

Gonorrhoea is a bacterial sexually transmitted infection (STI). It can infect the urethra, vagina, cervix, anus, throat and eyes (conjunctivitis). It's often asymptomatic and will not go away without treatment. On rare occasions, it can spread to the bloodstream causing fever, joint pain and skin lesions. If left untreated, gonorrhoea can cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), swelling of the testicles (balls), ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy that occurs outside of the uterus), or infertility.

## What is antibiotic resistance?

Antibiotic resistance develops when bacteria mutate and evolve to survive exposure to antibiotics. Infections take longer to heal, can become worse or lead to more serious health outcomes.

There is currently a rapid increase of gonorrhoea with antibiotic resistance in NSW.

### Reduce your chances of developing antibiotic resistance:

- only take antibiotics when necessary (antibiotics don't work against viruses)
- take antibiotics as prescribed and complete the full course
- never take antibiotics prescribed for someone else
- never save antibiotics for the next time you're sick



## How do you catch gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is commonly transmitted through the transfer of bodily fluids including:

- unprotected oral, vaginal, or anal sex, including 'dipping' (when the head of the penis briefly dips inside the vagina, mouth or rectum)
- kissing
- mutual masturbation, fingering or fisting without gloves, or sharing sex toys without condoms
- genital to genital contact (docking/nudging/scissoring)
- genital fluids entering eyes
- childbirth (parent to child)

## How do you reduce your chances of gonorrhoea transmission?

- **Get tested** as soon as you observe symptoms.
- As gonorrhoea is often asymptomatic, **regular sexual health screening** is advisable regardless.
- Conduct a visual sexual **health check on clients** to check for any indication of a possible STI. Look out for rashes, broken skin, sores, red spots, blisters, and 'milk' the penis before they shower or use the toilet, gently squeeze the penis along the shaft looking out for a **thick discharge**.
- Be prepared to **refuse a client, or negotiate** an alternative service if they fail a visual health check for STIs.
- Utilise personal protective equipment (PPE) including **condoms, gloves and dams**, for oral, vaginal and anal sex, and on toys.
- **Hold the base of the condom** when withdrawing.
- **Change PPE and wash hands** as required throughout the service and between partners.
- **Avoid touching the genitals or eyes** if your hands have made contact with body fluids.
- Ask for **throat swabs** during sexual health tests if you provide deep French kissing (DFK).
- Mouthwash has provided **no conclusive evidence** that gargling will prevent transmission.
- **Avoid genital fluid settling** on the face or genitals when using hands or breasts for stimulation.

## What will getting tested for STIs be like?

The doctor will take a sample of urine, swab the anus, vagina, cervix, throat and urethra if there is penile discharge. Sexual health clinics allow you the option of collecting your own swabs and will provide instruction on how to do so.

Familiarise yourself with the full range of tests that are available and don't be afraid to ask for any or all of them. If clinic staff make assumptions about your sexuality, your private or work sexual practices, by suggesting that you don't need certain tests (for example, an anal swab), it is fine to disagree with them and ask for those tests to be done.

## How can I get tested?

Getting tested for gonorrhoea (and other STIs) is free for all sex workers at sexual health clinics in NSW. You don't need a Medicare card to get treated, there are sexual health clinics in different areas.

## What does treatment look like?

If you need treatment for an STI, a publicly funded sexual health clinic will usually provide this for free, whilst a GP generally won't. If you are a sex worker and you have symptoms, they may provide treatment on the spot. Receiving immediate treatment can reduce the time it takes to return to work. Treatment for gonorrhoea involves a one-time antibiotic injection and a single-dose oral antibiotic. Have a follow up test two weeks after being treated to confirm that the antibiotic effectively cleared up the infection. This is important due to the increase in antibiotic resistant gonorrhoea. Re-infection is common and retesting again at 3 months is recommended.



More Testing Info



NSW Clinics



Antibiotic Info

## What does gonorrhoea look like?

### Vagina/ Vulva

- Unusual discharge
- Unpleasant odour
- Pain or burning sensation when urinating
- Pelvic/lower abdomen pain
- Pain during sex
- Bleeding between periods or after sex

### Penis

- Thick green, yellow or white discharge
- Pain or burning sensation when urinating
- Soreness, redness or swelling at the opening of the urethra (tip of penis)
- Pain and swelling in the testicles (balls)

### Anus/Rectum

- Anal itching
- Anal discharge
- Anal burning
- Anal soreness and bleeding
- Painful bowel movements, and having the feeling of needing to empty your bowels when your bowels are already emptied

### Throat

- Sore, dry throat

### Eyes

- Irritation and redness
- Discharge similar to conjunctivitis

## About SWOP NSW

We are a not-for-profit, peer-based community organisation run by and for sex workers in NSW.

We provide:

-  Sexual health information & condoms, dams, gloves and lube (PPE)
-  Drug and alcohol information & injecting equipment
-  Peer support & counselling
-  Workplace Health & Safety information
-  Culturally & linguistically diverse team & resources (English, Chinese & Thai resources available)

## Contact SWOP NSW

-  (02) 9184 9466
-  swopconnect@SWOP.org.au
-  swop.org.au

## Other Resources

### NSW Sexual health Info Link

1800 451 624  
shil.nsw.gov.au

### National Translating & Interpreting Service

1800 131 450  
tisonational.gov.au



Visit the Scarlet Alliance Red Book Online for photographs.  
[redbookonline.org.au](http://redbookonline.org.au)

# GONORRHOEA

## And what is antibiotic resistance?

This is a SWOP NSW resource that is created for sex workers, by sex workers.