

# Screening for chlamydia – one of the most common STIs



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Due to the fact that chlamydia is now the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the UK, the Department of Health has rolled out a free National Chlamydia Screening Programme. This is important because one in ten men and women under the age of 25 who take the test in the UK are infected with it.

The reason why this programme is so important is that chlamydia is the most frequent cause of Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) and its long-term consequences, including chronic pain, ectopic pregnancy and infertility. And of course, it's not just female fertility that can be affected. A few years ago, researchers at Sweden's Umea University found that male infection reduced a couple's chance of having a baby by about a third. Symptoms – unusual vaginal discharge; pain when passing urine or during intercourse; bleeding after sex or between

periods; pain in the abdomen or testicles – may show up one to three weeks or many months after being infected, although most people have no symptoms at all.

The test is simple and painless – either a sample of urine is tested or a woman can take a swab with a cotton wool bud from the lower vagina. If positive, antibiotic tablets are prescribed for both partners to avoid re-infection. For all those tested, the usual prevention advice is given – use condoms every time you have sex to reduce the risk of all STIs; each time you meet a new partner, both of you need to have a chlamydia test before engaging in sexual activity; do not have sex when you or a partner is infected until all treatment has been completed.

I feel proud that Durbin PLC plays an important role in helping to protect the nation's sexual health. We provide many of the UK's GP surgeries, family planning units, genitourinary clinics and pharma-

cies with a Chlamydia Test Kit so they can fulfil the government's ambitious screening programme. This kit uses a rapid immunoassay for the direct detection of Chlamydia trachomatis antigen in endocervical swab specimens. We also sell a self-test wand for use at home. This vaginal swab changes colour depending on whether infection is present or not and couldn't be simpler to use or read. Over the past few years, many universities in the UK have provided their students with these self-tests.

Yet chlamydia isn't just a UK-based problem. According to the World Health Organisation, chlamydia trachomatis is the most prevalent bacterial pathogen causing STI in the western world. Not only that, statistics show that infection rates have increased all over the world, including in North Africa and the Middle East. Perhaps not surprisingly then, Durbin is exporting an ever-increasing quantity of chlamydia testing kits to many of the 180 countries we supply worldwide. Other products in our sexual health range include a wide selection of condoms, a gonorrhoea test, a syphilis test and an HIV finger-prick test with results available after only 15 minutes. I think it's fair to say that Durbin PLC isn't just protecting our own nation's sexual health, but that we're playing our part in protecting the world's sexual health, too... **MEH**

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