

Auckland Sexual Health Service  
Free phone 0800 739 432

## What is Gonorrhoea?

- *Neisseria* Gonorrhoea is a sexually transmitted bacterial infection.
- In males it infects the urethra (tube inside the penis) and in women it infects the urethra and cervix (neck of the womb).
- It can also infect the rectum and sometimes the eyes and throat.

## How does someone get Gonorrhoea?

- Gonorrhoea is transmitted through contact with genital fluids from the penis and vagina.
- If you have vaginal sex, anal sex or oral sex without a condom you may become infected.
- Other sexual practices such as mutual masturbation or fingering may also result in the spread of infection.
- Gonorrhoea can be passed from mother to baby during birth. The baby may develop eye or joint infection as a result.

## What are the symptoms?

- **Symptoms for men can include:**
  - Thick, yellow or white discharge from the penis
  - Pain or discomfort passing urine
  - Redness around the opening of the penis.
  - Anal discharge and discomfort
  - The infection can spread to the testicles (balls) causing pain and swelling.
- Men are more likely to have symptoms and these usually occur within 2-10 days after infection.
- Some men, especially those with anal or throat gonorrhoea, may not have any signs or symptoms.
- Rarely, gonorrhoea may spread via the blood stream to cause severe joint pain and infect other internal organs and skin.
- **Symptoms for Women can include:**
  - Unusual vaginal discharge
  - Irregular bleeding.
  - Discomfort passing urine
  - Pelvic pain, especially during intercourse.
- Most women do not have any signs or symptoms.
- If left untreated, gonorrhoea can spread to the uterus and tubes causing pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), a condition that may cause infertility or ectopic pregnancies (where the pregnancy develops in the fallopian tubes instead of the uterus). This can lead to chronic pelvic pain.
- Both men and women can have infection with gonorrhoea in the rectum if they have anal sex. This may cause rectal discharge or discomfort, but often there are no symptoms.

## How do I know if I have Gonorrhoea?

- The best way to find out if you have gonorrhoea is to have a sexual health check.
- This involves an examination and taking a swab from the end of the penis in men and a swab from the cervix (neck of the womb) in women.

## How is Gonorrhoea treated?

- In most cases a single dose of the correct antibiotic reliably and rapidly cures gonorrhoea.
- Often chlamydia and gonorrhoea occur together, so you may be given treatment for both infections.

## Does my partner need treatment?

- If you have had sex without a condom with your sexual partner(s) it is very likely that they are infected with gonorrhoea.
- It is important that they have a sexual health check and treatment for gonorrhoea even if they have no symptoms and even if they have a negative gonorrhoea test.

## Important advice for someone with Gonorrhoea?

- Finish all the antibiotics – symptoms may resolve in a few days but the bacteria may not be gone.
- Sexual intercourse without a condom during treatment should be avoided for at least 7 days because the infection can still be transmitted during this time.
- If you receive single dose treatment you should avoid sex without a condom for 7 days after treatment and until 7 days after your partner has been treated.
- If you are using a combined oral contraceptive pill you need to use a condom for 14 days as antibiotics can affect the reliability of the pill. Ask your doctor or nurse if you are unsure.
- We recommend you have another sexual health check-up 3 months after you have completed treatment to make sure you have not been re-infected.