Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT) for Chlamydia or Gonorrhea Infection

GUIDE FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

What is Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT)?
Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT), also called patient-delivered partner therapy, is the clinical practice of treating the heterosexual sex partner(s) of patients diagnosed with chlamydia (Chlamydia trachomatis) or gonorrhea (Neisseria gonorrhoeae). Healthcare providers practice EPT by giving their patients that are diagnosed with chlamydia or gonorrhea antibiotics or an antibiotic prescription to then give to their heterosexual sex partner(s) without first evaluating the partner(s). This practice is recommended if it is unlikely that the sex partner(s) will seek timely evaluation and treatment.

Is EPT legal in New Hampshire?
Yes. Under NH law RSA 141-C:15-a, EPT is allowable and explicitly legal in NH. This law went into effect May 9, 2017.

Why is EPT important?
EPT decreases rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea reinfection by increasing the number of sex partners appropriately treated for chlamydia and/or gonorrhea. The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) is promoting the use of EPT because of a 2016-2017 statewide increase in gonorrhea and also to control chlamydia, which is the most common reportable sexually transmitted disease (STD).

Who is eligible for EPT?
You should use EPT for all of the heterosexual sex partners your patient had in the 60 days prior to their diagnosis of chlamydia or gonorrhea, or the most recent sexual partner if the patient’s last sexual encounter was more than 60 days in the past. EPT is not routinely recommended for men who have sex with men (MSM) because of a high risk for coexisting infections in partners, especially undiagnosed HIV infection and syphilis, which is increasing in MSM in NH. EPT is also not recommended for pregnant partners. A healthcare provider should evaluate these individuals for testing and treatment. EPT is also not recommended for treatment of gonorrhea infections in the throat.

Can EPT be used for any other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?
No. EPT is only for persons diagnosed with chlamydia and/or gonorrhea.

What are the recommended antibiotics for chlamydia and/or gonorrhea EPT?
- **Chlamydia**: 1 gram of azithromycin orally in a single dose. Because azithromycin can frequently cause gastrointestinal upset with nausea and vomiting, azithromycin should be taken with food.
- **Gonorrhea**: 400mg of cefixime orally in a single dose PLUS 1 gram of azithromycin orally in a single dose. Dual antibiotic therapy is necessary to fully treat gonorrhea. Because azithromycin can frequently cause gastrointestinal upset with nausea and vomiting, azithromycin should be taken with food.
• Note: oral cefixime should only be used for EPT. The recommended antibiotics for a patient you diagnose with gonorrhea are single dose 250mg of ceftriaxone intramuscularly PLUS a single dose of 1 gram of azithromycin orally. If a sex partner has a known allergy or contraindication to a recommended EPT treatment, the sex partner should be instructed to see a healthcare provider for appropriate evaluation and treatment.

• Along with antibiotics or a prescription for antibiotics, your patient and his/her sex partner(s) should also be provided with our EPT Guide for Patients and Sex Partners located at https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/bchs/std/ept.htm

• For your reference, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s 2015 STD Treatment Guidelines can be found here: https://www.cdc.gov/std/tg2015/default.htm.

• Further information about EPT can be found here: https://www.cdc.gov/std/ept/default.htm.

How does a healthcare provider write a prescription for EPT?
The EPT prescription should include:
• Healthcare provider or healthcare facility name and address
• Date of prescription
• Medication name and dosage
• Directions for antibiotic use
• Number of refills (should be “zero”)

If you know a sex partner’s name, date of birth, and address, you can also fill this information in, otherwise it is acceptable to leave this section blank for the sex partner to fill in when they take the prescription to the pharmacy.

How will sex partner(s) know if it’s safe to take EPT without seeing a healthcare provider?
Healthcare providers using EPT should provide informational material for both the patient and his/her sex partners ("Guide for Patients" and "Guide for Sex Partners") along with the antibiotics or antibiotic prescription. This material contains information about allergic reactions, potential side effects, and reasons why a partner should not take the antibiotics but see a healthcare provider instead for evaluation and treatment. The EPT Guides for patients and sex partners can be found on the DHHS website at: https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/bchs/std/ept.htm

Who will pay for a sex partner’s antibiotic prescription?
The cost of the antibiotics or any co-pays for antibiotics obtained through a pharmacy are the responsibility of the person being prescribed the antibiotics (i.e., paid by the person who picks up the prescription). If a person has insurance, their insurance should cover the cost of the antibiotics except for any co-pay.

Where can I find out more information about EPT in New Hampshire?
For more information about EPT, please visit:
• NH DHHS: https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/bchs/std/ept.htm
• CDC EPT: https://www.cdc.gov/std/ept/default.htm
• CDC 2015 STD Treatment Guidelines: https://www.cdc.gov/std/tg2015/default.htm