

Sexually Transmitted Diseases/Infections

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*, which can damage a woman's reproductive organs. Even though symptoms of chlamydia are usually mild or absent, serious complications that cause irreversible damage, including infertility, can occur before a woman ever recognizes a problem.

Chlamydia can be transmitted during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Any sexually active person can be infected with chlamydia. The greater the number of sex partners, the greater the risk of infection. Chlamydia can also be passed from an infected mother to her baby during vaginal childbirth, resulting in chlamydial conjunctivitis (also known as Ophthalmia Neonatorum) or chlamydial pneumonia. Thus, screening of pregnant women at intervals during pregnancy is required by North Carolina law.

Chlamydia is known as a "silent" disease because the majority of infected people have no symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they usually appear within 1 - 3 weeks after exposure. If untreated, chlamydial infections can progress to serious reproductive and other health problems with both short-term and long-term consequences. In women, untreated infection can spread into the uterus or fallopian tubes and cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). To help prevent the serious consequences of chlamydia, screening at least annually for chlamydia is recommended for all sexually active women age 25 years and younger.

Chlamydia infection in women can be diagnosed by testing urine or by collecting swab specimens from the endocervix or vagina. Chlamydia can be easily treated and cured with antibiotics. A single dose of azithromycin or a week of doxycycline (twice daily) are the most commonly used treatments.

For more information:

- CDC fact sheet, www.cdc.gov/std/chlamydia/STDFact-chlamydia.htm
- CDC STD Treatment Guidelines 2010 – Chlamydia
www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/2010/chlamydial-infections.htm