



GONORRHEA

What is gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the bacterium (a germ) *Neisseria Gonorrhoeae*.

What are the symptoms?

It usually takes two to seven days for symptoms to appear. Some people do not have symptoms. If they do appear, symptoms may include:

Females	Males
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unusual discharge from the vagina • burning feeling when urinating • vaginal bleeding after sex • lower abdominal (belly) pain • pain during sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creamy white and yellow discharge from the penis • burning or pain when urinating • burning or itching at the opening of the penis • painful or swollen testicles

In both men and women, a gonorrhea infection in the rectum may cause itching, bleeding, soreness, discharge and painful bowel movements. Gonorrhea infection in the throat usually does not cause any symptoms, but may cause a sore throat.

In rare occasions, gonorrhea can also cause infection in the eyes, skin, joints, bloodstream and around the liver.

How is the infection spread?

Gonorrhea is easily spread from one person to another by having unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex with an infected partner. Even without symptoms, gonorrhea can be transmitted to others. It can be passed from mother to child during childbirth. If you have gonorrhea, you should notify everyone you have had sex with in the past 60 days. If you have not had sex in the past 60 days, you should contact the last person you had sex with.

How is gonorrhea diagnosed?

- Testing for gonorrhea can be done with a urine test or through swabbing: a swab from the cervix (in females) and urethra (in males).
- Depending on the site of infection, swabs from throat, rectum or eyes may also be needed.
- Your health care provider will ask you questions about your past health and your sexual history.
- You should also be tested for other sexually transmitted and blood borne infections.

How is gonorrhea treated?

- Gonorrhea can be treated with antibiotics, though the infection is becoming increasingly resistant to antibiotics. You are contagious until you have completed your treatment.
- Take all the pills exactly as instructed.
- Avoid unprotected sexual activities that may put you at risk for re-infection until you and your partner(s) have completed treatment
- Be sure to follow your healthcare professional's treatment and follow-up recommendations.
- Having a gonorrhea infection once does not prevent you from getting infected again.
- If you have gonorrhea and chlamydia, you will get medication that treats both infections.

What happens if gonorrhoea is left untreated?

- In women, untreated gonorrhoea can spread to reproductive organs and cause Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). PID is a serious infection of the uterus (womb), fallopian tubes, and ovaries, causing lower abdominal pain. It can lead to ectopic pregnancy (where the egg implants itself outside the cavity of the womb) and infertility (the inability to have children). In men, untreated gonorrhoea can cause swelling and pain in the testicles. It can also lead to reduced fertility (harder to have children) or sterility (inability to have children).
- In both men and women, untreated gonorrhoea can cause joint or skin problems or widespread infection in the bloodstream which can be life-threatening.
- A pregnant woman could pass gonorrhoea to her baby during childbirth causing blindness, joint infection, or a life-threatening blood infection.
- Having gonorrhoea also increases the risk of contracting and transmitting HIV.

Who is at higher risk of getting gonorrhoea?

You are at higher risk of getting gonorrhoea if you:

- Are younger than 25 and sexually active with many partners.
- Have unprotected sex (vaginal, oral or anal) with an infected partner.
- Are a sex trade worker or one of their partners.
- Are a man having unprotected sex with men.
- Have ever had gonorrhoea or other STI.

How can gonorrhoea be prevented?

Individuals who are sexually active should:

- Limit the number of sexual partners and avoid sex with people whose sexual history is unknown.
- Always use condoms when having sex (vaginal, oral, or anal). A dental dam (a sheet of latex) or a male condom cut open should be used for oral sex.
- Avoid the use of alcohol and other drugs that might cloud thinking and lead to high-risk behavior.

What is the public health response?

If you are diagnosed with gonorrhoea, your health-care provider will treat you and give you information on sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections. A Public Health Nurse may contact you to support you in contacting your partners.

All discussions are strictly confidential.

Further Information

For additional information, contact your health-care provider, Tele-Care 811, local Public Health office or visit the [government of New Brunswick website](#).