

A young man and woman are smiling and taking a selfie together outdoors. The man is in the foreground, wearing a blue and white checkered shirt over a light green t-shirt, and sunglasses. The woman is behind him, also smiling, wearing a pink top and sunglasses on her head. They are both making heart shapes with their hands. The background is a bright, sunny outdoor setting.

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WESTERN HEALTH ADVANTAGE |

STDs: KNOW THE RISKS 2017



**Chlamydia is the
most frequently
reported STD in
the United States.**

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Prevention starts **with you**

Preventive care is the one important health practice that can help you live a longer and healthier life. In this resource you will learn about how to avoid getting infected with chlamydia, how to be tested, and the complications caused by the disease.

In a nutshell, there are steps you can take to help stop the spread of this highly contagious infection:

- **Get tested:** If you are sexually active, get tested annually through your primary care provider (PCP) or gynecologist.
- **Use condoms:** Latex condoms can greatly reduce the risk of chlamydia. Always use protection, especially with a new partner.
- **Seek treatment:** Chlamydia is easily cured with antibiotics. If you are infected, tell your partner and seek immediate treatment through your doctor.

Whether or not you are in a committed relationship, it's wise to get tested. For your own health, schedule an appointment with your doctor today.

— Dr. Don Hufford | WHA Chief Medical Officer

Sources: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) | [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)



FACT: According to the CDC, an estimated **one in 20** sexually active females age 14 to 24 years has chlamydia.

Most who have it **don't know it**

Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by a bacteria that can infect both men and women. Often, someone infected with chlamydia will have no symptoms. Women who do may notice an abnormal vaginal discharge or burning sensation when they urinate, and this may not show up for several weeks after having sex with an infected partner. When left untreated, chlamydia infections can lead to infertility in women along with other complications.

How do I know if I have it?

The only way to know if you have been infected with chlamydia is to get tested with a urine sample, and/or your doctor may use a cotton swab to get a sample from your vaginal lining. The lab facility will usually provide the results to your doctor within one to two weeks.

Who should get tested?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends annual testing for sexually active women age 25 and younger, pregnant women and women over the age of 25 who have multiple partners or a new partner.

How do I reduce my risks?

The only way to avoid being infected is to avoid having vaginal, oral or anal sex. If you do have sex, you can lower your risks by:

- Having only one partner with whom you are in a long-term monogamous relationship
- Ensuring your partner has been tested and is free of infections
- Using latex condoms correctly and every time you have sex

Talk with your doctor.

Ask if you should be tested. Your doctor has had these types of conversations before so don't be shy about bringing it up.



Did you know?

In 2015, California was ranked 17th among the 50 states for known chlamydial infections.

Complications due to infection

Why is getting tested so important? Chlamydia is especially harmful to a woman's reproductive organs and can have long-term effects, particularly for those who are in their reproductive years. Fortunately, the cure for chlamydia is treatment with antibiotics. That's why being tested is so important since testing detects the infection and, once detected, treatment can be started sooner rather than later.

Cervicitis: An inflammation of the cervix, cervicitis can lead to complications such as pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancy and complications during pregnancy when left untreated.

ONE IN EIGHT

The number of women with a history of PID who experience difficulties getting pregnant.

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID):

Chlamydia is one of the main causes of PID, where a woman's reproductive organs, such as the ovaries, uterus and fallopian tubes become infected. When left untreated, PID can lead to infertility.

Ectopic Pregnancy:

A potentially life-threatening issue, an ectopic pregnancy can occur when the chlamydial infection spreads to the fallopian tubes and causes inflammation. This can cause a blockage, which may prevent the egg from reaching the uterus. Instead, the egg implants itself in the tube. As the egg grows, the tube stretches and can rupture, resulting in an emergency and possibly life-threatening situation.

Chlamydia and Pregnancy

A chlamydia infection during pregnancy can result in preterm labor causing a baby to be born too early. As the baby enters the birth channel, there is also risk for the eyes and lungs becoming infected. Protect your baby and yourself; use precautions and get tested during your pregnancy.



Talk about it **with your partner**

Whether or not you have had an infection, one of the most important conversations you can have with your partner is an open and honest talk about STDs. Yes, it can be awkward and a bit scary but this conversation is important to your own personal health as well as your partner's health.

Don't know how to start? Remember, you can always start by talking to your doctor. Your doctor is your partner in health and can advise you on how to have these difficult conversations.

Why is it important to tell your partner? Getting treatment for you is only half the solution. Your partner must be treated as well or you risk becoming reinfected. Telling your partner or your ex-partner can help stop the spread of infection and lower the risk of potentially serious complications.

Here are some helpful resources:

Chlamydia Fact Sheet | [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

Chlamydia Fact Sheet | [womenshealth.gov](https://www.womenshealth.gov)

STD Testing: Conversation Starters | [healthfinder.gov](https://www.healthfinder.gov)

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