



## Reduce Your Risk for STDs

### What Are Gonorrhea and Chlamydia?

Gonorrhea and chlamydia are common and curable sexually transmitted diseases caused by the bacteria chlamydia trachomatis and Neisseria gonorrhoea. Both chlamydia and gonorrhea bacteria grow in warm moist areas including the urethra, vagina, cervix fallopian tubes, anus and rectum. Chlamydia can also infect the lining of the eyelids and gonorrhea can infect the throat through oral sex.

### Who Is At Risk?

Young adults between the ages of 15 and 24 years of age are most at risk for contracting chlamydia and gonorrhea. In fact, seventy-four percent (74%) of people infected with



chlamydia and sixty percent (60%) of people infected with gonorrhea are between the ages of 15 to 24.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates approximately 4 million people will contract chlamydia

each year, making it the most common sexually transmitted disease (STD) in the United States. In 2007, Berrien County reported 858 cases of chlamydia and 466 cases of gonorrhea.

### What Are The Symptoms?

Chlamydia and gonorrhea have been called "silent infections". The majority of patients can be infected with one or both STDs and not know it.

**75% of females and 50% of males infected with Chlamydia have no symptoms**

**Chlamydia:** Approximately 75% of infected females and half (50%) of infected men don't experience any symptoms from chlamydia. Patients who do experience symptoms may have an abnormal discharge from the vagina or penis and/or pain while urinating.

**Gonorrhea:** The majority of infected men experience some symptoms from gonorrhea, including a burning sensation when urinating, a yellowish-white discharge from the penis and painful or swollen testicles. Many women who are infected with gonorrhea have no symptoms; however, women that do experience symptoms, such as a painful burning sensation when urinating and vaginal discharge, may mistake the symptoms for a bladder or vaginal infection.

### Are There Long-Term Complications?

Chlamydia and gonorrhea can lead to infertility (not able to

have children) in both men and women. Untreated chlamydia and gonorrhea can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), a serious infection of the female reproductive organs. It is estimated that each year, 1 million women develop PID in the United States and 100,000 will become infertile. In men, chlamydia can cause pain or swelling in the scrotal area, which can lead to infertility.

### How Can I Protect Myself?

If you are sexually active, reduce your chances of infection by always using a condom during oral, vaginal and anal sex. Both chlamydia and gonorrhea can be transmitted through oral, vaginal or anal sex, and ejaculation does not have to occur for both to be transmitted. Sixty to 73 percent (60-70%) of young adults diagnosed with an STD become re-infected with the same STD within a year. If you are infected, talk to your partner as soon as possible so that he or she can be tested and treated also. It is possible to pass chlamydia and gonorrhea back and forth if you are treated and your partner has not been treated.



### Berrien County Health

**Department:**  
Preventing Disease,  
Prolonging Life and  
Protecting the  
Health of the  
Community.



### March is Reduce Your Risk Month!

March is Reduce Your Risk month, and the Health Department will bring your articles about reducing your risk of the following: Huffing, Diabetes, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, and HIV. For questions about any of these topics, please call the health department at **926-7121**.

### How Do I Get Tested and Treated?

Since the majority of people with chlamydia and gonorrhea have no symptoms, it is important for you to talk to your health care provider about being tested. A simple, pain-free urine test may be available.

If you test positive for chlamydia or gonorrhea, your health care provider will give you a prescription for antibiotics or treat you in the office.

Treatment for gonorrhea and chlamydia is usually given in the office at the STD clinics of the Berrien County Health Department.



The Berrien County Health Department offers testing for gonorrhea, chlamydia and other STDs Monday through Thursday on a walk in basis from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. in Benton Harbor, and on Wednesday from 1:00 to 4:00 pm in our Niles office. You may call (269) 927-5658 in Benton Harbor or (269) 684-2800 in Niles if you have any questions.

*Special thanks to Wanda Harris for her help with this article!*

**The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:**

#### **Benton Harbor**

769 Pipestone  
P.O. Box 706  
926-7121

M-139 Office  
2106 S. M-139  
927-5623

School Based  
870 Colfax Ave  
925-4500

#### **Niles**

1205 N. Front St.  
684-2800

#### **Three Oaks**

21 N. Elm  
756-2008

**Or visit us on the web at [www.berriencohlthdept.org](http://www.berriencohlthdept.org)**

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