Chlamydia

What is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a common sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the bacterium Chlamydia trachomatis. It can affect anyone of any age, but it's most prevalent in young women.

How is Chlamydia transmitted?

Chlamydia is primarily transmitted through sexual contact with someone who has the infection, regardless of gender. This includes vaginal, anal, and oral sex. It can also be passed from an infected mother to her baby during childbirth.

Symptoms

In many cases, Chlamydia does not cause any symptoms, and you might not know you have it. If symptoms do occur, they can present differently in men and women:

Men may experience:

- A burning sensation when urinating
- Discharge from the penis
- Pain and swelling in one or both testicles (although this is less common)

Women may experience:

- An increase in discharge from the vagina
- A burning sensation when urinating
- Pain during sexual intercourse
- Lower abdominal pain
- Bleeding between periods and/or after sex

Complications

If left untreated, Chlamydia can lead to serious health problems:

- **In women**, it can cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which can lead to long-term pelvic pain, infertility, and ectopic pregnancy (a pregnancy outside the uterus).
- **In men**, Chlamydia can cause pain, fever, and, in rare cases, infertility.
- It can also increase the risk of getting or giving HIV.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is through a simple urine test or a swab test. Regular screening for Chlamydia is recommended if you're sexually active and under 25, or if you're over 25 and at risk of STIs (new sexual partner or multiple partners, for instance).

Treatment

Chlamydia is treated with antibiotics. It's important to take all of the medication prescribed to you, even if your symptoms disappear. You should also refrain from sexual contact until you have finished your treatment, to prevent the spread of the infection.

Prevention

- Use latex condoms every time you have sex
- Have regular STI screenings if you're sexually active and at risk
- Inform your sexual partners if you're diagnosed with Chlamydia, so they can be tested and treated if necessary

Remember: Chlamydia is common, and it's nothing to be ashamed of. It's important to get tested and treated if you think you might have it. If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to speak with your GP or a sexual health clinic.

This information is intended for general informational purposes and should not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice. If you have any health concerns, please see your healthcare provider.

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