Gonorrhea [1]

Hi Alice,

How long of a time frame could you have gonorrhea and not know it? The doctors say you can't track how long you have had it so how do we know? I feel my last partner gave it to me and that was nine months ago. Is that possible?

Thanks. I can't get much information in regards to this subject so I have no idea. And it can't be received from sitting on a toilet or anything of that sort, correct?

Answer

Dear Reader,

It is difficult to figure out how long a person has had gonorrhea, especially because being asymptomatic is so common. As a result, if you do not have any symptoms, there's no way of knowing how long you've had gonorrhea unless you are certain that your last partner from nine months ago had it and gave it to you.

Many people who have gonorrhea are unaware of it because the signs of the infection are mild or nonexistent. Some men who have the infection may be asymptomatic, but men who do show symptoms will usually do so within two to five days of exposure to the bacteria that causes gonorrhea. Most women who have the disease are asymptomatic. Women who have gonorrhea and do develop symptoms tend to do so within ten days of infection. These symptoms, however, tend to be mild and are commonly misattributed to other infections. In general, signs of an infection could appear as long as 30 days after infection?a small number of people may not have symptoms for several months after being infected. Nine months is an uncharacteristically long time for symptoms to appear, however.

Gonorrhea is most commonly transmitted through vaginal, oral, and anal sex. It may also be transmitted through infected fingers or other objects that make contact with an uninfected person's mucous membranes, which line the vagina, penis, anus, and mouth. Using condoms and dams helps prevent the spread of gonorrhea and most other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Gonorrhea is not passed through casual contact. Shaking someone's hand, using a towel, or sitting on a toilet does not transmit gonorrhea.

Regardless of how gonorrhea was transmitted, it's critical to get tested, examined, and treated. Gonorrhea is best treated early, but it is not too late to prevent complications. See a health care provider or visit a community health center as soon as possible if you haven't...
already. If left untreated, gonorrhea may cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and ectopic pregnancy in women, inflammation of the prostate gland and epididymis in men, and sterility in both women and men.

For more information about gonorrhea, read Symptoms of gonorrhea [2] in the Go Ask Alice! archive.

Hope this eases your mind a bit.

Alice!

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