

# Gonorrhoea

## What is gonorrhoea?

*Gonorrhoea* (also known as 'the clap') is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the bacterium *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. It commonly affects the urethra, especially in men, and other genital areas but may also develop in the anus or throat, depending on the sexual activity.

## What are the symptoms?

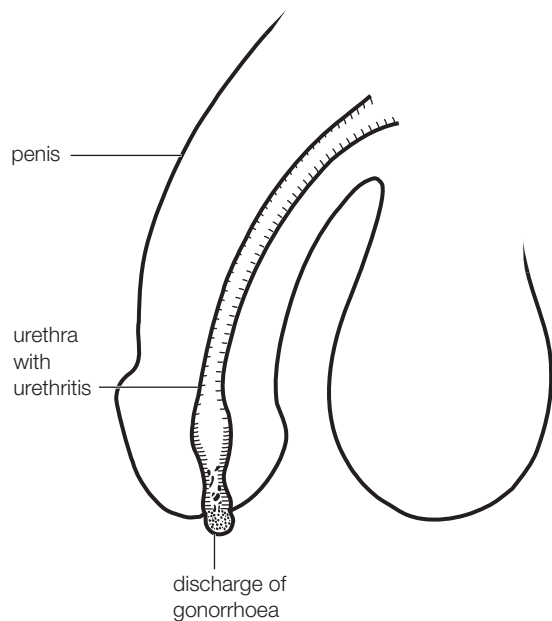
The symptoms usually appear about 2 to 10 days after vaginal, anal or oral sex, but the incubation period can be as long as 3 weeks.

### In men

The main symptoms (due to urethritis) are:

- a burning sensation on passing urine
- a pus-like (white or yellow) discharge or leak.

The first noticeable symptom is a slight discomfort on passing urine, which can later become very painful 'like passing razor blades' if it is not treated. A discharge of creamy pus from the tip of the penis follows. Sometimes there is no discharge, just pain, and sometimes there are no symptoms at all.



Gonorrhoea in men

### In women

In women gonorrhoea often causes no symptoms but can produce vaginal discharge or pain on passing urine. If it produces pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) it can cause:

- pain and tenderness deep in the pelvis
- lower abdominal pain and tenderness
- fever, an unwell feeling and painful periods
- pain on intercourse.

### In both sexes

Gonorrhoea of the anus and throat may have no symptoms or soreness. There may be a discharge (a feeling of dampness) around the anus.

Gonorrhoea is diagnosed by taking special swabs from the infected areas or testing the first passed specimen of urine.

## How is gonorrhoea spread?

It is spread through vaginal and anal intercourse and oral sex, whether homosexual or heterosexual, where one partner is already infected.

## What are the risks?

- It can cause PID in women, sometimes leading to infertility.
- It can cause infection in the joints.
- In men it can infect the testicles and also may cause a urethral stricture (narrowing of the urethra).

## What is the treatment?

You must see your doctor or go to an STI clinic. Gonorrhoea is treated with a single dose or course of antibiotics (by tablets, capsules or injection, depending on where you picked up the infection and on the test results). It is usually cured in about 2 weeks.

Sexual partners should be tested, even if they have no symptoms, and even if a checkup has failed to detect the infection.

Sexual intercourse must be avoided until the infection has cleared up (both you and your partner).

## How is gonorrhoea prevented?

Using condoms for vaginal, anal and oral sex provides good protection. Sexually active men and women (especially those at risk, e.g. those with multiple partners) should have regular checks (at least annually).

### Important points

- Gonorrhoea may cause no symptoms, especially in women.
- It can cause infertility in women (and less commonly in men).
- It is readily treated by antibiotics.
- All sexual partners need to be informed and treated.
- Sexual intercourse should be avoided until the infection is cleared.
- Condoms provide protection.