

Donovanosis

Description:

*Donovanosis is a sexually transmissible infection (STI). It is an infection of the skin around the genitals, groin or anal area caused by the bacterium *Klebsiella granulomatis*. It causes ulcers and destruction of the skin. Donovanosis is uncommon in Australia, occurring mostly in remote areas of northern Australia. Throughout the world, it occurs commonly in tropical and sub-tropical areas, particularly Papua New Guinea, areas of Central America, southern Africa and southern India.*

Symptoms:

After infection, a small ulcer, sore or lump develops in the genital area. This spreads slowly as an ulcer or as a raised red fleshy lump that progressively destroys normal skin. Common sites of infection are the tip of the penis, the skin just outside the vagina and the skin around the anus.

Transmission:

People get donovanosis by sexual contact with a person who has ulcers or sores due to this disease. Infections that cause ulcers and sores around the genitals increase the risk of HIV transmission.

Treatment:

Swabs from the ulcer or sore can be tested for donovanosis. There are other causes of genital ulcers, so these swabs could be used to test for other possible causes at the same time. Antibiotics can be given which will cure the disease. Depending of the length of time since infection and the stage of infection, antibiotics may need to be taken for several weeks. During this time it's important to keep ulcers clean and dry and the affected skin away from sunlight. It can take some months for the ulcers or sores to heal.

To ensure the infection has been cured:

- it is important to take the full treatment, otherwise the infection may not be properly cured
- abstain from sex until the treatment is finished and the doctor has advised that the infection has been cured.

When people find out that they have donovanosis, anyone they have had sex with in the past few months will also need to have a sexual health check. This is to make sure that they are free of the infection and to prevent re-infection. Anybody who feels uncomfortable or embarrassed about telling their partners, a member of the health care team can assist by contacting them on a person's behalf. Names are not mentioned to ensure it is a confidential process. Remember, it is very important for any partner's health and the health of other people they have sex with that this contact tracing occur.

Health Outcome:

If donovanosis is not treated, the ulcer will persist and will slowly and progressively get bigger. It can destroy large areas of skin.

Prevention:

People should not have sex with someone who has a visible genital ulcer or sore. Genital ulcers or sores could be due to donovanosis or some other STI such as herpes or syphilis. If anyone's sexual partner or intended sexual partner has a genital sore or ulcer, advise that person to have a sexual health check.

People planning to visit or live in a developing country should find out about diseases that occur there and how they are best avoided.

Practice safer sex. Always using condoms when having vaginal or anal sex is the best way to avoid getting an infection. Using water-based lubricant with condoms is recommended.

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People who have more than one sexual partner and do not use condoms should have regular sexual health checkups.

Help and Assistance

For more information on donovanosis, talk to:

- a local doctor
- a local sexual health service
- a local family planning clinic.

Other Resources

[Queensland Health Sexual Health website](#)

Related Content

[Chancroid fact sheet](#) [Safe Sex fact sheet](#)