

Lymphogranuloma Venereum

Description:

Lymphogranuloma venereum is a sexually transmissible infection. It is caused by a bacterium called Chlamydia trachomatis. Some types of this bacteria cause the genital infection chlamydia. Other types of this bacteria cause lymphogranuloma venereum. Chlamydia and lymphogranuloma venereum are quite different infections. Lymphogranuloma venereum causes ulcers or sores of the genital area and then invades the lymph glands in the pelvis and groin.

Symptoms:

After exposure to the infection, a small ulcer or sore develops. This can be in the vagina or around the outside of the vagina in women, or on the penis in men. In men and women who have anal sex, this ulcer or sore can occur in the rectum (back passage). This ulcer or sore can heal without treatment, but the infection has not gone away.

Between two and six weeks after initial infection, the lymph glands in the groin or inside the pelvis will begin to show signs of infection, becoming very swollen and painful. The infected person may become unwell with fevers, aching muscles and joints, and headaches.

In anal infections a person may experience pain, discharge, bleeding, constipation and/or inflammation. The infection can spread to tissues around the lymph glands. In the groin, this can cause large sores which break out on the skin. Inside the pelvis, this can involve the vagina, the rectum and the bowel.

Treatment:

Blood tests and swabs from the infected ulcers or glands are used to test for lymphogranuloma venereum. These tests and others may also be used to test for other causes or infections.

Lymphogranuloma venereum is treated with antibiotics that need to be taken for at least three weeks.

To ensure the infection has been cured:

- it is important to take all the tablets, otherwise the infection may not be properly cured
- do not have sex until you have finished treatment and you have returned to your doctor or clinic for a follow-up appointment

If, when you have your check up, you find out that you do have lymphogranuloma venereum, anyone you have had sex with in the past few months will also need to be tested. This is to make sure that they do not have the infection and to prevent you being re-infected. If you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about telling your partner or partners, a member of your health care team can assist by contacting them for you. Your name is not mentioned to ensure it is a confidential process. Remember, it is very important for your partner's health and the health of other people with whom they have sex that the tracing of contacts occurs.

Health Outcome:

Lymphogranuloma venereum is common in South and Central America, Asia and Africa. In Australia it generally occurs only in people who have travelled or lived in countries where it is prevalent. There is only a small number of people who are diagnosed with the infection each year in Australia.

If not treated, the infection persists. It causes progressive destruction of lymph glands and tissues near lymph glands. Infections that cause ulcers and sores around the genitals increase the risk of the spread of HIV.

Prevention:

You can get lymphogranuloma venereum by sexual contact with a person who has ulcers or sores due to this infection.

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You should not have sex with someone who has a visible genital ulcer or sore. Genital ulcers or sores could be due to some other sexually transmissible infection (STI) such as herpes or syphilis. If your sexual partner or intended sexual partner has a genital sore or ulcer, advise that person to have a sexual health check.

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

Practise safe sex. Always using condoms when you have vaginal or anal sex is the best way to avoid getting an STI. Using water-based lubricant with condoms is recommended. If you are giving a man oral sex (his penis in your mouth) then he should wear a condom. It does not matter whether you are male or female, if you put your mouth in contact with your partner's anus or vulva while having sex you should use a dental dam.

Help and Assistance

If you would like more information on Lymphogranuloma Venereum, you can talk to your local:

- doctor
- sexual health clinic
- family planning clinic
- public health unit

Other Resources

[Queensland Health Sexual Health website](#)