



CHLAMYDIA – YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

About Us

Marie Stopes International provides sexual health and pregnancy choices worldwide. Our caring and committed team ensures every client receives immediate help and support in a non-judgmental, personalised and confidential manner.

Marie Stopes International centres in Australia offer a broad range of sexual and reproductive healthcare services to men and women, including: abortion, vasectomy, contraception and STI check-ups.

Our Global Partnership

Marie Stopes International in Australia is part of the global Marie Stopes International partnership – a UK based registered charity providing a full range of reproductive health care services in over 40 countries.

Marie Stopes International was established in London in 1976, and grew out of the organisation originally set up by Dr Marie Stopes – the family planning pioneer who opened UK's first family planning clinic in 1921.

About This Information Sheet

This information sheet is designed to provide you with up-to-date information about Chlamydia and to encourage you to have a test for the infection if you are at risk.

What is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia (pronounced clar-midi-yer) is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the bacteria *Chlamydia Trachomatis*, which can affect areas such as the penis, cervix, urethra, vagina, fallopian tubes, anus, rectum, and less commonly the throat and/or eyes. If left untreated Chlamydia can cause serious problems in later life, including infertility. Chlamydia tests are readily available and treatment is both simple and effective.

Over the past decade there has been a steady increase in the number of detections of Chlamydia in Australia, making it Australia's most common STI. In 2002, national Chlamydia notifications rose to over 24,000, compared with 16,770 in 2000 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). The number of detections is likely to be much higher however, as many people with the infection do not display any symptoms and it is possible to carry the infection for many years without knowing you have it.

What are the symptoms of Chlamydia?

In many cases, Chlamydia has no symptoms. Just because you cannot see it doesn't mean you don't have it.

Possible warning signs are:

- pain or cramping in the lower abdomen
- painful sexual intercourse
- flu like symptoms, including a slight fever and nausea
- unusual discharge from the vagina/penis
- pain when passing urine and increased frequency of needing to urinate
- vaginal bleeding or spotting between periods or after intercourse

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So how will I know if I have the infection?

The only way you can be sure is to be tested.

Chlamydia can be detected with a simple urine test or swab of the cervix, which can easily be carried out at a Marie Stopes International centre. If you decide to take the test, results will be available to you within 72 hours. It is possible to have contracted other STIs at the same time as Chlamydia, so you should consider a complete STI check up.

We will only contact you if the result is positive, either by phone or by post, or you may choose to contact the Marie Stopes International centre yourself. If the result is positive, we suggest you either return to the centre or visit your own GP as soon as possible for treatment. If the result is negative, we will not contact you, however you are welcome to contact us on **Freecall 1800 003 707** to confirm your test results.

Are you at risk?

Chlamydia does not discriminate: it affects both men and women of all ages. People who are most at risk are those who are sexually active (particularly those with multiple partners), and those having unprotected sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal or oral).

How do you get Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is transmitted when the mucous membrane (the soft skin covering all openings of the body) comes into contact with the mucous membrane secretions or semen of an infected person, particularly during unprotected sexual contact.

You can contract Chlamydia via:

- sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal or oral) with someone who is infected
- transferring the infection on fingers from genitals to the eyes
- blood to blood contact

The only way to protect yourself from STI's, including Chlamydia, is to practice safer sex and use a condom or a latex dental dam.

Can Chlamydia be treated?

Yes, very easily with antibiotics. The treatment is safe, simple and effective if a full course of antibiotics is taken correctly.

It is important to understand that anyone who has tested positive for the infection has almost certainly passed it on to their partner/s.

In order to effectively treat Chlamydia, it is very important that both/all current partners receive the same antibiotic treatment at the same time; otherwise you may be reinfected and continue to pass the infection back and forth amongst you. All of your previous sexual partners whom you feel may be at risk should also be checked and treated.

Avoid unprotected sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal or oral) for at least seven days after you and your partner/s have finished the course of antibiotics to ensure you do not re infect each other. Although a low risk, you should also be careful when having sexual contact or oral sex for at least seven days following antibiotics, as Chlamydia can also be transmitted via sexual fluids to the eyes, genitals or throat.

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To avoid contracting an STI in future, always practice safer sex and make sure you have regular STI check-ups, particularly if you or your partner have multiple partners or if your partner has not been tested.

What will happen if I don't get treatment?

Chlamydia can be a serious health threat. If left untreated in women, it may cause inflammation of the cervix (cervicitis) which can spread up into the uterus and fallopian tubes. This may lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), potentially causing chronic pain, an increased risk of ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy in the fallopian tube) or even infertility. Pregnant women can pass on Chlamydia to their children, giving them infections of the eye, nose or throat, or pneumonia. If left untreated in men, Chlamydia may cause urethral and testicular infections. It may also cause a serious form of urethritis (inflammation of the tube along which urine and semen pass through the penis), chronic pain and possibly fertility problems. These complications are preventable if diagnosed and treated early for both partners.

If you are unsure of anything, need further clarification or require test results, please contact our National Support Centre on **Freecall 1800 003 707**.

What is the cost of a Chlamydia test?

The cost of a Chlamydia test is bulk billed if you have a Medicare card. If you do not have a Medicare card, the pathology company will bill you the full cost by mail at a charge of around \$45. Some of this may be rebated with certain health insurance covers.

Marie Stopes International aims to provide the best possible service to our clients and your feedback is very important to us.

If you have any suggestions about improvements we could make to our information, or other aspects of our service, please use the Client Feedback Form that you are given at the centre, or speak to a Marie Stopes International team member.

If you are not satisfied with any aspect of the service provided by Marie Stopes International and wish to make a formal complaint, the Centre Manager will give your complaint their urgent attention, carry out an investigation and respond to you.

Should you be dissatisfied with the handling of your complaint, it will be referred to the CEO – Australia.

For more information on the services offered
at a centre near you,
or to make an appointment,
please call our National Support Centre on

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or visit our website at
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