What you should know about Gonorrhea

What is Gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea ("the clap") is an STD (sexually transmitted disease) that affects millions of people every year. It is spread by having vaginal, anal or oral sex with someone who has the disease. The disease can affect the sex organs as well as the mouth, throat and eyes. Babies can get gonorrhea at birth if the mother has it. This can happen even if the mother doesn't have symptoms.

Many people do not know they have Gonorrhea.

Some people don't have symptoms, but they can still pass the disease to others. Often, people who have gonorrhea don't know they have it until they have severe health problems.

Gonorrhea can be cured!

Getting tested and treated early is the key to avoiding major health problems later.

Gonorrhea can be dangerous.

Gonorrhea can be very harmful for both women and men if it isn't treated early.

In women, it can cause:

- **Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)**, a painful infection of the sex organs
- Infertility (not being able to get pregnant)
- Arthritis (painful swelling in the joints)
- Heart problems

In men, it can cause:

- Painful swelling in the testicles (balls)
- Sterility (not being able to get a woman pregnant)
- Arthritis (painful swelling in the joints)
- Heart problems

Babies born to mothers with gonorrhea can get an eye infection that causes blindness. All babies born in hospitals get special drops in their eyes to prevent this.

How would you know if you have Gonorrhea?

The only way to be sure is to get tested at your doctor's office or an STD clinic. The test is usually easy - a sample of fluid from your penis or vagina will be taken and sent to a lab. Some doctors and clinics now test for gonorrhea and chlamydia by taking a urine sample. Urine testing is both simple and painless. Ask your health care provider if you can get this test. **Most women and many men with gonorrhea have no symptoms.** If you do have symptoms, they may include:

Men

- discharge (drip, pus) from the penis or anus
- burning or pain when urinating (peeing)
- frequent urination
- anal/rectal pain and itching
- sore throat

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What you should know about Gonorrhea

Women

- discharge (drip, pus) from the vagina or anus
- bleeding between periods
- burning or pain when urinating (peeing)
- pain in the lower belly, lower back pain
- anal/rectal pain and itching
- sore throat

Even if these symptoms go away on their own, you should get checked at a doctor's office or an STD clinic. The symptoms can come back and be much worse.

Gonorrhea can be cured!

Gonorrhea can be cured by taking medicine prescribed by a doctor. Since you can have gonorrhea and another STD at the same time, you may have to take more than one medicine at a time. Your sex partner(s) must be treated or you could get infected again.

If you have gonorrhea or any other STD:

- Take **all** the medicine given to you
- Follow your health care provider's directions
- Call your health care provider as soon as possible if the medicine gives you problems
- Tell your sex partner(s) to get tested, or ask your health care provider to tell them
- Don't have sex until a health care provider says you and your partner(s) are cured
- Don't try to treat yourself
- Don't share your medicine

Get tested for gonorrhea if:

- You or your sex partner(s) have symptoms of gonorrhea
- You have had more than one sex partner, male or female (the more partners you have, the greater your risk)
- You have had sex without a condom
- You have another STD
- Your partner tells you that they are being tested or treated for an STD

When you get tested for gonorrhea, you should also get tested for HIV and other STDs.

How can you stay healthy?

- The only sure way to avoid gonorrhea and other STDs is to **not have sex**. Vaginal, oral, and anal sex can all pass the disease from one person to another.
- If you do have sex, **use a latex condom every time**. When used the right way, condoms can help keep you from getting gonorrhea and other STDs. Be sure to put the condom on before the penis touches the vagina, mouth, or anus.
- If you have sex, **stay with one partner who only has sex with you**. Use condoms unless tests show that your partner does not have gonorrhea or other STDs.

For HIV/STD testing locations in Texas, call: 2-1-1

For other HIV/STD questions, call:
1 (800) CDC-INFO (English/Español)
1 (888) 232-6348 (TTY)

For more information, go to: www.dshs.state.tx.us/hivstd

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