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# GONORRHOEA

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## WHAT IS GONORRHOEA?

Gonorrhoea is caused by the bacteria, *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, which can cause an infection of the urethra, cervix, anus, throat and eyes. Rarely *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* can infect the bloodstream and cause fever, joint pain and skin lesions.

## HOW IS IT SPREAD?

Gonorrhoea is readily spread by vaginal, anal or oral sex without condoms.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?

Gonorrhoea most commonly infects the urethra in men and the urethra and cervix in women. It may also infect the anus and throat.

### Men

The symptoms of gonorrhoea depend upon the site of infection. Some men, especially those with anal or throat gonorrhoea, do not have any signs or symptoms. When symptoms occur they usually include:

- Thick, yellow or white discharge from the penis
- Pain or discomfort passing urine
- Redness around the opening of the penis
- Anal discharge and discomfort
- Sore, dry throat

### Women

Most women do not have any signs or symptoms. When symptoms occur they may include:

- Unusual vaginal discharge
- Irregular bleeding
- Discomfort passing urine
- Pelvic pain, especially during intercourse
- Anal discharge and discomfort
- Sore, dry throat

If left untreated, gonorrhoea can spread to the uterus and fallopian tubes causing Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), a condition that may lead to complications, including infertility.

## HOW LONG UNTIL SYMPTOMS DEVELOP?

The majority of men develop symptoms within 1-3 days. If women develop symptoms, they seem to do so within 10 days.

## HOW DO YOU TEST FOR GONORRHOEA?

We test for gonorrhoea by taking a swab (a sample of secretions) from the urethra in men and the cervix in women. It can also be tested by taking a urine sample. Swabs may also be taken from the throat and anus. The tests can usually detect gonorrhoea within 2-4 days of coming into contact with the infection.

## HOW IS GONORRHOEA TREATED?

Gonorrhoea is easily and effectively treated with antibiotics. At MSHC we usually prescribe an injection called ceftriaxone and an oral antibiotic called azithromycin.

## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR THE SYMPTOMS TO GO AWAY AFTER TREATMENT?

The symptoms will usually start to ease within 24 hours. If you are still having problems after a week, go back and see your doctor.

## WHEN IS IT SAFE TO HAVE SEX AGAIN?

- You should not have any sexual contact for one week after completion of treatment (not even sex with a condom).

- You must ensure you do not have sex with any previous or current partners until one week after they are also treated.
- If your partner is treated after you, this means no sex until one week after they are treated. Otherwise you could be reinfected, and would need further treatment.

## DO I LET MY PARTNERS KNOW?

- Yes. We strongly encourage you let all of your sexual partners in the last 3 months know that they have been a contact of gonorrhoea. You should advise all these partners to get tested and treated, (even if you think you know who you got this infection from).
- Include any partners you've had any sexual contact with, this includes vaginal or anal sex, oral sex and any other genital to genital contact, (even if a condom was used).
- Gonorrhoea in the throat or back passage often has no symptoms, so it's still important for your partners to be tested and treated even if they show no sign of infection.
- Recent studies conducted at MSHC have shown that you're much more likely to be reinfected with the same infection if your partners are not notified.

## HOW CAN I LET MY PARTNERS KNOW?

- Most people find this is best done directly, either in person or via phone call or text message. If you don't feel comfortable contacting partners personally, there are two websites enabling you to send a free and anonymous text message or email:
- **Let Them know** [www.letthemknow.org.au](http://www.letthemknow.org.au), this website is available for anyone to use.
- **Drama Down Under** [www.thedramadownunder.info/notify](http://www.thedramadownunder.info/notify), this website is specifically for gay men, or men with male sexual partners and allows you to contact several people in one go.

## HOW DO I AVOID RE-INFECTION?

- Your best protection against reinfection is by notifying your partners, ensuring that current partners are treated and consistent condom use with all future partners.
- We know sometimes that alcohol and other drugs can influence your decisions about sex and condom use. One of our nurses, doctors or counsellors can chat with you about ways to further reduce your risk or refer you to another service for appropriate support.
- Meeting sexual partners at Sex On Premises Venues and online carries a greater risk of getting an STI. If you do meet partners this way, always practise safe sex.

### DISCLAIMER:

This fact sheet is designed to provide you with information on gonorrhoea. It is not intended to replace the need for a consultation with your doctor. All clients are strongly advised to check with their doctor about any specific questions or concerns they may have. Every effort has been taken to ensure that the information in this pamphlet is correct at the time of printing.