



Gonorrhea Facts

What is gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that can infect both men and women. It can cause infections in the genitals, rectum and throat. It is a very common infection, especially among young people ages 15-24 years.

How do you get gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is spread:

- Through anal, vaginal or oral sex with an infected person.
- From mother to baby (during birth).

Can you protect yourself from gonorrhea?

Yes. The best ways to avoid gonorrhea are to:

- Not have sex (abstinence).
- Limit your number of sex partners.
- Being in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and has negative STI results.
- Use a latex condom correctly each time you have sex.
- Talk to your sex partners about gonorrhea and other STIs.

What are the symptoms of gonorrhea?

You can get gonorrhea in the anus, eyes, mouth, throat, urinary tract or uterus. You may not notice any symptoms. If you do have symptoms, they will vary depending on what part of your body is infected.

Females may have abnormal bleeding from the vagina. In both males and females, symptoms may include:

- Painful peeing or bowel movements.
- Yellow or clear discharge from penis, vagina or anus.
- Sore throat (from oral sex).
- Itching in the genitals or anus.

Other symptoms for males may include:

- A white, yellow, or green discharge from the penis;
- Painful or swollen testicles (although this is less common).

You should call a health care provider or Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Division right away if you have any of these symptoms or if you have had sex with someone who has gonorrhea or has these symptoms. Since the symptoms of STIs often resemble one another, diagnosis by a health care provider is the only way to know for sure if you are infected.

Is gonorrhea dangerous?

It can be. Gonorrhea stays in your body if it is not treated. If you have gonorrhea, you may have a higher risk of getting HIV infection if you have unprotected sex with a partner who has HIV.

Gonorrhea can also spread to the blood or joints. This condition can be very serious.

If you are a woman:

- Gonorrhea can spread into the uterus or fallopian tubes and cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), a serious infection that happens when gonorrhea spreads to the reproductive organs.
- PID can also cause damage that makes you unable to get pregnant.
- Untreated gonorrhea may cause chronic pain in your pelvic area.
- If you are pregnant and have untreated gonorrhea, you could pass the infection to your baby when giving birth. Gonorrhea can cause serious health problems for babies.

If you are a man:

- You may develop a painful condition in the testicles. In rare cases, this may prevent you from fathering children.
- Rarely, untreated gonorrhea can spread to your blood or joints. This can be life threatening.

Is there a cure for gonorrhea?

Yes, antibiotics are used to treat and cure gonorrhea.

Can you still have sex?

You should not have sex until:

- You should wait **seven days** after you have finished all of your prescribed medications.
- Your sex partners have been treated and have finished all of their prescribed medicine, and have waited the seven days.

Who can I call for more information?

American Social Health Association Hotline: 1-800-227-8922

www.ashastd.org

Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Division

Greensboro or High Point: 336-641-7777

www.myguilford.com