



Gonorrhoea

What is gonorrhoea? (“gono”, the clap)?

Gonorrhoea is a common sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by having unprotected sex (sex without a condom) with a person who is infected.

Gonorrhoea can affect both men and women and can occur in the cervix, penis, anus or throat.

What are the symptoms?

Many people will not have any symptoms. They may think (wrongly) that they are OK. But they can still get health problems and still pass the infection on.

When symptoms do occur in women they may notice an unusual vaginal discharge, a burning feeling when peeing, bleeding in-between periods or after sex, or pains in the lower abdomen. These symptoms may go away without treatment – but health problems can still occur later on.

Men may notice a whitish-yellow or watery discharge from the penis, a burning feeling when peeing, irritation or itching around the eye of the penis or painful, swollen testicles (balls).

What other problems can it cause?

If gonorrhoea is untreated in men it can lead to swelling and pain in the testicles which can lead to infertility.

If gonorrhoea is untreated in women, the infection can spread up into the uterus (womb/baby bag), fallopian tubes, and other parts of the lower abdomen. This is known as pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). This can be painful and women may be quite sick and

need to be admitted to hospital. PID can damage the tubes from the uterus to the ovaries which can lead to infertility. If a woman with damaged tubes gets pregnant, this pregnancy may be “ectopic”, or outside the uterus. Ectopic pregnancies are a medical emergency and usually require an operation. Infertility or ectopic pregnancy can even happen without the woman knowing that she had gonorrhoea in the past.

Babies born to mothers with gonorrhoea can develop severe eye infections which can lead to blindness.

Having gonorrhoea can make it easier for a person to become infected with HIV or to pass HIV on to someone else.

What tests do you do?

If a discharge is present in men then a swab will be taken from the penis. A urine sample can also be used to test for these infections in men.

In women, the best way is to take a swab from the cervix. Women can also take a swab themselves from their vagina.

Swabs will also be taken from the throat or anus if the person has had oral or anal sex.

What is the treatment?

Usually, treatment is with a single dose of antibiotic tablets. If a person caught the infection from someone from outside the NT, then an injection will be needed.

Women with PID, or men with infection in the testes will need a longer course of treatment.

Sexual partners need to be told so they can also be tested and treated so they don't pass the infection back.

Further fact sheets available at <http://www.nt.gov.au/health/cdc/cdc.shtml>

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