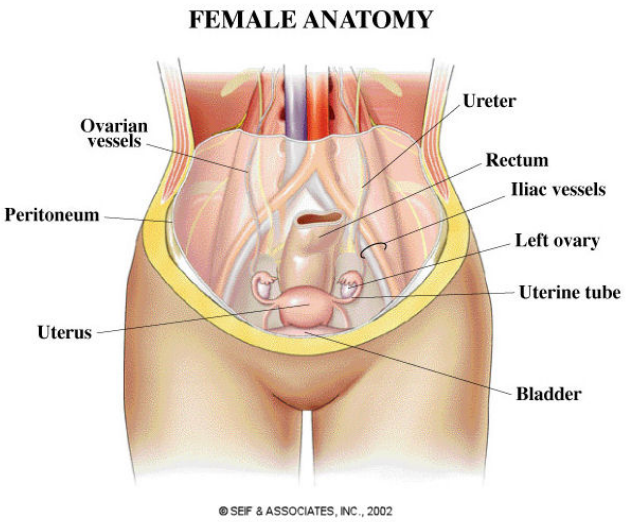
Chlamydial Infection in Women

Chlamydia is a microscopic organism (*bacteria*). It can infect several areas of the body. These areas include the urinary tract, vagina, rectum, cervix, and pelvis in women. Untreated complications include fallopian tubal scarring, tubal pregnancy, chronic pelvic pain and infertility. If infected, one must finish all treatments and follow up with a caregiver.



CAUSES

Chlamydia is a sexually **transmitted** disease. It is passed from an infected partner during intimate contact. This contact could be with the genitals, mouth, or rectal area. Infections can also be passed from mothers to babies during birth. This results in eye infections or pneumonia.

SYMPTOMS

There may be no problems (*symptoms*). This is often the case early in the infection. A large number of carriers are without symptoms (*asymptomatic*). Symptoms you may notice include:

- Mild pain and discomfort when urinating.
- Inflammation of the rectum.
- Vaginal discharge.
- Painful intercourse.
- Miscarriage.
- Belly (*abdominal*) pain.
- Pneumonia.

DIAGNOSIS

To **diagnose** this infection, your caregiver will do a pelvic exam. They take cultures of the vagina, cervix, urine and possibly the rectum to see if the infection is chlamydia.

TREATMENTS

- Taking medications which kill germs (*antibiotics*) usually cures the infection. Any sexual partners should also be treated. Even if they do not show symptoms, they should be treated. Antibiotics usually work quickly. **Take the medication for the prescribed length of time.**
- If you are pregnant, do not take tetracycline type antibiotics.
- It is important to treat chlamydia as soon as you can because of the damage it can do to other female organs.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- Get plenty of rest, eat a well balanced diet and drink a lot of fluids.
- Inform any sexual partners about the infection. They should be treated also.
- WARNING: If you have this infection, it is contagious. Do not have sexual contact until tests show no sign of infection.
- Follow instructions from your caregiver for follow-up visits and tests.
- For the protection of your privacy, test results can only be given to you and not over the phone. It is your responsibility to get your test results. Ask how your test results can be obtained if you have not been informed. Be sure to get your test results.

PREVENTION

- Use sanitary pads rather than tampons for vaginal discharge. Change them frequently.
- Wipe from front to back after using the toilet. This will avoid infecting the urinary tract.
- Practice safer sex with all partners. Always use condoms during intercourse.

- Have one sex partner who is not sexually active with anyone else.
- Avoid douching. It can kill normal bacteria in the vagina and increase the chance of infection with bad bacteria.
- Test for chlamydia first if you are having an IUD inserted.
- Ask your caregiver to test you for chlamydia at your regular checkup. Seek testing sooner if you are having symptoms.
- Ask for further information if you are pregnant.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is increasing abdominal pain.
- An oral temperature above 100° F (37.8° C) develops. It is not controlled by medication. Follow the suggestions your caregiver gives you.
- There is a pus-like (*purulent*) or any type of abnormal vaginal 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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