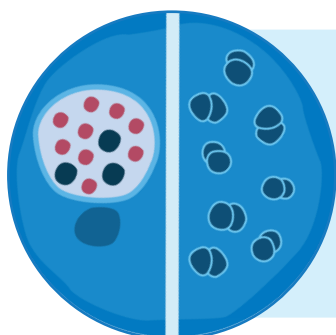


SCREENING FOR CHLAMYDIA AND GONORRHEA

**Recommendation**

The Task Force recommends opportunistic screening for chlamydia and gonorrhea at primary care visits, using a self- or clinician-collected sample.

Conditional recommendation; very-low-certainty evidence

1. Who does this recommendation apply to?

- It applies to all sexually active individuals under 30 years of age.
 - Sexual activity is defined as ever having oral, vaginal or anal intercourse
 - Most cases occur in Canadians under age 30 with increasing rates between ages 15 - 29
 - Evidence of benefit for screening
- This extends the eligible screening population from previous Canadian guidance to reflect increasing rates of infection among those aged 25 to 29 years.

2. Who does this recommendation not apply to?

- It does not provide guidance for pregnant patients, individuals known to belong to a high-risk group or patients specifically seeking care for a possible sexually transmitted infection (STI).
- Pregnant patients and those who are seeking testing or who are known to belong to a high-risk group should be managed following applicable national, provincial, or local guidance.
- High-risk includes having multiple sexual partners, previous STI's or having sex without a condom.

3. Why are we recommending screening?

- Chlamydia and gonorrhea are the most commonly reported bacterial sexually transmitted infections in Canada.
 - 1 in 20 sexually active individuals 15-29 years old will get chlamydia
- This recommendation supports an uncertain but potentially important benefit of reducing pelvic inflammatory disease in females.
- Screening of males may help prevent negative health consequences in females.
- Patients under 30 generally prioritize the benefits over the harms of screening and have shown a strong preference to be screened.
- Individuals at high risk of infection may not always readily self-identify or be easily identified by clinicians.
 - This routine offer to screen may reduce barriers to screening and improve health equity by normalizing screening
- We have included both chlamydia and gonorrhea in this recommendation since they are tested together.



4. How often should screening take place?

- An annual offer of screening may be appropriate for individuals at general risk, recognizing that encounters with primary care may occur less frequently.

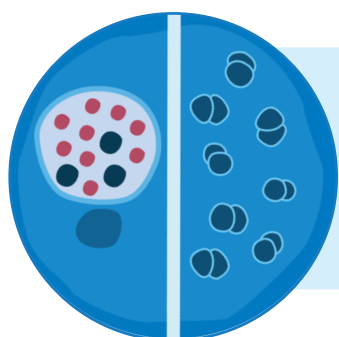
5. What are the harms of screening?

- Some individuals eligible for screening may experience psychosocial harms of embarrassment, anxiety, or stigma.
- While no serious adverse effects of antibiotic treatment for chlamydia or gonorrhea were found in studies, there is potential for minor harms (nausea and diarrhea) and allergic reactions.
- A false positive result could cause psychological harm without benefit to some individuals. False positives are more likely to occur when prevalence is low.
- Based on the approximate prevalence of chlamydia (5%) and gonorrhea (1%) in the target population, the expected range of false positive tests is:
 - In individuals who are assigned female at birth, approximately 8-9% of chlamydia tests and 45-70% of gonorrhea tests (depending on various factors)
 - In individuals who are assigned male at birth, approximately 13-15% of chlamydia tests and 24-50% of gonorrhea tests (depending on various factors)

6. How should I implement this recommendation?

- Identify eligible individuals, those who are sexually active and under 30 years of age.
- Offer screening opportunistically.
 - i.e., without requiring a separate screening visit, and not only during sexual health visits
- Keep in mind that screening requires sensitivity to fear, anxiety and feelings of embarrassment for some people.
 - Consider this example of a non-judgmental offer of screening: “screening is offered routinely for everyone under 30 who is sexually active”
- Acceptability and uptake of screening may be improved by minimally invasive sample collection methods, of which self-collected vaginal swabs from females and urine samples from males are the most accurate.
- Undertake informed consent for STI testing.
 - Address privacy and reporting requirements for positive test results to local public health offices and potential partner notification

SCREENING FOR CHLAMYDIA AND GONORRHEA



Recommendation

The Task Force recommends being screened for chlamydia and gonorrhea if you're under the age of 30 and if you are sexually active (if you have ever had oral, vaginal or anal intercourse).

Key Points

- Chlamydia and gonorrhea are sexually transmitted infections passed on through unprotected sex
- They are more common amongst younger people (under 30)
- If left untreated they can cause serious health problems
- People with chlamydia and gonorrhea often don't show symptoms and usually do not suspect that they could be infected
- It's a good idea to get screened

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why should I be tested for chlamydia and gonorrhea if I am not showing any signs or symptoms?

- There's a good chance you would not show symptoms even if you were infected.
 - Symptoms include pain when urinating, discharge, bleeding
- Screening will help catch these infections before there are symptoms and treating them may prevent some health problems.

2. Why screen for chlamydia and gonorrhea?

- They are the two most commonly reported sexually transmitted bacterial infections in Canada.
 - About 1 in 20 sexually active adults between 15 and 29 years will get chlamydia
- Screening may reduce the risk of pelvic inflammatory disease.
 - It is painful, can be severe, and may lead to infertility
- The potential benefits of screening outweigh the harms, and most individuals show a strong preference to be screened.

3. What is involved in being screened?

- Screening involves being tested for the chlamydia and gonorrhea bacteria.
- It is a simple test and easy to do.
 - Anyone can provide a urine sample
 - People with vaginas may provide a vaginal swab



4. What happens if I test positive?

- Both chlamydia and gonorrhea are curable with antibiotics.
- You will be prescribed antibiotics and possibly asked to book a follow up appointment to see how you are doing.
- Chlamydia and gonorrhea are infections that are required to be reported confidentially to public health.
 - This may involve notification of your sexual partners

5. Are there any harms?

- Some people may feel anxious or embarrassed.
 - We recommend to doctors that they offer screening routinely, so that you don't have to ask for it
 - Screening should also be offered in a way that does not make you feel uncomfortable
- It is possible to get a false positive test result.
 - A false positive test shows that you have an infection when you don't
 - This could lead to unnecessary use of antibiotics without benefit
- Antibiotic treatment, in people who test positive, can sometimes cause minor symptoms (nausea and diarrhea) and in some rare cases, allergic reactions.

6. How can I prevent sexually transmitted infections in the future?

- Speak to your health care provider about safer sex practices that are right for you.
- Talk to your partner(s) about getting tested.
- Use condoms regularly.