

Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT) for Chlamydia/Gonorrhea Infection

GUIDE FOR PATIENTS

What are chlamydia and gonorrhea?

Chlamydia and gonorrhea are sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) caused by bacteria. They can infect the reproductive and genital tracts, throat, and rectum, depending on the type of sex a person had. People with infection may not have any symptoms, or might only have mild symptoms. When present, symptoms of both chlamydia and gonorrhea can include burning or pain with urination, penile or vaginal discharge, and pain or swelling in the testicles. Rectal infection can also cause rectal pain, bleeding, or discharge, and throat infection can cause a sore throat. More serious complications of chlamydia and gonorrhea include infection of the internal reproductive organs called Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), infertility (inability to become pregnant), and ectopic pregnancy (an abnormal pregnancy that develops outside of the uterus). Gonorrhea can also spread to the blood and joints, which can be life-threatening.

Even without symptoms, both chlamydia and gonorrhea can be passed on to sex partners. Having an untreated sex partner is an important risk factor for repeat infection and complications. Treating the sex partners of a person diagnosed with chlamydia or gonorrhea is important to stop the spread of these STDs.

Why am I getting extra antibiotics or an extra prescription for antibiotics?

You have been diagnosed with chlamydia and/or gonorrhea. Your sex partners also need to be treated with antibiotics so they don't develop serious health problems, re-infect you, or pass the infection on to others. You are getting extra antibiotics or an antibiotic prescription to give to your sex partners in order to treat them; this practice is called Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT).

What is Expedited Partner Therapy?

Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT) is a convenient, fast, and private way to get your sex partners treated for chlamydia and/or gonorrhea without them needing to see a healthcare provider. EPT allows your healthcare provider to give you extra antibiotics or an antibiotic prescription for you to then give to your sex partners so they can be treated as soon as possible.

Is Expedited Partner Therapy safe?

Your healthcare provider will give you and your sex partners instructions about how to safely take the antibiotics.

How should I make sure my sex partner(s) are treated with antibiotics?

First, recall all the people you have had sex with in the past 60 days. If you have not had sex in the last 60 days, recall your most recent sex partner before that. Tell them that you have been diagnosed and treated for an STD called chlamydia and/or gonorrhea and that they may also have this STD even if they don't have symptoms.

Next, give your sex partners the antibiotics or the prescription for antibiotics along with the information sheet “*Guide for Sex Partners*” that your healthcare provider gave you. Finally, encourage your sex partners to read the Guide before taking the antibiotics. You should also encourage all your sex partners to visit a healthcare provider to get tested for other STDs, even if they take the antibiotics.

How do I tell my sex partner(s) I was treated for an STD?

Telling sex partners that you have an STD can be difficult, but it is the right thing to do and important to prevent your partners from having health complications from an infection, prevent yourself from getting re-infected, and prevent the spread of infection to others. The best way to tell your partners is by being open and honest. You could say:

“These antibiotics are to treat a STD called gonorrhea (and/or chlamydia), and you should take them because I was infected and you may be infected too. You should read the information that comes with the antibiotics and visit a healthcare provider to get checked for other STDs.”

You or your partners may feel embarrassed, ashamed, guilty, angry or scared; these feelings are normal. By offering them treatment, however, you are showing that you care enough to help.

What if my sex partner(s) blame me?

People worry about their partners being angry, but you may not be the one who has infected them with chlamydia and/or gonorrhea. These infections often don’t have symptoms, so a person can have it for a long time and not know it. The most important thing is to tell your partners about the infection, make sure those who have been exposed get treated, and take steps to avoid future STDs, including using condoms.

What if my partner becomes violent when I tell him/her I have an STD?

If you think a partner could become violent, EPT may not be the best approach. Ask your provider for help telling your partner; your healthcare provider can work with the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services to anonymously reach out to a sex partner and make sure they get evaluated and treated. If a partner ever does threaten you or becomes violent, you should call 911 immediately.

What if my partner(s) have questions about EPT?

Your partners can call the phone number on the prescription, read the enclosed information sheet, talk to the pharmacist filling the antibiotic prescription, or visit the DHHS website at <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/bchs/std/ept.htm>. They should also be encouraged to talk with their own healthcare providers about being tested for other STDs.

My sex partner(s) are not sick. Should they still take the antibiotics?

Yes. People with a chlamydia and/or gonorrhea infection may not feel sick or experience any symptoms. Taking the antibiotics should cure their infection.

What if my sex partner is pregnant or thinks she may be pregnant?

If a sex partner is pregnant or thinks she may be pregnant, EPT is not recommended for her. It is better for her to see a healthcare provider as soon as possible to be tested and treated for STDs, which can be passed from a mother to her baby during pregnancy or delivery.

How long do the antibiotics take to work?

The antibiotics take about 7 days to fully treat the chlamydia and/or gonorrhea infection. You and your sex partners should not have sex (vaginal, oral, or anal) for at least 7 days after being treated. You can get chlamydia and gonorrhea again if you have sex before the medicine cures you and your partner(s).

What should my sex partner(s) expect when they go to a pharmacy to pick up the antibiotics?

If your healthcare provider chooses to write an antibiotic prescription for your sex partners, you will need to give that prescription to your partners. Each partner will need their own prescription, and a partner can fill the prescription at any pharmacy. On the prescription, your healthcare provider will list the antibiotic name, dose, and directions for how to take the antibiotics. The prescription will also need to include your partner's name, date of birth, and address. If you don't provide this information for your healthcare provider to fill in on the prescription, then it will be left blank and your sex partner will need to fill this information in before a pharmacist can fill the prescription. If your sex partner has questions about the medications, he/she should talk with the pharmacist or their healthcare provider.

What if a partner won't take the antibiotics?

If a sex partner won't take the antibiotics, he/she should see a healthcare provider as soon as possible to be tested and treated for chlamydia, gonorrhea, and other STDs. You should tell your partner that not getting treated can cause serious health problems. You should not have sex with past sex partners until they are treated and the antibiotics have 7 days to work.

What if I can't get the antibiotics or antibiotic prescription to all of my sex partners?

If you can't give the antibiotics or an antibiotic prescription to all of your sex partners, then you should return the antibiotics or prescriptions to your healthcare provider.

How do I avoid sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?

The only way to completely avoid STDs is to not have sex. If you choose to have sex, please do it safely by using a latex condom correctly every time and for every kind of sex (oral, anal or vaginal sex). You can also reduce your chances of getting STDs by limiting the number of people you have sex with. The more sex partners you have, the higher your risk of getting an STD.

For more information please talk to your healthcare provider. You can also access more information on the DHHS website at <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/bchs/std/ept.htm>.