

# Expedited Partner Treatment for Chlamydia

Brown Health Services Patient Education Series

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Your sex partner has recently been treated for Chlamydia. Expedited partner treatment is available in the State of Rhode Island. Health care providers may treat sexual partners of people diagnosed with chlamydia without examining them.

**Before you take this medicine, please read the following:** This medicine is very safe. However, do not take this medicine if any of the following are true (IF ANY OF THESE ARE TRUE, YOU MUST SEE A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER BEFORE TAKING THIS MEDICINE):

- You have a uterus and are having lower belly pain, pain during sex, vomiting or fever
- You are pregnant
- You have a penis and are having pain or swelling in testicles or fever
- You have ever had a bad reaction, rash, or allergy to the following antibiotics: Azithromycin (“Zithromax” or “Z-Pack”), Erythromycin, Clarithromycin (“Biaxin”), or doxycycline
- You have a serious long-term illness like kidney, heart or liver disease
- You are currently taking another prescription medication

## What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States. There

are about 4 million cases in the United States every year. It is caused by a bacterium, chlamydia trachomatis.

## How does it occur?

The Chlamydia microorganism is usually passed from person to person during sexual intercourse or intimate contact with the genitals or rectal area.

Condoms are very effective in preventing chlamydia transmission. Symptoms of chlamydial infections may appear as early as two weeks to a month after exposure to an infected sexual partner. However, since the condition can be asymptomatic (showing no signs), evidence of infection may be found only during a routine, annual physical exam or when a sexual partner is diagnosed. Chlamydia can remain asymptomatic for a widely variable amount of time (even up to several years), making it difficult sometimes to determine which sexual contact resulted in the infection.

## How is chlamydia treated?

Chlamydia is curable with antibiotics. It is important to take *all* of the medication you are given, even if the symptoms start to go away before you’ve taken all the pills. If you stop taking the medicine, you may leave some of the infection in your body.

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It is very important that any sexual partner(s) within the last 60 days be treated as well. If you are treated and a sexual partner is not, you may become reinfected. During treatment, it is important to abstain from intercourse and from any exchange of genital fluids. After treatment, always use a latex condom during intercourse.

Repeat infection with chlamydia is common. It is important to be retested for chlamydia three months after treatment of an initial infection to check for re-infection even if your partner was treated.

#### **Special considerations:**

If symptoms persist for more than a few days after treatment, go to a health care provider for evaluation.

#### **For people with penises**

Chlamydia most commonly causes non-gonococcal urethritis (NGU, also known as non-specific urethritis or NSU). NGU is a condition in which the urethra (the tube which conducts urine from the bladder) becomes inflamed. Less frequently, chlamydia causes infections of the prostate gland (prostatitis), the testicles (epididymitis), and proctitis (inflammation of the rectum and anus).

Approximately 70% of people with penises have **no** symptoms if they have a chlamydia infection. If symptoms are present, they can be mild and intermittent.

Symptoms for people with penises may include:

- rectal pain
- pain/swelling in the testicles or scrotum
- pain with ejaculation
- discharge from the penis

- burning when urinating
- irritation and itching around the urinary opening of the penis

#### **For people with vulvas**

In people with vulvas, chlamydia may cause urethritis (infection of the tube that conducts urine from the bladder) as well as cervicitis (inflammation of the cervix). If untreated, chlamydial infections may ascend into the reproductive tract and cause a more serious condition called pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID is an infection of the uterus and/or fallopian tubes which may damage the reproductive organs and can cause infertility.

Approximately 90% of people with vulvas have **no** symptoms until the infection is more advanced.

Symptoms for people with vulvas may include:

- burning during urination
- frequent urination
- abnormal vaginal discharge, itch or irritation
- lower abdominal pain
- Fever
- painful sexual activity or intercourse
- vaginal spotting after intercourse or between periods

*References: CDC website 2015 Sexually transmitted disease treatment guidelines. "Up to Date: Beyond the basics - Chlamydia"*