



What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a common infection passed on through sex. Most people with chlamydia do not notice any symptoms.

Chlamydia can infect these parts of the body:

- Cervix
- Womb (uterus) and tubes leading to the ovaries (Fallopian tubes)
- Urethra (where you pee through)
- Testicles
- Back passage (rectum)
- Throat or eyes.

Chlamydia is easy to treat with antibiotics. If not treated, it can sometimes cause infertility.

How common is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is the most common bacterial sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the UK. Anyone can get it, but it is most common in people under 25.

How do you get chlamydia?

- You can get it from vaginal, oral or anal sex without a condom.
- You can also get chlamydia by sharing sex toys.
- A baby can get chlamydia during birth.
- You cannot get chlamydia from kissing and hugging. You do not get it from towels or toilet seats. You cannot get it by sharing a swimming pool or bath.

What symptoms might I have?

Most people have no symptoms. Women or other people with a vagina may get:

- Bleeding between periods or after sex
- Pain in the tummy, especially during sex
- Changes in vaginal discharge
- Burning or pain when peeing.

Men or other people with a penis may get:

- Discharge from the end of the penis
- Burning or pain when peeing.

Infection in the back passage (rectum) can cause pain, bleeding or discharge from your bottom. Chlamydia eye infection can cause soreness and redness.

How do I get tested?

You usually need a urine test or vaginal swab, which you can do yourself. You may need swabs from the back passage (rectum) or throat.

If you have symptoms, a doctor or nurse may need to examine you. They will take a swab from inside the vagina or from the end of the penis.

Results should take a few days.

When should I get tested?

You should have a chlamydia test if:

- You have had sex with someone new
- Someone you have had sex with tells you they have chlamydia
- If you notice any symptoms that could be chlamydia.

How is chlamydia treated?

Chlamydia is treated with antibiotics such as doxycycline or azithromycin. Medicines for sexually transmitted infections are free on the NHS. Antibiotics are very effective when taken correctly. Antibiotics do not stop contraception from working.

What about people I have had sex with?

It is important that people you have had sex with recently are tested and treated. Most people choose to tell their partners themselves.

If you want, the clinic can contact people you have had sex with for you, without using your name.

What happens if chlamydia is not treated?

Chlamydia can spread into the womb (uterus) and Fallopian tubes. This can cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), infertility or an ectopic pregnancy. For more information, [see this leaflet](#).

It can cause pain or swelling in the testicles. This is called epididymitis. For more information, [see this leaflet](#).

Rarely, it can cause joint pain or other complications.

When can I have sex again?

You should avoid all sex for one week after starting treatment. This includes oral sex, and sex with condoms.

If you take a 7-day course of antibiotics, you must finish all the tablets.

If you take a single-dose treatment, wait one whole week after taking it.

Can I get chlamydia again?

Yes. Having chlamydia once does not stop you from getting it again.

Condoms can help protect you against chlamydia and other sexually transmitted infections.

Do I need to repeat the test?

If you are under 25, you should test again in 3 months.

Otherwise, you should test again if your symptoms return or you have had sex with someone new.

Chlamydia in pregnancy

If you are pregnant, treating chlamydia is important. Without treatment, your baby can get an eye or lung infection.

Your doctor or nurse will give you an antibiotic that is safe in pregnancy.

You should repeat the test in 4 weeks, to check the infection has cleared.

This leaflet was produced by the Clinical Effectiveness Group of the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH). The information in the leaflet is based on the 'UK National Guideline for the management of infection with Chlamydia trachomatis' published by BASHH in 2026.

British Association for Sexual Health and HIV:
bashh.org/guidelines

NHS Choices:
nhs.uk/conditions/Chlamydia/

National chlamydia screening programme in England:
gov.uk/government/collections/national-chlamydia-screening-programme-ncsp

If you would like to comment on this leaflet, e-mail us at:
admin@bashh.org Please type 'Chlamydia PIL' in the subject box.

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