

Patient Information

Gonorrhea in Males

What is gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is a common sexually transmitted disease. Popular names for gonorrhea are clap, drip, dose, and strain.

How does it occur?

Gonorrhea is caused by bacteria. The infection is passed from person to person during sex. It is very contagious. The bacteria can enter the body through any body opening, such as the mouth, vagina, penis, or rectum.

In men, the infection usually starts in the urethra. The urethra is the tube that urine passes through. The bacteria may also infect the throat or rectum after oral or anal sex.

What are the symptoms?

If symptoms occur, they usually appear 2 to 10 days after you were exposed to the bacteria. Symptoms of gonorrhea include:

- thick, yellow discharge (drip) from the penis
- burning or pain when you urinate
- urge to urinate often.

How is it diagnosed?

Other infections can cause symptoms similar to gonorrhea. To confirm the diagnosis, your healthcare provider will test a sample of discharge from your penis. For this test, a tiny swab is inserted into the opening of the urethra at the tip of the penis. Sometimes a sample of urine may be tested for gonorrhea.

Your healthcare provider may swab the anus or mouth for testing if there is a chance you were infected in these areas.

What is the treatment?

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If you think you may have gonorrhea, you must see your healthcare provider. Gonorrhea is treated with antibiotic medicine, usually given as a shot. Many people with gonorrhea also have chlamydia (another sexually transmitted disease). Because of this, you may be given more than 1 drug to treat both diseases.

Tell your sexual partner or partners about their risk of infection. They also should be treated even if they don't have symptoms.

How long will the effects last?

If only the urethra is infected, proper treatment should clear up the infection in about 10 days.

The effects of the disease depend on:

- how long you have had gonorrhea
- how much the infection has spread, for example, to the prostate gland or joints such as the ankle
- if you have had gonorrhea before.

If not treated, gonorrhea can lead to scarring of the urethra, inability to urinate normally, and infection of the testicles. Testicle infection can cause infertility, which means that you would not be able to have children.

If the bacteria get into the bloodstream, multiply, and spread, gonorrhea can lead to arthritis, meningitis, and death.

How can I take care of myself?

- Follow the full treatment prescribed by your healthcare provider.
- Tell everyone with whom you have had sex in the last 3 months about your infection. They must also be treated, even if they have no symptoms. Do not have sex until both you and your partner have finished all of the medicine and your provider says it's OK.

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- Follow your healthcare provider's instructions for follow-up visits and tests. Your provider may need to make sure that the infection is gone.
- Call your healthcare provider if you feel you are getting sicker instead of better.
- Ask your provider if you need to be tested for other sexually transmitted diseases.

How can I help prevent gonorrhea?

- Make sure you tell your sexual partner(s) that they have been exposed to gonorrhea.
- Reduce the risk of infection by always using latex or polyurethane condoms during foreplay and vaginal, oral, or anal intercourse.
- Have just 1 sexual partner who is not sexually active with anyone else. Make sure your partner has been tested for gonorrhea and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Even if you don't have symptoms but have had unprotected sex (without a condom), see your healthcare provider or clinic to be checked for sexually transmitted diseases.
- When boys and men are victims of sexual assault and are at risk for having been infected with gonorrhea, they should be treated.

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