Chlamydia, Females and Males

Chlamydia is an infection that can be found in the vagina, urethra, cervix, rectum and pelvic organs in the female. In the male, it most often causes *urethritis*. This happens when it infects the the tube (*urethra*) that carries the urine out of the bladder. When Chlamydia causes urethritis, there may be burning with urination. In males, it may also infect the tubes that carry the sperm from the testicle. This causes pain in the testicles and infect the prostate gland. In females, an infection of the pelvic organs is also called PID (*pelvic inflammatory disease*). PID may be a cause of sudden *(acute*) lower abdominal/belly (*pelvic*) pain and fever. But with Chlamydia, the infection sometimes does not cause problems that you notice (*asymptomatic*). It may cause an abnormal or watery mucous-like discharge from the birth canal (*vagina*) or penis.

CAUSES

Chlamydia is caused by germs (*bacteria*) that are spread during sexual contact of the:

- Genitals.
- Mouth.
- Rectum.

This infection may also be passed to a newborn baby coming through the infected birth canal. This causes eye and lung infections in the baby. Chlamydia often goes unnoticed. So it is easy to transmit it to a sexual partner without even knowing.

SYMPTOMS

In females, symptoms may go unnoticed. Symptoms that are more noticeable can include:

- Belly (*abdomina*l) pain.
- Painful intercourse.
- Watery mucous like discharge from the vagina.
- Miscarriage.
- Discomfort when urinating.
- Inflammation of the rectum.

In males they include:

- Burning with urination.
- Pain in the testicles.
- Watery mucous-like discharge from the penis.

It can cause longstanding (*chronic*) pelvic pain after frequent infections.

TREATMENT

- Chlamydia can be treated with medications which kill germs (*antibiotics*).
- Inform all sexual partners about the infection. All sexual contacts need to be treated.
- If you are pregnant, do not take tetracycline type antibiotics.
- PID can cause women to not be able to have children (*sterile*) if left untreated or if half-treated. It does this by scarring the the tubes to the uterus (*fallopian tubes*). They carry the egg needed to form a baby. It is **important to finish ALL medications** given to you.
- Sterility or future tubal (*ectopic*) pregnancies can occur in fully treated individuals. It is important to follow your prescribed treatment. That will lessen the chances of these problems.
- This is a sexually transmitted infection. So you are also at risk for other sexually transmitted diseases. These include: Gonorrhea and HIV (AIDS). Testing may be done for the other sexually transmitted diseases if one disease is detected.
- It is important to treat chlamydia as soon as possible. It can cause damage to other organs.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS:

- **Finish all medication as prescribed.** Incomplete treatment will put you at risk for not being able to have children (*sterility*) and tubal pregnancy. If one sexually transmitted disease is discovered, often treatment will be started to cover other possible infections.

- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- Rest.
- Eat a balanced diet and drink plenty of fluids.
- **Warning: This infection is contagious. Do not have sex until treatment is completed.** Follow up at your caregiver's office or the clinic to which you were referred. If your diagnosis (learning what is wrong) is confirmed by culture or some other method, your recent sexual contacts need treatment. Even if they are symptom free or have a negative culture or evaluation, they should be treated.
- For the protection of your privacy, test results can not be given over the phone. Make sure you receive the results of your test. Ask how these results are to be obtained if you have not been informed. It is your responsibility to obtain your test results.

PREVENTION

- Women should use sanitary pads instead of tampons for vaginal discharge.
- Wipe front to back after using the toilet and avoid douching.
- Test for chlamydia if you are having an IUD inserted.
- Practice safe sex, use condoms, have only one sex partner and be sure your sex partner is not have sex with others.
- Ask your caregiver to test you for chlamydia at your regular checkups or sooner if you are having symptoms.
- Ask for further information if you are pregnant.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop an oral temperature above 100° F (37.8° C), not controlled by medications or lasting more than 2 days.
- You develop an increase in pain.
- You develop any type of abnormal discharge.
- You develop vaginal bleeding and it is not time for your period.
- You develop painful intercourse.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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