

# Gonorrhea and Chlamydia Tests

## What are gonorrhea and chlamydia tests?

These tests check for 2 sexually transmitted diseases: gonorrhea and chlamydia. Your provider may swab an infected area for tests or may test a sample of urine.

## Why are these tests done?

These tests are done to see if you have gonorrhea or chlamydial infection. These serious infections may not cause any symptoms at first. Later, if they are not treated, they can cause pain and serious health problems, such as arthritis and infertility.

## How do I prepare for the test?

- Women do not need to do anything to prepare for this test.
- If you are a man and a sample is being taken from your penis, do not urinate for 3 to 4 hours before the test.

## How is the test done?

There are 2 main ways to test for these infections:

- Swabs from the infected area
- A urine test

Your healthcare provider may use a swab to collect secretions from the infected area. The most commonly checked areas are the penis and a woman's cervix. If you have had anal intercourse or if you are having symptoms around the anus, a swab of that area will be done also. Because gonorrhea and chlamydia can infect the throat after oral sex, a throat swab of the tonsils may be done.

Newborn babies can get chlamydia from their mothers during birth. It can cause an eye infection. To test for chlamydia in a newborn, a swab is carefully taken from discharge in the corner of the eye.

Samples collected with the swab are sent to the lab. Special tests called cultures can be done to check the type of bacteria that grow from the samples. This also allows the lab to tell which antibiotics will work the best. It usually takes 2 to 3 days to get the results.

Sometimes the tests done from the swabs are not cultures, but are genetic tests to look for gonorrhea or chlamydia.

The newest test is done with a urine sample rather than swabs. It can check for gonorrhea and chlamydia. It is now available at most clinics and hospitals. It is often the most costly of these tests, but it is the most accurate. The results from the urine test can be available on the same day you have the test or the next day.

The advantage of the culture test over the urine test is that it can identify both the cause of the infection (gonorrhea or chlamydia) and which antibiotics are best

to treat the infection. This can be important in areas where gonorrhea bacteria are becoming resistant to the antibiotics usually used to treat the infection.

Ask your healthcare provider when and how you will get the result of your test.

## **What do the test results mean?**

A positive test result means that chlamydia or gonorrhea bacteria are present and you have an infection. Sometimes you may have both types of infection. If you have a positive result, your healthcare provider will prescribe treatment with antibiotics.

State laws often require that healthcare providers report the names of people who have these infections to the health department. This allows the state health department to monitor for outbreaks and for infections that are becoming resistant to the usual antibiotics.

## **What if my test result is not normal?**

Test results are only one part of a larger picture that takes into account your medical history and current health. Sometimes a test needs to be repeated to check the first result. Talk to your health care provider about your result and ask questions.

If your test result is positive, ask your healthcare provider:

- If you need additional tests, for example, for other sexually transmitted diseases
- Any questions you have about your treatment
- When you need to be tested again
- When it is safe to have sex again
- How to protect yourself against reinfection.

If you have a positive test result, you should tell your sexual partner, so he or she can be treated also. Follow your healthcare provider's advice about when it is safe to start having sex again. Use latex or polyurethane condoms every time you have sex to prevent another infection.

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