

## What is gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is a bacterial sexually transmitted infection (STI) of the genitals, rectum or throat.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

Women may have:

- vaginal discharge
- pelvic pain
- irregular bleeding.

Men may have:

- a discharge from the end of the penis
- irritation of the inside of the penis
- pain when urinating.

There are usually no symptoms when the cervix, the rectum or the throat is infected.

Symptoms usually occur within 2-10 days after contact with an infected partner.

Men have symptoms more often than women.

## What happens when you are tested?

The doctor or nurse will talk to you and examine you. If you have gonorrhoea, you should also be checked for other STIs.

Tests for gonorrhoea may include:

- a swab from the infected area
- for women, an internal examination.

## Can gonorrhoea be cured?

Yes. In most cases a single dose of antibiotics (usually as an injection) cures gonorrhoea. More severe cases may need more antibiotics. Your doctor or nurse will want to see you again when you have completed the treatment.

- Always finish all antibiotics.
- While symptoms may disappear a few days after treatment begins, the bacteria may not have been killed off.
- Avoid having sex during treatment because you can still give the infection to someone else.
- If you have the single dose therapy, avoid sex for seven days after treatment.
- If you do have sex, you must use a condom for vaginal or anal sex or an oral dam for oral sex.

## Should I tell my sexual partner(s) that I am being treated?

Yes. Your partner(s) will also need treatment, even if they have no symptoms or their test results are normal.

If you need help to tell your partner(s), speak to a doctor or nurse or a sexual health counsellor.

## What happens if gonorrhoea is not treated?

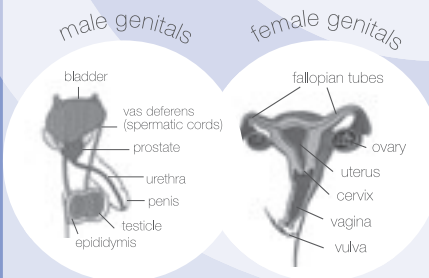
In women, untreated gonorrhoea can cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), affecting the uterus (womb) and the fallopian tubes (see diagram below). PID may cause:

- an ectopic pregnancy (the fetus grows in the fallopian tubes instead of the womb)
- infertility (caused by scar tissue damaging the fallopian tubes)
- chronic pelvic pain.

In men, untreated gonorrhoea can cause:

- inflammation of the epididymis (the tissue that joins the testicles to the sperm cords) (see diagram below)
- chronic inflammation of the inside of the penis
- chronic discomfort of the testicles
- infertility (rare).

Gonorrhoea can trigger chronic arthritis, although this is rare.



## How can I protect myself from STIs?

- Always use a condom. This is a thin latex or polyurethane sheath, which fits over the penis. A female condom is made of polyurethane and is inserted into the vagina. Condoms collect semen and prevent it from entering the other person's body. Condoms make vaginal, anal and oral sex safer because they provide a barrier to prevent person-to-person infection, although they do not guarantee full protection from STIs.
- Always use an oral dam during oral sex. This is a thin square of latex that can be used as a protective layer between the mouth and vagina or anal areas during oral sex.
- There are vaccines available that can protect against infections such as hepatitis A and B and the human papillomavirus (HPV). Ask your doctor or nurse about these vaccines.
- Never share drug equipment, for example, needles, syringes, spoons and filters.

Some STIs are passed on by skin-on-skin contact. Condoms or oral dams may not prevent this.

## How do I use a condom?

Check the condom pack to make sure the expiry date has not passed.

1 Open the packet carefully. Fingernails, rings and teeth can tear condoms. Make sure your penis does not touch your partner's vagina, mouth or anus before being covered by a condom.



2 Check that the condom is facing the right way. Pinch the top of the condom to remove any air.



3 Roll the condom on to the hard penis all the way down to the base. Use a water-based lubricant. Oil-based lubricants such as petroleum jelly can cause latex (rubber) condoms to break. Ask your pharmacist for advice about a suitable product.



4 After coming, and when withdrawing, hold the condom on to the base of the penis so that no semen gets spilt. Wrap the used condom in tissue or toilet paper and put it in the rubbish.



Use a new condom and lubricant each time you have sex!

## Where can I get condoms?

You can get condoms and, sometimes, oral dams from your general practice, Family Planning and sexual health clinics. Condoms are also available from pharmacies, supermarkets, pubs, clubs and some dairies. Female condoms are available from Family Planning clinics.

Condoms will help to protect you and your partner(s) from STIs when you have sex. However, they are not fully protective. You are still at risk.

To be sure you don't have an STI, get tested at a Family Planning or sexual health clinic or your general practice.

## Where can I find out more about STIs?

- Student health services at your university, polytechnic or school
- The public health nurse at your school
- Sexual health services listed in the white pages and at [www.hpv.org.nz/help/where.htm](http://www.hpv.org.nz/help/where.htm)
- Family Planning on 0800 INFOLINE (0800 4636 5463) or at [www.fpanz.org.nz](http://www.fpanz.org.nz)
- Your general practice doctor or nurse
- [www.hpv.org.nz](http://www.hpv.org.nz) or Herpes/HPV Helpline 0508 11 12 13
- Healthline 0800 611 116.

## The four guides

- 1 What is gonorrhoea? Code HE1442
- 2 What is genital herpes? Code HE1443
- 3 What are genital warts? Code HE1444
- 4 What are STI tests? Code HE1445

See also *Chlamydia: Information Guide* Code HP4609

New Zealand Government

This resource is available from [www.healthed.govt.nz](http://www.healthed.govt.nz) or the Authorised Provider at your DHB.



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1 2 3 4

of four information guides