

# gonorrhoea

## What is gonorrhoea?

- Gonorrhoea is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by a bacteria.
- It can affect the cervix (the opening to the uterus), penis\*, rectum (inside your butt) and throat.

## How do you get gonorrhoea?

- Gonorrhoea is found in certain bodily fluids of someone who has gonorrhoea: semen (cum), vaginal\* fluid and anal fluid.
- You can get gonorrhoea from having unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex with someone who already has it.
- You can get gonorrhoea if you share sex toys with someone who already has it and you don't disinfect the toys or put a new condom on them each time a new person uses the toys.
- A pregnant person with gonorrhoea can pass it on to their baby during vaginal delivery.

## How do you know if you have gonorrhoea?

- The only way to know you have gonorrhoea is to get tested.
- Some people do not have any symptoms and may not know they have it. You can pass on gonorrhoea even if you don't have any symptoms.
- Most people with testicles\*\* will get symptoms in the first week after getting the infection. Most people with cervixes\*\* do not have symptoms or the symptoms may be mistaken for a bladder or vaginal infection.
- Symptoms can vary depending on where the infection is.

*\*We know that these aren't the words everyone uses for their bodies (eg. trans folks), and support you using the language that feels best for you.*

*\*\* People with cervixes are usually designated female at birth while people with testicles are usually designated male at birth. People with testicles don't always identify as male and people with cervixes don't always identify as female.*

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## Possible Symptoms

### **Cervix:**

- Painful urination (peeing)
- Bleeding between periods
- A change in vaginal discharge
- Pain during or after vaginal sex

### **Penis:**

- Discharge from the penis that is thick and yellowish-green
- Painful urination
- Pain or swelling in the testicles (balls)

### **Anus:**

- Pain or itching in the rectum (butt)
- Bleeding or discharge from the rectum
- Painful bowel movements (pooping)

### **Throat:**

- Possible sore throat or swollen glands but usually no symptoms at all

**Remember:** *The most common symptom of any gonorrhea infection is no symptoms at all*

## How can you get tested for gonorrhea?

- If you have a vagina, a clinician will do a vaginal exam and take a swab of your cervix. At some clinics, you can be tested by peeing into a cup.
- A Pap test is not a gonorrhea test, although they are often done at the same time.
- If you want to be tested for gonorrhea, ask specifically for a gonorrhea test. Do not assume you will be tested for gonorrhea, even if you ask to be tested “for everything” or “every STI”.
- If you have a penis, you will be tested by peeing into a cup.
- To make sure your results are accurate, do not pee for 1-2 hours before doing the test.
- Gonorrhea in the throat or rectum is tested for by swabbing the area. A swab is like a long q-tip.
- A pregnant person can pass gonorrhea on to their baby during vaginal childbirth. If you are pregnant and have not been tested for gonorrhea, talk to your prenatal care provider.

## What if you test positive for gonorrhea?

- Gonorrhea can be cured with antibiotics. You should take all of your medication, even if your symptoms go away before you are finished taking it.

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- Your sexual partners should also get tested and treated. If they don't, they can give gonorrhea to you again.
- It is important to have a follow-up test after you have finished all your medication. Talk to your clinician about being re-tested.
- To make sure you don't give gonorrhea to your sexual partners, wait for 7 days after you've taken all your medication to have sex again.
- It is important to treat gonorrhea. If left untreated, gonorrhea can lead to serious health problems. In people with cervixes, this includes Pelvic Inflammatory Disease which can lead to infertility, long-lasting pelvic pain and ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy that occurs outside the uterus). In people with testicles, untreated gonorrhea can reduce fertility and cause pain and swelling of the testicles.
- Gonorrhea is a reportable infection. This means that if you test positive for gonorrhea, you may be called by a public health nurse to get contact information for current and past sexual partners so that those people may be encouraged to get tested. Your name is not disclosed when a sexual partner is contacted.
- You can also contact current and past sexual partners yourself. If you wish to do so anonymously, you can use an email program called [www.inspot.org](http://www.inspot.org).

### **How can you lower your risk of getting gonorrhea and/or passing it on to your partner(s)?**

- Make informed decisions. Talk to your partner(s) about STIs and the use of safer sex tools.
- Use condoms on penises or dildos for vaginal or anal sex, use latex gloves for finger play and fisting, and use condoms/dams for oral sex to lower your chances of getting or transmitting gonorrhea.
- If you are sharing sex toys, be sure to disinfect them or put a new condom on them when a new person uses the toys.
- Get tested for gonorrhea and other STIs when you or your partner has a new sexual partner. Or, if you have new partners often, get STI testing every 3-6 months.
- If you test positive for gonorrhea, follow your clinician's instructions for treatment and follow-up.

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