

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT GONORRHEA

## Where can I learn more?

Go to [knowmystatus.org](https://knowmystatus.org) to learn more about gonorrhea and other STDs and find out where to go for testing, support, and treatment in Texas.

Gonorrhea information from DSHS: [dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/info/gonorrhea](https://dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/info/gonorrhea)

For STD testing locations in Texas, call:  
**2-1-1**



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

Texas Department of State  
Health Services

For HIV/STD questions, call  
800-CDC-INFO (English/Espanol)  
888-232-6348 (TTY).

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Stock No. 6-47  
Revised 8/2024



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## WHAT IS GONORRHEA?

Gonorrhea is an STD (sexually transmitted disease) that affects millions of people every year. Gonorrhea is spread by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has it. The disease can affect the sex organs as well as the mouth, throat, and eyes. Babies can get gonorrhea at birth if the mother has it. This can happen even if the mother does not have symptoms.

## HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE GONORRHEA?

Many people do not know they have gonorrhea. Some people do not have symptoms, but they can still pass the disease to others. People with gonorrhea are often unaware that they have it until it is too late.

Some symptoms are:

- Pus from the penis, vagina, or anus
- Burning or pain when urinating
- Anal/rectal pain and itching
- Sore throat
- Bleeding between periods (women)
- Pain in the lower belly; lower back pain (women)

Even if these symptoms go away on their own, you need to get checked at a doctor's office or an STD clinic. The infection can cause permanent damage even when symptoms are not present.

## SHOULD I GET TESTED FOR GONORRHEA?

The only way to know if you have gonorrhea is to get tested. The doctor may ask you to provide a urine sample or swab the cervix, penis, rectum, or throat. Getting tested and

treated early is the key to avoiding serious health problems later.

Get tested for gonorrhea if:

- You or your sex partner(s) have symptoms of gonorrhea.
- You have more than one sex partner, male or female; if you have more partners, you are at a higher risk for STDs.
- You had sex without a condom.
- You have another STD.
- Your partner has been tested or treated for a STD.

When you get tested for gonorrhea, you should also get tested for HIV and other STDs.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF GONORRHEA IS NOT TREATED?

Gonorrhea can be very harmful for both women and men if it is not treated early.

It can cause:

- The inability to get pregnant or have children
- Pelvic inflammatory disease, a painful infection of the sex organs (women)
- Painful swelling in the testicles (men)
- Rarely, heart problems and arthritis (painful swelling in the joints) can occur

Babies born to mothers with gonorrhea can get an eye infection that causes blindness.

## CAN GONORRHEA BE CURED?

Gonorrhea can be cured by taking medicine prescribed by a doctor. Your sex partner(s) must also be treated or you could get infected again.

If you have gonorrhea or any other STD:

- Take all the medicine given to you and follow the doctor's directions.
- Call your doctor right away if the medicine gives you problems.
- Tell your sex partner(s) to get tested, or ask your doctor to tell him or her.
- Do not have sex until a doctor says you and your partner(s) are cured.
- Do not try to treat yourself.

It is becoming harder to treat some gonorrhea because some strains are resistant to medication. If your symptoms continue for more than a few days after receiving treatment, you should return to a health care provider to be checked again.

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT GONORRHEA. YOU SHOULD GET TESTED FOR GONORRHEA ONCE A YEAR IF:

- You are a sexually active woman under age 25
- You are a woman age 25 or older with new or multiple sex partners
- You are a man who has sex with other men

## HOW CAN YOU STAY HEALTHY?

The only sure way to avoid gonorrhea and other STDs is to not have sex. Vaginal, oral, and anal sex can all pass the disease from one person to another.

- If you have sex, use a latex condom every time. When used the right way, condoms can help keep you from getting gonorrhea and other STDs. Be sure to put the condom on before having sex.
- If you have sex, stay with one partner who only has sex with you. Use condoms unless tests show that your partner does not have gonorrhea or other STDs.