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Video Short

Chlamydia on the Rise

By CWK Network Producer

"I don't really know anything about it."
-Berit, Age 16, when asked about Chlamydia.

The latest statistics from the Centers for Disease Control show that there is one sexually transmitted disease that affects more teenage girls than any other age group. Last year, 1.2 million cases of Chlamydia were reported among teens. That's 100,000 more than the year before.

What is Chlamydia?

If you ask many teenage girls, you're likely to get a blank stare. "I really don't know much about it at all," says 14-year-old Tavia.

Or you'll get a wrong answer. "Um, it's one of the female body parts," says 14-year-old Jade.

Most kids don't know it, but Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted disease that infects 1.2 million teenage girls every year.

Kids often don't know what it is and they don't know they have it, because the symptoms may not show up for years when it's too late.

"Chlamydia infections have been associated with pelvic inflammatory disease, which can cause scarring of the fallopian tubes and lead to infertility," says infectious disease specialist Dr. Kimberly Workowski.

According to the CDC, nearly half of all new Chlamydia cases are among teenager girls for two reasons: first, teens are less likely than adults to use condoms; second, the immature cells in a teenage girl's cervix are more vulnerable to infection.

Still, it's a "very curable disease," says Dr. Workowski. Curable, if it detected. Many teens, however, don't suspect they have the disease, and they're afraid to go to a doctor to get checked.

"I don't think they're really educated about that stuff yet, they don't even listen, they don't care," says Jade.

Experts say parents should take the lead, and talk with their child about getting tested.

"You can get a non-invasive test, like a urine sample, to see if there is any evidence of chlamydia," says Dr. Workowski. The experts say, if parents think to themselves, "there is no way my child has chlamydia!" they need to consider the consequences if they're wrong.

"Your daughter...can be infertile," Dr. Workowski warns, "because of this infection."

Chlamydia & Teenagers

By CWK Network, Inc.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Chlamydia ("kla-mid-ee-uh") is the "most common bacterial sexually transmitted disease in the US today. It is estimated that 4,000,000 new cases occur each year. The highest rates of Chlamydia infections are among 15-to-19-year-olds, regardless of demographics or location.

Chlamydia is transmitted through sexual contact (primarily vaginal and anal) with an infected person. According to the Association for Voluntary Surgical Contraception International (AVSC), about 75% of infected women and half of infected males have no symptoms of chlamydia. In other words, most people infected with the disease don't even know they have it.

Symptoms

In women, symptoms of chlamydia may include:

- an unusual vaginal discharge
- bleeding after intercourse
- bleeding between menstrual periods
- abdominal or pelvic pain

In men, symptoms of chlamydia may include:

- discharge from the penis
- burning with urination
- swollen and/or painful testicles

(Keep in mind, most people with chlamydia have no symptoms at all.)

Treating Chlamydia

The best way to prevent sexually transmitted disease (STDs) is to not have sexual relations. The CDC recommends that people who are sexually active use a condom, and get regular checkups for STDs. Though condoms are good at protecting against some STDs, others such as herpes and HPV may still be passed on through sexual contact.

Most STDs are readily treated, and the earlier treatment is sought and sex partners are warned, the less likely the disease will do irreparable damage such as the formation of scar tissue in the woman which can lead to infertility or an increased likelihood of a tubal pregnancy which can be life threatening.

Chlamydia can be easily treated and cured with antibiotics. It is also important that sexual partners receive treatment in order to prevent getting infected again. Doctors also recommend avoiding sex while being treated to reduce the chances of getting the infection again or giving it to someone else.

Resources

- [AVSC International](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

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