

Gonorrhea (gon·or·rhe·a)

What is gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted infection (STI). It most commonly infects the genitals, rectum, throat and eyes. A person with gonorrhea can pass it on to another person during sexual contact (oral, anal, vaginal).

How do you get it?

Anyone who is sexually active can get gonorrhea. Gonorrhea is most easily passed on during sex without a condom. The infection passes from one person to another through body fluids from the penis, vagina, mouth or rectum.

Gonorrhea can be passed from a pregnant parent to their child during childbirth (delivery).

How can you tell if you have it?

Many people with gonorrhea have no symptoms, so they don't know they have an infection. When symptoms do occur, they usually take two to seven days to appear after you have been infected. Common symptoms vary depending on where the infection is.

Common Symptoms of Gonorrhea by infection sites

Infection Site	Common Symptoms
Genitals	Discharge, pain when urinating, vaginal bleeding between periods, painful sex, swelling in testicles or abdomen
Rectum/Anus	Anal itching, discharge, painful bowel movements, feeling of having to have a bowel movement
Throat/Mouth	Sore throat
Eyes	Itchy/swollen eyelids, red (bloodshot) eyes, white/yellow/green discharge, crusting over

If it is not treated, gonorrhea may lead to infertility in both those with male and female reproductive organs as well as abdominal pain or pregnancy complications for those with female reproductive organs.

Untreated gonorrhea in the eye can damage vision.

How do you get tested?

The only way to know for sure whether you have gonorrhea is to get tested.



Health and Wellness

You should get tested if you experience symptoms of gonorrhea or if you have a current or recent sex partner diagnosed with gonorrhea.

Consider getting tested if you:

- have a new sexual partner
- have had oral, anal or vaginal sex and not used a condom
- have had multiple sex partners within the last 12 months
- have, or have had another STI
- are pregnant or planning to become pregnant

Testing is available on PEI through the [Sexual Health Clinic \(SHORS\)](#), your primary health care provider or a walk-in clinic. The test involves a swab of the genitals, rectum, throat or a urine (pee) sample. In some cases, you may be able to take the sample yourself. Tell the healthcare provider about all the sexual contact (oral, anal, vaginal) you have so they can test the appropriate parts of your body.

It is a good idea to get tested for other STIs, including HIV and syphilis, when you get tested for gonorrhea. Many STIs can be passed on in the same way as gonorrhea. Talk to your healthcare provider about how often you should test for gonorrhea and other STIs.

If you are diagnosed with gonorrhea, a public health nurse will talk to you about your sex partners who might have been exposed to gonorrhea. They will contact them and encourage them to get tested and provide education. Your identity will not be revealed.

How is it treated?

Gonorrhea can be treated with antibiotics given either by injection or by mouth or a combination of both. Some strains of gonorrhea have become resistant to the antibiotics used to treat it.

After you are treated for a gonorrhea infection, and your symptoms have gone away, you should not be able to pass it on to someone else. You should wait 7 days after you finish your treatment to have sex again as it takes that long for the medication to cure the infection in your body. After treatment (3-4 weeks) a test may be performed to ensure that you no longer have gonorrhea. This is called a test of cure.

How can I not get it again?

- Use a condom during vaginal and anal sex
- Use a condom or oral dam during oral sex
- When sharing a sex toy, wash the sex toy and put a new condom on it between each use

There is no vaccine approved to protect against gonorrhea.