



DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT GONORRHEA?

We have answers.

What is gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that can infect the genitals (reproductive organs), rectum (last part of the large intestine), and throat. It is the second most reported STI in the United States.

Data shows that gonorrhea is most common in people age 15 to 24 years old. About 371 out of every 100,000 Native people have gonorrhea compared with 79 out of every 100,000 white people.¹

2022 data shows that gonorrhea is more common in Native people than white people.

Rates below are calculated per 100,000 people.

American Indian/Alaska Native 371

White 79

Data extracted from CDC's NCHSTP AtlasPlus tool.

How does gonorrhea spread?

Gonorrhea can spread through unprotected sexual contact (vaginal, oral, or anal) with a person who has gonorrhea. It can also be passed from a pregnant woman to her baby during birth.

What are the symptoms of gonorrhea?

Many people who have gonorrhea do not have symptoms. The most common symptoms occur on the reproductive organs.

Men with gonorrhea may have symptoms such as:

- abnormal discharge from the penis
- unusual sore or rash in the penis or testicles
- a painful burning sensation when urinating
- pain and swelling in the testicles.

Women with gonorrhea may have symptoms that include:

- abnormal discharge from the vagina
- unusual sore or rash in the vagina
- a painful burning sensation when urinating
- vaginal bleeding between periods.

Some people have the infection in their rectum. This may cause symptoms such as:

- abnormal discharge from the anus
- itching in the anus
- bleeding from the anus
- painful bowel movements.

People with gonorrhea may have the STI in their throat. This can cause symptoms including:

- sore throat
- swollen lymph nodes.^{2,3}

How is gonorrhea diagnosed?

Gonorrhea is usually diagnosed through a urine sample. Your health care provider might use a swab to collect samples from your throat or rectum if you have had oral or anal sex.²

How is gonorrhea treated?

Gonorrhea is usually treated with antibiotics. Make sure to take all the medicine your health care provider gives you to get rid of your infection.

Reinfection is common, so it is important to get retested for gonorrhea three months after completing treatment.²



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(Continued)

What happens if gonorrhea goes untreated?

Living with untreated gonorrhea puts you at higher risk for getting HIV. The same behaviors that increase your chances of getting gonorrhea (such as unprotected sexual contact) also increase your chances of getting HIV. In addition, gonorrhea symptoms like sores may make it easier for HIV to enter your body.⁴

In men, untreated gonorrhea may result in epididymitis. This is a condition where the coiled tubes behind the testicles become inflamed (swollen).³

In women, untreated gonorrhea may lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). This is when the infection has spread to the uterus or fallopian tubes. Untreated gonorrhea in a pregnant woman can allow gonorrhea to spread to her baby during birth. This may lead to complications in the baby such as blindness, joint infection, or a life-threatening blood infection.^{2,3}

How can we prevent the spread of gonorrhea in our communities?

It is important to take steps to keep you and your loved ones healthy. Take the following steps to help prevent the spread of gonorrhea in your community:

- The best ways to prevent gonorrhea are to either:
 - not have sexual contact
 - only have sexual contact with someone who is not infected and who only has sexual contact with you.

- If you or your partner may have gonorrhea, get tested before having sexual contact.
- If you received treatment for gonorrhea in the past, get tested for gonorrhea again three months after completing treatment.
- If you or your partner may have gonorrhea, use a latex condom when having sexual contact (from start to finish). Condoms can reduce the risk of spreading gonorrhea. However, condoms must be used exactly right every time.
- If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, get tested for gonorrhea and other STIs. This will lower the chance that an infection is spread to your baby.
- Contact your health care provider if you have any gonorrhea symptoms or if you think you have gonorrhea.

Sources:

1. AtlasPlus. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed December 19, 2023. <https://gis.cdc.gov/grasp/nchhstpatlas/charts.html>
2. About gonorrhea. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Updated February 15, 2024. Accessed October 21, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/gonorrhea/about/index.html>
3. Gonorrhea. Mayo Clinic. Updated September 13, 2024. Accessed October 21, 2024. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/gonorrhea/symptoms-causes/syc-20351774>
4. HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Updated August 26, 2021. Accessed October 21, 2024. <https://hivinfo.nih.gov/understanding-hiv/fact-sheets/hiv-and-sexually-transmitted-diseases-stds>

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