

Your partner has Gonorrhea: What you need to know

DIRECTIONS & INFORMATION FOR PARTNERS OF PERSONS DIAGNOSED WITH GONORRHEA INFECTION

What is gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the United States. Gonorrhea is caused by bacteria that is easily spread by **any kind** of sexual contact, including oral, vaginal, and/or anal sex with someone who already has gonorrhea. Pregnant people can also give it to their baby at birth. For this reason, it is appropriate to assume you also share this infection and can be offered treatment without first going to the doctor.

What are the symptoms of gonorrhea?

Unfortunately, it is **very common for people to not have any symptoms** (also called being “asymptomatic”) of gonorrhea. Because it is possible that someone can be infected with gonorrhea and not know it and pass it on to other people, it is important to get tested for STIs, including gonorrhea at least yearly if you are having sex and when you have new partner(s).

What happens if gonorrhea is not treated?

Gonorrhea **can lead to serious health problems if not treated**, even if the person with gonorrhea does not have symptoms. Some of the possible health issues that may happen if gonorrhea is not treated are:

- A more serious infection in people with female body parts (like a uterus, ovaries, and/or fallopian tubes) called Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) that may lead to inability to get pregnant (“infertility”), complications in future pregnancies such as a pregnancy outside of the womb (“ectopic pregnancy”), and/or long-term issues with pain.
- An infection of different male body parts (like a penis or testicles), which can rarely cause inability to have children (“infertility”).
- Untreated infection increases your risk of getting or giving HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

How do I take my medicine to treat gonorrhea?

Most people will be given an antibiotic called cefixime. Cefixime is easy to take because it is only one dose. Take your dose on an empty stomach if you can. Some people who cannot get cefixime may be given a closely related antibiotic called cefpodoxime, which is also only one dose. If you are given cefpodoxime, take your dose with food if you can. **Do not share your antibiotic with anyone else. You need to take all the medication given to you for it to be effective and get rid of all of the infection.**

What happens if I have a side effect to the medication?

Antibiotics (cefixime or cefpodoxime) used to treat gonorrhea are very safe. Stomach upset, diarrhea, headache, and nausea are common side effects of all antibiotics, and it is normal for people who take them to get these symptoms. They are not serious and should go away once you finish your antibiotics. These side effects are not an allergy to the antibiotic.

Allergic reactions are extremely rare. If you think you may have had an allergy to an antibiotic in the past, ask your doctor or pharmacist before taking the medication. Even if you had an allergy to one antibiotic in the past, you still may be able to take the antibiotic prescribed to you this time. **If at any time you develop difficulty breathing, swelling of your face or neck, hives (a bumpy, itchy rash), or watery diarrhea bad enough that you can't leave the house, go to the nearest emergency department.**

What should I do next?

- **Do not engage in any kind of sex for 7 days AFTER FINISHING your medicine – it takes the medication that long to fully treat the infection, so you do not pass it on to other people or deal with more severe medical issues.**
- Tell all the people who you have had sex with in the last 2 months (or your last partner) that you are being treated for trich so they can be tested and treated, too.
- People who are infected with gonorrhea are very likely to get it again – it is a good idea to get tested for gonorrhea and other STIs in about 3 months.
- Because many people with gonorrhea may not know they are infected because they do not have symptoms, it is important for you to get tested for STIs on a regular basis (about every 6-12 months) and when you have new sex partner(s).
- Using condoms and having sex with partner(s) who practice safe sex and get regularly tested will reduce your chances of getting gonorrhea again.
- **IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS: contact a medical professional (like a doctor or pharmacist), call the Minnesota Family Planning and STD Hotline at 1-800-783-2287, and/or visit a sexual health clinic like Red Door Clinic (612-543-5555) or Clinic 555 (651-266-1255).**
- **If you have more partners that you feel would benefit from treatment, have them call the Minnesota Family Planning and STD Hotline at 1-800-783-2287, and/or visit a sexual health clinic like Red Door Clinic (612-543-5555) or Clinic 555 (651-266-1255).**

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