

Chlamydia

Definition

Chlamydia are a large group of bacteria (*Chlamydia trachomatis* D-K) that may cause pelvic infection and atypical pneumonia.

Causes, Incidence & Risk Factors

- Infections due to chlamydia are one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in the U.K..
- Chlamydial pelvic infections are caused by a bacterium, *Chlamydia trachomatis*.
- The disease is transmitted during vaginal or anal sexual contact with an infected partner.
- A silent chlamydial infection of the cervix inflicts minimal damage, but all too often the organisms travel upward into the uterus, where they infect the endometrium.
- When chlamydia ascends further, to the Fallopian tubes and ovaries, it produces a chronic condition known as pelvic inflammatory disease, which is also a common complication of gonorrhoea.

- Chlamydial infections are easily confused with gonorrhoea because the symptoms of both diseases are similar, and they often occur together.
- Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) has emerged as a major cause of infertility and ectopic pregnancy among women of childbearing age.
- A mother may also pass the infection to her newborn during delivery.
- *Chlamydia pneumoniae* and *Chlamydia psittaci*, cause pneumonia and pneumonitis (nu-mo-ni'tis).
- Chlamydia bacteria have also been found in the throat.
- Chlamydial infection can also cause proctitis and conjunctivitis.

Symptoms

- Early symptoms usually mild, for this reason it has sometimes been called "the silent STD."
- When symptoms occur, they usually appear within 1 to 3 weeks after exposure.
- Studies report that 10 to 20 percent of sexually active female teens harbour chlamydial infections.
- In up to 70 percent of cases, the infection is clinically unapparent.
- As a result, the disease is often not diagnosed until complications develop.

- Symptoms of chlamydial infection in the cervix, urethra, or anus may include
 - **intermittent vaginal bleeding**
 - **discharge**
 - **dysuria**
 - ill-defined **abdominal discomfort**.
- In men, chlamydial infections cause
 - **discharge of mucus or pus from the penis.**
 - **dysuria.**
 - **swollen scrotum/testicle**

Diagnosis

- The diagnosis is often made clinically and by exclusion.
- In women, a pelvic exam and cervical and urethral swabs for chlamydia and gonorrhoea are performed.
- In men, a urethral swab is taken.
- Patients who have had sexual contact with an infected individual should be treated immediately before results of cultures are known.
- New urine tests, are now available to screen both sexes for chlamydial infection.

Treatment

- Antibiotics to eradicate both chlamydia and gonorrhoea are usually given since both types of bacteria commonly coexist.
- Tetracycline, doxycycline, oxytetracycline
- **Sexual partners of infected patients should also be treated.**

Prevention

- Safe sex behaviours, consider using condoms or other barrier methods to prevent STDs and HIV infections.
- Become a hermit!!

Complications

- Chronic pelvic inflammatory disease
- Infertility
- Salpingitis (inflammations of fallopian tubes which leads to scarring and adhesions)



Watery discharge from penis in chlamydia

vulvovaginitis



Foul smelling
pale frothy
discharge