

# Chlamydia

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## Description

Chlamydial infections are caused by the bacteria *Chlamydia trachomatis* and are among the most prevalent sexually transmitted diseases in the United States today.

Some bladder infections and many cases of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) may also be due to chlamydia.

The bacteria target mucus membrane cells, or the soft, moist tissues not covered by the skin. Examples of areas that can be infected by chlamydia bacteria are:

- Surfaces of the urethra, vagina, cervix, and uterus lining
- Fallopian tubes
- Anus and rectum
- Eyelid lining
- Throat (less common)

It is estimated that 75% of infected women and 50% of infected men show NO SYMPTOMS. As a result, they may not seek treatment until serious complications occur. Even without symptoms, transmission can occur. Those individuals without symptoms who are infected may unknowingly transmit the infection to sexual partners. The number of chlamydial infections is especially high in the 17 to 30 year old age range.

Chlamydia is a bacteria that invades the lower genital tract. If left untreated, it may move on to the deeper tissues of the reproductive organs where it can cause irreversible damage.

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## Symptoms

If symptoms occur, they may include:

Women:

- Spotting between periods
- Burning or pain during urination
- Abnormal vaginal discharge
- Severe symptoms, including those associated with pelvic inflammatory disease (i.e. lower abdominal pain or cramping and fever)

Men:

- Burning or pain during urination
- Discharge from the penis (pus, watery, or milky)
- Testicular pain
- Itching

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## Complications

**It is important to see a medical provider for even the mildest symptoms.**

If untreated, chlamydia has the potential to cause serious complications, particularly for women, including infertility. Infants born to infected mothers can acquire the infection during passage through the birth canal. These babies are at increased risk of eye infections or pneumonia.

