

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is a very common sexually transmitted infection (STI) and most of the time has no symptoms. If detected, it can be cured. If undetected, it can lead to illness and infertility. This is why screening for it is so important.

What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a bacteria that infects certain cells in the body. Specific mucous membranes are especially vulnerable to chlamydia, such as the cervix and vaginal canal, urethra, anus, and (much less commonly in adults) the throat and the lining of the eyes. Once it gets inside the body, it can lead to inflammation and scarring which can lead to infertility.

How common is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is the most frequently reported STI in the United States¹, with an estimated 2.9 million cases of chlamydia every single year². It is most common in people under age 25.

How common is chlamydia at UO?

The chlamydia rates at UO are comparable to the national averages.

How could I be exposed to chlamydia?

Chlamydia requires direct contact between mucous membranes, the moist parts of the body not covered by skin. If any of these areas (the tip of the penis, the vulva/clitoris and vagina, the anus, the insides of eyelids, and throat) come into contact with a sexual partner's mucous membranes without a barrier device, there is risk of infection. At University Health Center, we find chlamydia most commonly infecting genitals and anuses and very rarely in the eyes and throats of UO students. Unprotected genital/genital sex and genital/anal sex are the most common routes of transmission.

If I have been exposed to chlamydia, how long until I might have symptoms?

Most of the time, there are NO SYMPTOMS after an infection. If you do have symptoms, they usually start about one to three weeks after infection.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Chlamydia Statistics. <http://www.cdc.gov/std/chlamydia/stats.htm>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sexually Transmitted Infections Among Young Americans. http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/newsroom/2013/SAM-Infographic-2013.html?s_cid=nchstp-nr-sam-011

What are the symptoms of chlamydia?

Most of the time, chlamydia infections have no symptoms at all. That's why screening (testing when you have no symptoms) is so important. However, individuals might experience irritation and pain in the infected area (genitals or anus/rectum) or increased discharge or discomfort with urination. Some strains of chlamydia cause enlarged lymph nodes in the groin area. Chlamydia can also infect the back of the throat through oral sex, but this almost never causes symptoms. Chlamydia can infect the lining of the eyes as well, but this is very rare in the U.S.

How do you test for chlamydia?

We test for chlamydia infection by sampling the mucous membranes directly.

- For penises, this means giving us a urine sample, as the urine washes the chlamydia in the urethra into the sample cup.
- For vaginas, this might mean a urine sample or we'll give you a vaginal swab so you can do your own collection.
- For rectums, this means a self-collected rectal swab.
- For the back of the throat, this means a throat swab.

Test results generally take a week to return.

How long after infection will it take for a screening test to turn positive?

Testing one week after infection detects most cases. Testing two weeks after infection detects almost all cases.

How will you notify me of my test results?

We relay negative results via a secure message to you via myUOHealth student portal.

If you test positive, we will call you by phone. If you don't answer, we'll leave a generic message to call us back to discuss your recent test results.

What happens if I test positive for chlamydia?

It is important to know that chlamydia is treatable and curable. But we understand that a positive test may still cause fear or anxiety.

We will schedule an appointment for you with a UHC clinician as soon as possible. At that visit, you will get all the information you need, have your questions answered, and get treated.