

CHLAMYDIA IN FEMALES

Chlamydia is the most common sexually transmitted disease in the United States. It is caused by bacteria called *Chlamydia trachomatis*, and often starts as an infection of the cervix. Chlamydia infection in women can lead to inflammation of the cervix or the fallopian tubes and may cause infertility.

Abstinence or maintaining a monogamous sexual relationship are the best ways to avoid chlamydia infection. Risk factors include multiple sexual partners. Proper use of condoms decreases the risk of infection.

Symptoms

Fifty percent of women with chlamydia have no symptoms. When symptoms are present, they include

- Abnormal vaginal discharge
- Burning during urination
- Dull pelvic pain
- Spotting or bleeding between menstrual periods
- Heavier than normal menstrual bleeding
- More painful periods
- More frequent urination
- Painful intercourse

Course

The outcome of a chlamydia infection depends on

- The length of time you have been infected
- The extent of infection (whether it has spread through the uterus and to the fallopian tubes)
- The number of previous chlamydia infections you have had

With proper antibiotic treatment, chlamydia usually clears in 10 days.

Untreated, chlamydia can cause pelvic inflammatory disease, and infection of the entire female reproductive system. This can lead to infertility and to increased risk of ectopic pregnancy (a pregnancy outside the uterus), which can be fatal.

Reinfection may occur if medications are not taken as directed, or if both sexual partners are not treated.

Treatment

Uncomplicated chlamydia infections are treated with one of three antibiotics:

- 100-mg tablet of doxycycline* taken 2 times daily for 7 days
- 500 mg tetracycline* taken 4 times daily for 7 days
- 500 mg erythromycin taken 4 times daily for 7 days

Your treatment is _____

*Doxycycline and tetracycline should not be taken if you are or may be pregnant.

Prevention

Abstinence is the best way to avoid chlamydia infection. Proper use of condoms also helps prevent transmission of STDs. Women with multiple sexual partners are more likely to become infected.

Because chlamydia is so often asymptomatic, if you are sexually active, you should be tested for chlamydia and gonorrhea at your yearly pelvic examination, along with a pap smear.

Contact Our Office:

IMMEDIATELY IF:

- You develop severe abdominal pain
- You vomit and cannot hold the medication down
- You develop a fever (100°F [34°C] or higher)
- You feel that you are getting sicker

DURING OFFICE HOURS IF:

- You have any additional questions or concerns