

Sexually Transmitted Diseases



Gonorrhoea

Questions and Answers



Generalitat de Catalunya
**Departament
de Salut**

What is gonorrhoea?

It is an infection caused by the bacteria *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* or gonococcus and is one of a group of infections that are transmitted from person to person through sexual contact.

In the primary stage it can affect different mucous membranes of the body, commonly the genitals (urethra or urine canal in men and cervix in women); also the rectum, the pharynx or throat and, occasionally, the eye.

If the genital infection is not treated on time, sometimes it can spread to the reproductive organ and can lead to sequelae such as sterility, especially in women.

Gonorrhoea can increase the risk of transmitting HIV during sex.

How is it transmitted?

- **Easily during vaginal or anal sex** and also through oral sex, **by contact with secretions** from infected mucous membranes. Ejaculation is not essential to transmit gonorrhoea.

Gonorrhoea can be transmitted by infected people, who may not experience any discomfort or symptoms.

- **From the infected mother to her infant during delivery.** It can cause serious infection in the baby's eyes.

In addition...

It can also be transmitted with the use of sex toys infected with the gonococcus if they are immediately exchanged between partners.

It is possible to be infected with gonorrhoea more than once.

What are the symptoms?

Genital tract infection

In the majority of men, signs and symptoms of the infection are: usually abnormal yellowish penis discharge and/or strong pain or burning with urination; in some cases, pain in one of the testicles.

In contrast, they occur very rarely in women and if so are of little importance: abnormal or slightly increased vaginal discharge, pain or burning with urination, lower abdominal pain, abnormal vaginal bleeding or, in some cases, painful intercourse.

These signs and symptoms may be similar to other infections. Consult your doctor, who will make a diagnosis.

Rectal or pharyngeal infection

Symptoms do not usually occur.

How can I find out if I have gonorrhoea?

Specific tests are needed. It is only needed a sample of secretions of the infected area: urethra in men, cervix or vagina in women, rectum or throat, **or even a urine sample** to detect genital infection.

Can gonorrhoea be cured?

Infection can be cured. Treatment is comfortable and effective with the use of antibiotics, usually in a single dose: an injection or a tablet.

The infected person should receive treatment as soon as possible, as well as her/his recent sexual partners. Only if this is done, the chain of new infections will be broken.

However, treatment does not cure sequelae gonorrhoea may have produced.

In addition...

When people get to know they are infected, they should warn their sexual partners in the previous two months. Therefore, although these may not have symptoms, they should have access to treatment of infection and avoid related complications.

How can gonorrhoea be prevented?

Unless both partners know they are not infected, the risk of contracting gonorrhoea and other sexually transmitted diseases can be reduced as follows:

- **Use a barrier method to prevent transmission of infectious secretions in vaginal, anal and oral intercourse.** The use of condoms (and a sheet of latex for oral sex) can avoid the risk of transmitting gonorrhoea.

If sex toys are shared, these should be covered by a new condom before anyone else uses them.

- **Avoid having sex under the influence of alcohol or drugs,** as the perception of risk decreases, and may lead to the lack or inconsistency of condom use.




In addition...

- **Limiting the number of sexual partners** is also a preventive measure.
- **To reduce complications:**
 - **In case of warning signs of sexually transmitted infections** (lesions of the skin or the mucous membranes, particularly in the genital area, abnormal genital discharge or burning with urination), **consult your healthcare professional**, who will determine their importance, **and avoid sexual intercourse until then.**
 - **You should be tested for sexually transmitted infections such as gonorrhoea and HIV/AIDS** if there was risk of infection; it can be recommended, even if any symptoms are not present.
 - **Detect infection in pregnant women.** Treatment of an infected mother can prevent the infection from being transmitted to the newborn.

Signs and symptoms of gonorrhoea without treatment

Initial infection



Infection starts and is limited to certain mucous membranes of the body.

Gender	Infected areas	Possible symptoms
	Urethra	2-5 days after sexual intercourse with an infected partner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purulent yellowish discharge of the penis • Pain or burning with urination Without symptoms in 10% of infections.
	Cervix Urethra	10 days after sexual intercourse with an infected partner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yellowish or increased vaginal discharge • Lower abdominal pain • Burning or pain with urination Without symptoms in 50% of infections.
	Rectum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anal itching, rectal mucopurulent discharge or bleeding • Intense rectal pain (usually in men). Without symptoms in most cases.
	Pharynx	Without symptoms in more than 90% of infections.

Infection may persist for a few months before healing spontaneously.

Complications of infection

Primary infection of the genitals can spread to the reproductive system. It affects 1% of men and 10% of women with genital infection.

Gender	Infected areas	Possible symptoms
	Epididymis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain or swelling of the testicle (usually in one testicle)
	Sequelae: infertility (rare)	
	Uterus* Fallopian tubes* Ovaries*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower abdominal pain • Vaginal bleeding between menstrual periods • Menstrual disturbances • Painful intercourse • Fever
	* Pelvic inflammatory disease encompasses infections in these organs. Sequelae: lower abdominal chronic pain, pregnancy outside the uterus, infertility.	

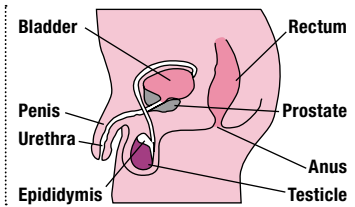
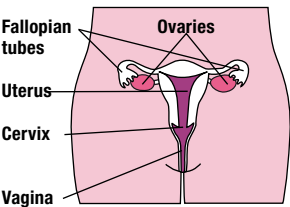
Infection disseminates throughout the body through blood.
It affects 1% of infected persons.

- Cutaneous lesions, joint inflammation and pain (knees, wrists...)

Infection in pregnant women may be transmitted to the baby.
It affects newborns: 40% in case of eye infection (conjunctivitis)

- Conjunctivitis (can cause blindness); rarely a severe generalized infection of the newborn may occur

N. B.: Most relevant and frequent data on gonorrhoea is summarized on the table.



Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Don't forget that:

- An individual can be infected and not know about it.
- The use of condoms effectively reduces the risk of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease.
- Early diagnosis and treatment prevents most of the complications of sexually transmitted diseases.

If you have any doubts or if you think that your behaviour puts you at risk of infection, visit one of the public health system's health centres, sexual and reproductive health units or sexually transmitted disease units.

You can also call:



Sanitat Respon 24 hores
902 111 444

SIDA

900 212222
Informació confidencial i gratuïta



www.gencat.cat/salut