

Gonorrhea Encyclopedia Article

Gonorrhea

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Gonorrhea

Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by a bacteria called Neisseria gonorrhoeae.

Gonorrhea is most common among females ages 15-19 and males ages 20-24. Although most males experience symptoms, 50% of females have no symptoms. For this reason, gonorrhea in adolescent girls often goes untreated. Therefore, screening cultures for gonorrhea should be routine for all sexually active adolescents.

Symptoms

Most males (95%) with gonorrhea will experience a yellow discharge from the urethra. In females, gonorrhea can affect the cervix, uterus, and fallopian tubes. In addition to symptoms affecting the genital and anal area, gonorrhea can affect the liver, throat, skin, joints, blood, and brain. In addition, gonorrhea can cause a severe form of **conjunctivitis** in infants born to infected mothers. The most common complication of untreated gonorrhea is pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). Less common is a complication called disseminated gonococcal infection (DGI), where the bacteria travels through the blood to distant sites such as skin or joints.

Treatment

Gonorrhea is treated with **antibiotics**, either injected or taken orally. After treatment, repeat cultures should always be performed to be certain the infection has been cured.

For Further Study

Books

Daugirdas, John T., M.D. *STD, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Including HIV/AIDS*. Hinsdale, IL: Medtext, 1992.

Organizations

National Sexually Transmitted Disease Hotline **Telephone:** (800) 227-8922
(Free information and clinic referrals)