

What is Gonorrhea?



TULANE
Campus Health

The Health Center
for Student Care

Gonorrhea is a common sexually transmitted infection (STI) that can cause infections in the genitals, rectum, and throat. It's especially prevalent among young people, particularly those aged 15-24.

Signs & Symptoms

Gonorrhea often has no symptoms, but it can still cause serious health problems. If you notice any of the following, see a healthcare provider:

- Painful or burning sensation when urinating
- Increased vaginal discharge
- Bleeding between menstrual cycles
- Discharge from the penis (white, yellow, or green)
- Painful or swollen testicles (less common)
- Anal/rectal discharge, itching, soreness, bleeding, and/or painful bowel movements

How is Gonorrhea spread?

You can get gonorrhea through vaginal, anal, or oral sex without a condom with someone who has the infection. A pregnant person with gonorrhea can pass the infection to their baby during childbirth.

Are you at risk?

Anyone who is sexually active is at risk, especially if:

- You don't use condoms consistently
- You have multiple sexual partners or a partner who has an STI

Testing is recommended for sexually active individuals, particularly those under 25 or with risk factors like new or multiple partners.

Prevention

Reducing the risk for those who are sexually active (including anal, rectal, vaginal and oral encounters):

- Use condoms, correctly, every time during vaginal, anal, and oral sex
- Engage in sexual activity with one or a small number of partners who have been tested and with whom you communicate openly about sexual health.
- Get tested regularly for STIs

Testing & Diagnosis

Your healthcare provider will typically use a urine sample to test for gonorrhea. If you've had oral or anal sex, they may take samples from your throat or rectum.

Talk to your provider about getting tested, especially if you're sexually active.

Treatment & Recovery

Is Gonorrhea Curable?

Yes! Gonorrhea can be cured with the right antibiotics. It's important to complete your healthcare provider's instructions and finish all of the prescribed medication.

When Can I Have Sex Again?

Wait at least seven days after finishing your treatment before having sex. Both you and your partner(s) should complete treatment before resuming sexual activity to avoid reinfection.

What Happens If Gonorrhea Is Untreated?

Untreated gonorrhea can lead to serious health problems, including:

- **Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), infertility, ectopic pregnancy, and chronic pelvic pain for people who can become pregnant**
- **Painful testicle conditions, potentially leading to infertility for people who produce sperm**
- **Other risks: Untreated gonorrhea can spread to your blood or joints and increase the risk of acquiring HIV.**

Key Takeaways for College Students

- **Get tested regularly if you're sexually active.**
- **Use condoms every time to prevent gonorrhea and other STIs.**
- **Gonorrhea can be treated, but untreated infections can lead to serious, permanent health problems.**
- **Talk openly with your healthcare provider about STI prevention and treatment.**



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Have any questions?

Reach out to your provider in one of two ways:

- **Call 504-865-5255 and ask to leave a message for your provider OR**
- **Send a secure message through the Patient Portal (campushealth.tulane.edu/patient-portal).**