



Will the Rise in Chlamydia Cases Ultimately Result in a Rise in Infertility Rates?

According to the CDC, chlamydia is on the rise in the United States (1.2 million new cases were reported in 2008, a more than 200% jump from 1998, only a decade before.) Top experts cite an upswing in casual teen sexual activity, including oral sex, as a possible reason for the surge in numbers.

Fortunately, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) like chlamydia are not immediately life-threatening; however, chlamydia can have long-term repercussions that can be devastating. One of those consequences is infertility.

Unlike other STDs like genital herpes and syphilis, chlamydia is typically symptomless. Many women (and men) have no clue they are infected with the disease until years later. In fact, it's often not until they try to conceive do they discover that a case of untreated chlamydia has left them with fertility problems.

Says Abraham K. Munabi, M.D., Reproductive Science Institute of Suburban Philadelphia, P.C., "We've definitely seen a rise in the cases of infertility that can be associated with STDs as a result of early sexual activity. That's why we encourage everyone who has had sexual relations to get checked. In its early stages, chlamydia can be treated. It's when the disease has been allowed to grow that issues like infertility arise."

How can you know if you might have been infected with chlamydia? Though a screening is your only way of finding out for certain, you may be at risk if:

- You've had any sex partners who could have been infected with chlamydia. (The more there have been, the greater the possibility.)
- You were sexually active as a teenager or very young adult.
- You have had oral or anal sex with someone who could have been infected with chlamydia.

Even if you believe there isn't any way that your partners could have had chlamydia, it's better to know early than late. Cautions Dr. Munabi, "Don't assume you're fine. Ask your physician for a screening to rule out chlamydia, whether or not you expect to want children in the future."

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