anal sex.

The initial damage that Chlamydia causes often goes unnoticed. However, Chlamydia can lead to serious health problems.

If you are a woman, untreated Chlamydia can spread to your uterus and fallopian tubes (tubes that carry fertilized eggs from the ovaries to the uterus), causing [Pelvic Inflammatory Disease](#). The disease often has no symptoms, however some women may have abdominal and pelvic pain. Even if it doesn't cause symptoms initially, it may cause permanent damage to your reproductive system and lead to long-term pelvic pain, inability to get pregnant, and potentially deadly ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside the uterus). Men rarely have health problems linked to Chlamydia. However, infection sometimes spreads to the tube that carries sperm from the testicles, causing pain and fever.

Chlamydia can be cured with the right treatment. During this treatment, it is crucial that you take all of the medication your doctor prescribes to cure your infection. When taken properly it will stop the infection and could decrease your chances of having complications later on. Medication for Chlamydia should not be shared with anyone. Repeat infection with Chlamydia is common. You should be tested again about three months after you are treated, even if your sex partner(s) was treated.

Luckily, there are more quick and efficient options for getting tested – and staying healthy -- than ever. The breakthrough of At-Home Testing Kits now gives you security of your very own testing center. If you would like to get tested in private for STIs such as Chlamydia, Gonorrhea -- or even HIV -- now is the time to order myLAB Box.

myLAB Box offers at-home STD test packages for every lifestyle, discreet packaging and free shipping, easy five-minute tests, lab-certified results, and free physician treatment consultations for those with positive results. And unlike other at-home testing solutions, my LAB Box allows for extragenital testing (screening of the rectum and throat in addition to genital-only examination). While standard STD exams from a clinic will only check the genital area, but ignoring rectal and oral screening leaves a major portion of the population untested. Current public health guidelines dictate that doctors only recommend screening for the so-called “at-risk” population (gay men and HIV-positive individuals). And even then, the additional testing is only offered upon admission of personal details or request.

