

GONORRHEA FACT SHEET

■ WHAT IS GONORRHEA?

Gonorrhea is caused by a bacterium called *Neisseria gonorrhoea*. It is also known as the "clap," "drip," or GC. In Long Beach, the population with the highest rates of gonorrhea are in the 25-29 age range, followed by 20-24. Men account for two-thirds of all gonorrhea cases in Long Beach. It is the second most commonly reported STD in Long Beach. Of those infected with gonorrhea, at least 75% of women and 50% of men experience no symptoms. Additionally, having gonorrhea can increase your chances of transmitting or acquiring HIV.

■ HOW CAN A PERSON GET GONORRHEA?

You can get gonorrhea by having unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex with a person who has gonorrhea. It is passed through contact with semen, vaginal fluids or discharge. Most people with gonorrhea do not know they have it, however they can still infect others. In women, gonorrhea infects the cervix and can be found in vaginal fluids. In men, gonorrhea infects the urethra (where urine and semen come out). Gonorrhea can also infect the rectum and throat. A pregnant woman with gonorrhea can pass it to her newborn baby during childbirth.

■ WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF GONORRHEA?

Many people with gonorrhea experience no symptoms. If symptoms develop, they may appear 2-5 days after being infected.

Symptoms may include:

- white, yellow, or green discharge from the penis, vagina, or anus.
- it may also hurt or burn to urinate.
- women may also have pain in the abdomen, fever, unusual heavy periods or bleeding between periods, or pain during sex.
- infections in the throat may cause mild soreness or redness (usually rare).

If gonorrhea is left untreated, it can spread in the reproductive organs. In women, untreated gonorrhea can cause scarring and inflammation of the fallopian tubes and ovaries, a condition called Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). PID can cause infertility and chronic pelvic pain, and can increase the risk of a life threatening ectopic (tubal) pregnancy. In men, untreated gonorrhea can lead to a painful infection of the testicles known as epididymitis, which can cause sterility. In rare cases, gonorrhea can spread to the blood stream and cause a general

infection with rash and joint pain. A baby born to a mother with gonorrhea may develop an eye infection which can cause blindness.

■ WHAT CAN A PERSON DO TO PREVENT PASSING GONORRHEA?

Using latex condoms provides an excellent protection against gonorrhea. The female condom and polyurethane (plastic) condoms are equally effective. Infected pregnant women should seek prenatal care early to prevent passing gonorrhea to their newborn.

■ HOW DO I GET TESTED FOR GONORRHEA?

To get tested for gonorrhea, a person should go to a doctor or health clinic.

- For women, the cervix is swabbed during a pelvic exam.
- For men, the inside of the urethra is swabbed.
- If you engage in oral or anal sex you should get tested for chlamydia in your throat and rectum.

Newer gonorrhea test, which require only a urine sample from the patient, are now available at many clinics.

■ WHAT IS TREATMENT FOR GONORRHEA?

Gonorrhea can be treated and cured with certain antibiotics (given as an injection and oral medication). It takes one week for the medicine to completely cure Chlamydia. Make sure both you and your sex partner(s) are cured before having sex again. Since different antibiotics cure different diseases, see a doctor before taking any medications. You should not attempt to diagnose yourself or take any medicine that was not prescribed to you. Do not share medications.

■ WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT GONORRHEA?

California Department of Public Health:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Gonorrhoea.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/Gonorrhea/STDFact-gonorrhea.htm>

For additional questions, call the **HIV/STD Surveillance Program at (562) 570-4321**

