

Microbe of the Month

Chlamydia trachomatis

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Transmission

Chlamydia trachomatis is a gram-negative bacterium that infects the epithelium of the cervix, urethra, lungs and eyes. You can get a urogenital infection from chlamydia by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who is infected. If a mother has it during pregnancy, it can cause eye (conjunctivitis) or lung infections in the newborn baby. Trachoma is also spread through personal contact, towels, clothing, and flies contaminated with discharge from the eyes or nose of an infected person.

Love is blind? Chlamydia is the most prevalent STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease) in the US. Trachoma is the world's leading cause of preventable infectious blindness. Both are caused by the bacterium Chlamydia trachomatis! A pregnant women can pass the infection to her infant during childbirth. Between 20% and 50% of babies born to infected mothers will contract the infection. Conjunctivitis can damage the newborn's eyes and cause scarring or permanent blindness.

Treatment/ Prevention:

Asymptomatic infection is common among both men and women so detecting chlamydial infections usually requires screening tests such as urinalysis or vaginal swabs in women. Chlamydia infections can be cured with antibiotics. Sexual partners should also be treated to prevent reinfection. Treating pregnant women usually prevents transmission of *C. trachomatis* to neonates during birth.

Signs/ Symptoms:



Chlamydia bacteria are unusual because they are tiny, obligate intracellular parasites. They are dependent on the host cell for certain metabolites. Chlamydia has two forms. An elementary body (EB) can survive outside the host cell and is spread from person to person. Once inside the host it replicates as a reticulate body (RB).

Signs of trachoma usually affect both eyes and may include:

- Discharge.
- Eyelid inflammation and pain.
- Light sensitivity (photophobia).

If left untreated, bumps and scarring of the inside of the eyelid cause the eyelashes to turn inward (trichiasis). The scars and lashes scratch the cornea with each blink and can cause clouding of the cornea leading to blindness.

Chlamydia is a STD that leads to scarring of the uterus and uterine tubes. Although often asymptomatic, infected individuals may notice:

- Abnormal vaginal or penile discharge.
- Burning sensation if urinating.

If untreated, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) may result in pelvic pain, inability to get pregnant and ectopic pregnancy (implantation outside uterus).

For further questions or concerns, please see your physician.
Reference: www.cdc.gov
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