

CHLAMYDIA

What Is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia trachomatis is a bacteria that lives and reproduces inside human cells. With an estimated 3 million new cases in the United States each year, chlamydia ranks as the most commonly reported sexually transmitted disease in the United States. It is a bacterial infection that can be treated with antibiotics.

Most people are unaware that they are infected; approximately 75% of women and 50% of men have no symptoms. Symptoms that may occur include vaginal redness, discomfort, and discharge in women, and a discharge and burning upon urination in men.

Chlamydia is easily cured with antibiotics. Left untreated, it can cause many problems, including pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and potentially fatal tubal pregnancy. PID can lead to infertility. Passed from a birth mother to a newborn child, chlamydia can cause conjunctivitis, blindness, and pneumonia.

Chlamydia and Adolescents

Approximately 10% of adolescent girls tested for chlamydia are infected. Young women have the highest percentages of infection: 46% of infections are in 15- to 19-year-old girls and 33% occur in 20- to 24-year-old women.

Testing

Testing for chlamydia can be done with a urine test or through collection of a tissue sample from the vagina, cervix, or urethra. Significant declines in infection have been shown in areas in which screening programs are implemented. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that every dollar spent on screening and treatment of chlamydia saves \$12 in complications that result from untreated chlamydia.

Treatment

Antibiotics cure the infection. Treatment should be carried out for both partners, and the person undergoing treatment should abstain from sexual activity until treatment is completed. Many people who have chlamydia also have gonorrhea. The CDC recommends that people being treated for either disease also get treated for the other.