



Internet photo

Chlamydia **The Treatable Sexually** **Transmitted Infection**

It seems that everywhere you turn there is a commercial, pamphlet or class discussion about AIDS. The good thing about hearing a lot about any one STI (sexually transmitted infection) is that if you are properly protecting yourself against one, you are also properly protecting yourself against all. This also means that if you are not taking proper precautions because you don't believe "AIDS exists in a small community like Mount Allison or the even broader community of Sackville" you are placing yourself at great risk of contracting (getting) any STI.

Some of the most common STI's are Gonorrhea ("the clap"), Vaginitis, Yeast infection, Trichomoniasis ("trich"), Bacterial Vaginosis, Pubic lice, Scabies, Genital Herpes, Genital Warts (HPV-Human Papillomavirus), Hepatitis B, Syphilis, HIV/AIDS & Chlamydia.. Remember there are also lots of infections that we have not yet discovered that place individuals at risk.

Many individuals may assume that they will know if they have an infection or that their partner has one. This is not true because you do not always have obvious symptoms that would make you suspicious that you have an infection. Many times the symptoms are so subtle that when you finally do seek medical attention the infection has already done damage, some irreversible and untreatable. You also can not pick out of a crowd who has a STI because most individuals do not look sick.

"Chlamydia (pronounced kla-mid-ee-ah) is a very common STI - and one of the more serious. It can spread silently in the female and cause a painful, long-term condition called PID (Pelvic Inflammatory Disease) and infertility (the inability to have children). Pregnant women can pass this infection on to their babies who can then get infections of their eyes or lungs. You can get chlamydia from vaginal and anal sex.

A young woman may never know she is infected with chlamydia until she has a test for it or decides to have a baby and has problems trying to become pregnant. For those who develop symptoms, these usually appear 1-3 weeks after sex with an infected person. Sometimes, the symptoms are so mild that a person may not notice them. Men sometimes have no symptoms and can spread it without knowing they have it. It is very important that chlamydia be treated right away.

What to look for:

- Females:*
- *a new or different discharge from the vagina
 - *a burning feeling when urinating
 - *a pain in the lower abdomen, sometimes with fever and chills
 - *pain during sex
 - *bleeding between periods
 - *bleeding after intercourse
- Males:*
- *a watery or milky drip from the penis
 - *an itchy feeling inside the penis
 - *a burning feeling when urinating
 - *pain or swelling in the testicles

If you are having any of these symptoms please contact a physician immediately.

Chlamydia is treated with an antibiotic, taken by mouth (orally). You must get a prescription for the right antibiotic from your doctor. Don't borrow medicine from your friends, and you cannot buy this medicine on the street. Make sure you take your medication until it is finished. Ask your doctor or nurse how soon after treatment you can have sexual intercourse. Your doctor or nurse may ask you for the name of your partner (s) or ask you to tell your partner (s) so this STI will not be spread further.

If you have chlamydia and don't get treatment, this could happen to you if you are female:

- *you might develop a pain in your abdomen or belly that never seems to go away
- *the infection will spread to all your reproductive organs and cause PID (pelvic inflammatory disease)
- *you may have problems later in life getting pregnant or during your pregnancy

The long-term effects of chlamydia in males are not well known.

Did you know?

You are at risk of contracting a STI if:

- *you have unprotected sex (without a condom) with an infected person
- *you have more than one sex partner
- *you have a new sex partner
- *you know little about your partner
- *your partner has sex with others
- *you are an injection drug user - even injecting steroids!
- *you share needles for injection"

Printed from "What you need to know about STD" from Health Canada, 1997.

Public Health Services in South East Region (Alberta, Westmorland, and Kent County) reports 407 cases of chlamydia in the 2002 school year.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact the Health Services at Mount Allison University at 364-2163 to meet with the Nurse/Educator.