



Information for Patients Diagnosed with Gonorrhea

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PLEASE READ CAREFULLY: THIS IS IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

What is gonorrhea?

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

Even without symptoms, gonorrhea can be passed on to sex partners and if not treated can lead to serious and permanent health complications. Having an untreated sex partner is an important risk factor for repeat infection and complications. Treatment of the sex partners of a person diagnosed with gonorrhea is important to stop it from spreading to others.

How do I tell my sex partner(s) I was diagnosed with an STD?

Telling sex partners that you have an STD can be difficult, but it is important to prevent your partner 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.

First, explain to all the partners you have had sex with in the past 60 days (or your most recent sex partner if you've had none in the past 60 days) that you have been diagnosed and treated for an STD called gonorrhea and that they may also have an STD even if they don't have symptoms.

You could say:

"I have been to see my doctor and found out I have gonorrhea. It's sexually transmitted so you may have it too. Even if you don't feel sick, you should visit a health care provider to get treatment and checked for STDs."

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

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

Yes. People with a gonorrhea infection may not feel sick or experience any symptoms (signs). Taking antibiotics is still important to treat for a gonorrhea infection to prevent long-term health problems and prevent the infection from spreading to others.

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 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, ask your provider for help telling your partner; your health care provider can work with the New Hampshire public health department to anonymously reach out to your 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.

Where can I tell my partners they can go to get testing and treatment for gonorrhea?

Please see the attached list of providers where you and/or your partner can go to get low-to-no-cost testing and treatment for gonorrhea. You can also check our website:

<http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/gonorrhea.htm>.

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

Your partners can call the New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services at (603) 271-4496 or their own health care provider. There is also additional information on our website:

<http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/gonorrhea.htm>.

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, 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, including chlamydia, gonorrhea and HIV, 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 talk to your health care provider. There is also additional information on our website: <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/gonorrhea.htm>.