What is Gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted bacterial infection. It is the second most commonly reported communicable disease in Indiana and in the U.S. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that more than 800,000 Americans will contract gonorrhea each year; it is most commonly diagnosed in young adults 15-24 years of age. Gonorrhea is spread by oral, vaginal or anal sex with someone infected with the bacteria. Gonorrhea is easily treated and cured with antibiotics, but if left untreated a more serious infection, infertility, heart trouble, skin disease, arthritis and blindness can occur. Pregnant women can spread gonorrhea to their baby during childbirth, leading to pneumonia or even blindness.

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms may appear 2-21 days after having sex with an infected partner. Seek testing if you or your partner has any of the following symptoms:

**Men** may experience:
- Pain or burning during urination
- Penile discharge (white, yellow or green)
- Frequent urination
- Painful or swollen testicles (not common)

**Women** may experience:
- Pain or burning upon urination
- Increased vaginal discharge (may be thick yellow or white)
- Abnormal periods
- Vaginal bleeding between periods
- Lower abdominal pain

Rectal infections may result in:
- Discharge
- Anal itching
- Soreness
- Bleeding
- Painful bowel movements

*Many people will have no symptoms at all; it is important to get tested regularly for STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) if you are sexually active.*

Gonorrhea and HIV Co-infection

Transmission of HIV during sex with an HIV-infected partner is 3-5 times more likely when a skin disruption, such as a chancre or other break in the skin caused by gonorrhea or another STD, is present.

It is recommended that anyone who is diagnosed with gonorrhea also be tested for HIV.

*STD prevention is HIV prevention.*

**Fast Facts**

- Gonorrhea is **curable**.
- Drug resistant gonorrhea is a **real threat**.
- Latex **condoms** used the right way every time will greatly reduce the chance of infection.
- **Damage** from untreated gonorrhea cannot be reversed.
- Patients should take all medication for the entire duration; medication should not be shared. Failure to do so could result in ongoing infection.
- Patients should **wait** 7 days until they and all partners have completed treatment before having sex again.

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For additional information on gonorrhea in Indiana, please visit: [www.in.gov/isdh/17440.htm](http://www.in.gov/isdh/17440.htm)
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