

What is chlamydia?

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Chlamydia is a very common infection that is spread through sexual contact. It is an infection caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*. Chlamydia infects the cervix (neck of the womb) and the penis in men (urethra). It can also sometimes infect the urethra in women and the throat and anus in both men and women. Chlamydia is extremely common. The number of people diagnosed with chlamydia in Australia has increased dramatically since the late 1990s, with over 41,000 people diagnosed with chlamydia in Australia in 2005. Most of these infections were in people aged between 15 and 29 years.

Are there any symptoms of infection?

Women: About 80% of women with chlamydia infection will not have any symptoms at all. But, when it does cause symptoms, these can include a vaginal discharge, burning or stinging when passing urine, irregular bleeding between periods or after sex, pain during sex or lower abdominal pain.

Men: Up to 80% of men with chlamydia infection may not have any symptoms of infection. But when they do occur, symptoms in men include discharge from the penis, stinging or burning when passing urine or pain in the testicles and scrotum.

As many people infected with chlamydia do not have any symptoms, they do not know they have the infection. This study will help us determine how many young Australia women actually catch chlamydia infection during a 12 month period. This is very important information and we will use it to plan how to control chlamydia infection.

Why are we worried about chlamydia infection?

If left untreated, chlamydia infection can cause serious health complications, particularly in women. Women may develop an infection of the womb (uterus) and fallopian tubes (that connect the ovaries to the womb), a condition called pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID can cause infertility in women (inability to become pregnant) – up to 20% of women with PID may become infertile. For men, infection with chlamydia may cause pain and swelling of the testicles.

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Are there any other problems with chlamydia infection?

Yes, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) can last a long time – sometimes months and can be very painful. PID can also damage the fallopian tubes, causing a fertilized egg to get stuck in her fallopian tubes resulting in an ectopic pregnancy – a pregnancy in the fallopian tube rather than the womb. This is an uncommon, but very serious problem for women.

How do you catch chlamydia?

- Chlamydia is sexually transmitted, so you can catch it by having sex without a condom with someone who has the infection.

How do you prevent getting infected with chlamydia?

- Use condoms when having sex.
- Get yourself and your partner tested for sexually transmitted infections before having unprotected sex.

How is chlamydia diagnosed?

Chlamydia is easily tested with a simple urine test.

Can chlamydia be cured?

Chlamydia is easily treated. Usually just a single dose of the antibiotic azithromycin is used.