

However, the success rates for IVF are only generally around 15 per cent.

If you test positive for chlamydia, it is possible to obtain an antibiotic over the counter at a pharmacy. However, it is best to get checked at a genito-urinary medicine (GUM) clinic as STIs are often transmitted together and you may be at risk of having other infections in addition to chlamydia.

THE ONLY SURE WAY TO PREVENT INFECTION IS TO SAVE SEX UNTIL YOU ARE IN A FAITHFUL LIFELONG RELATIONSHIP WITH AN UNINFECTED PARTNER

How can I prevent it?

Using a condom during sex may reduce the risk of acquiring chlamydia from an infected partner by around 50 per cent. However, as with most other STIs, the only sure way to prevent infection is to save sex until you are in a faithful lifelong relationship with an uninfected partner.

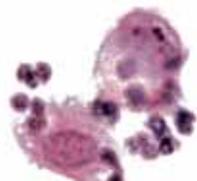


Photo: Wellcome Images

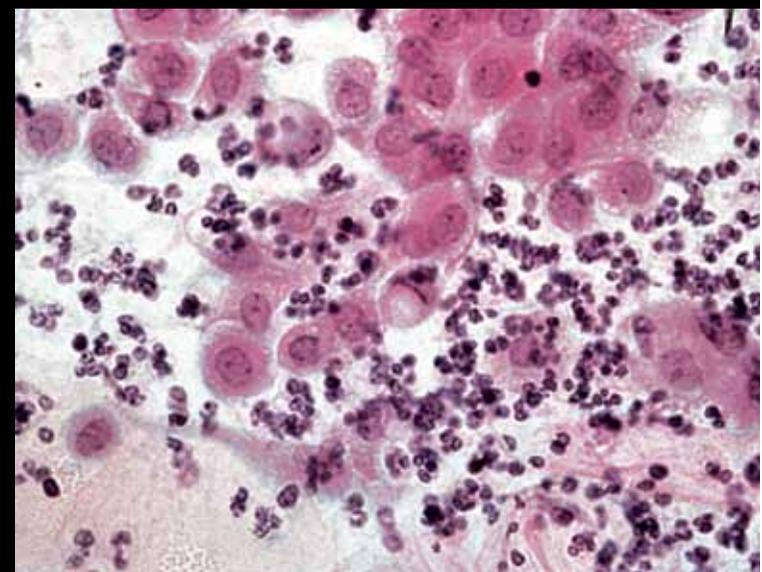
CHLAMYDIA IS THE TORPEDO OF THE STI WORLD. IT TRAVELS UNDETECTED AND SILENTLY AND IS OFTEN ONLY NOTICED WHEN IT CAUSES MAJOR AND SOMETIMES IRREVERSIBLE DAMAGE. WITH REPEATED ATTACKS OF CHLAMYDIA, THE RATES OF INFERTILITY ARE VERY HIGH AND AFTER THREE EPISODES OF PID AROUND THREE QUARTERS OF WOMEN WILL BE INFERTILE. THE ONLY SURE WAY TO PREVENT INFECTION IS TO SAVE SEX UNTIL YOU ARE IN A FAITHFUL LIFELONG RELATIONSHIP WITH AN UNINFECTED PARTNER. CHLAMYDIA IS THE TORPEDO OF THE STI WORLD. IT TRAVELS UNDETECTED AND SILENTLY AND IS OFTEN ONLY NOTICED WHEN IT CAUSES MAJOR AND SOMETIMES IRREVERSIBLE DAMAGE. WITH REPEATED ATTACKS OF CHLAMYDIA, THE RATES OF INFERTILITY ARE VERY HIGH AND AFTER THREE EPISODES OF PID AROUND THREE QUARTERS OF WOMEN WILL BE INFERTILE.

Other leaflets available from Family Education Trust:

- Sexual Spin: Sorting fact from fiction about sexually transmitted infections
- HPV and You
- Why Save Sex?

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STIALERT



CHLAMYDIA AND YOU



What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the UK. It is caused by the bacterium, *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

Why is chlamydia important?

Some 10-30 per cent of chlamydia infections in women infect the fallopian tubes and, if they are not treated promptly, can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). In some cases PID can cause severe and chronic pelvic pain, while in other cases it is not accompanied by any symptoms at all. Either way, it can lead to the serious complications of infertility or ectopic pregnancy.

With repeated attacks of chlamydia, the rates of infertility are very high and after three episodes of PID around three quarters of women will be infertile. Chlamydia also causes reduced fertility in men but not so frequently as in women.

As with any other genital infection, the presence of chlamydia should prompt tests for other STIs and it can also increase the risk of acquiring HIV infection.

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How common is it?

In 2007 there were almost 122,000 recorded new chlamydia infections. The highest rates are seen mainly in men and women aged between 16 and 25, and there were over 1,700 cases in under-16s. In some parts of the UK, studies have shown that more than 10 per cent of sexually active young people are infected with chlamydia at any one time.

How is it transmitted?

Chlamydia is transmitted through the exchange of body fluids in sexual intercourse. Though less common than vaginal transmission, oral and anal sex can also transmit chlamydia.

How do you know if you are infected?

The simplest answer to this question is that you probably don't know, unless you have never had sex, or neither you nor your sexual partner has ever had sex with anyone else before. Chlamydia is the torpedo of the STI world. It travels undetected and silently and is often only noticed when it causes major and sometimes irreversible damage.

Around three quarters of women, and a half of all men, infected with chlamydia have no symptoms at all.

In the minority of cases where there are symptoms, they arise one to three weeks after being infected. In women, two of the most common symptoms are abnormal bleeding between periods and a burning sensation on passing water. These symptoms can often be wrongly dismissed as just an irregular period or a urine infection. A watery vaginal discharge can also occur.

In men, chlamydia can cause pain on passing water or a discharge from the penis, sometimes with itching. Pain or tenderness in the testicles is another possible symptom.

How is it detected?

Chlamydia infection can be detected by taking urethral swabs from men and urethral and cervical swabs from women. More recently it has become possible in most parts of the UK to detect chlamydia infection by means of a urine sample.

How is it treated?

If detected at an early stage, chlamydia infection is easily treated with a course of antibiotics. If, however, it has progressed to cause PID, it can be more difficult to eradicate and the pain from PID can sometimes become chronic despite treatment.

Surgery or in vitro fertilisation (IVF) may be employed in an attempt to overcome tubal infertility resulting from chlamydia infection and enable a woman to conceive.

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