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# Sexually Transmitted Diseases :

## Gonorrhea (gon-or-ee-ah)

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This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a healthcare professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

### What is it ?

Gonorrhea is a serious bacterial infection if not treated early. Men may have a burning feeling when passing urine. They may also have a discharge from the penis. Women may have vaginal discharge and irritation, or pain when passing urine. Most women and some men will have no early symptoms.

### How do I get it ?

By direct contact with sexual fluids of an infected person.

### What can it do to me ?

In women, gonorrhea can cause a serious infection of the womb and tubes (pelvic inflammatory disease). It can lead to infertility and ectopic or tubal pregnancy. In men, gonorrhea can cause sterility and difficulty passing urine. Gonorrhea may also cause eye infection and arthritis. Early treatment protects against these problems.

### How is it treated ?

With antibiotics, usually pills or an injection. You must follow the directions given with your medicine. The signs may go away in a few days. But the disease may not be cured until the treatment is finished. Do not drink alcohol when taking antibiotics.

### Does treatment work ?

Usually, yes. To be certain, your doctor or clinic may do a follow-up test 4 to 7 days after you finish your medicine. A repeat test should always be done.

### Could I give it to other people ?

Yes. You can pass on gonorrhea to other sex partners as soon as you pick it up. Men may not have signs of the disease for several days. Women often have no signs. So it is very important to tell the people you have had sex with during the past 3 months because they may have the disease and not know it. They will need treatment. Your public health nurse will contact your partner(s) if you prefer. Your name will be kept confidential.

A pregnant woman can pass the infection to her baby when it is born. This can lead to a serious eye infection in the infant.

### When can I have sex again ?

After you and your partner(s) have finished treatment and the doctor or clinic says you are no longer infectious (able to give the disease to others).

### Is follow-up important ?

Yes. It is important that you return for a check-up to make sure your infection has been cured.

**Remember :**

- Take pills or injections as directed until treatment is finished;
- Avoid alcohol while taking antibiotics;
- Return for a check-up with your doctor/clinic when requested;
- Tell people you have had sex with in the past 3 months. They should be examined and treated;
- Use condoms to lower the chance of infections in future.

**If you are worried or have more questions,** call your local health unit or STD clinic.

**Government of Ontario**

For information about health services and resources :

[www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca)

For consumer-friendly health tips and information :

[www.HealthyOntario.com](http://www.HealthyOntario.com)

INFOline: 1-877-234-4343;

TTY: 1-800-387-5559

Telehealth Ontario:

1-866-797-0000; TTY 1-866-797-0007

INFOline is open during business hours and can provide general information on healthcare.

Telehealth Ontario is a 24/7 service which uses nurse practitioners to answer your immediate health concerns.