

## Chlamydia on sex toys <sup>[1]</sup>

Alice,

I have looked through your archives but have not found an answer to my question. I was diagnosed and treated for chlamydia about a month and a half ago. Do I need to get rid of any sex toys I have? Is it possible to become reinfected by using a sex toy that you used while you were infected if you wash it before using it? Please help me find the answer to my question. I really need to know ASAP! Thank you in advance.

— Confused

### Answer

Dear Confused,

While it's possible that your sex toys could have chlamydia bacteria present on the surface, you don't need to get rid of them to prevent infection. Although your sex toys could potentially re-infect you with chlamydia, they're unlikely to do so since the bacteria, *chlamydia trachomatis*, can't live outside of the body for very long. Additionally, with proper cleaning measures, the likelihood of chlamydia transmission between the sex toy and you is decreased further. The good news is there are quick and easy ways to clean, care for, and prolong the lifespan of your toys (more on those in a bit!).

First, a little more about sex toys and chlamydia transmission: chlamydia is typically spread through direct sexual contact, where partners exchange bodily fluids (which contain the bacteria) such as vaginal fluids, semen, or pre-cum. By engaging in vaginal, anal, or oral sex, these bodily fluids can come directly into contact with mucous membranes within the vagina, rectum, or urethra, spreading the bacteria. This is when transmission is most likely to occur. So, the likelihood of transmission occurring through indirect contact, such as using a sex toy, is slim (this also applies to sharing utensils, clothes, toilet seats, or non-intimate physical contact with an infected person) but not impossible. Transmission of chlamydia is more likely to occur if you insert them into your body (as opposed to not inserting the sex toy during use) or if they're made from a highly porous material (such as neoprene, vinyl, acrylic, or thermoplastic), as bodily fluids are more likely to remain on the toy. Furthermore, if you share your sex toys with a partner without cleaning them, it can increase the risk of spreading chlamydia and other sexually

transmitted infections (STIs) to each other. For a more comprehensive overview of chlamydia — ranging from how it's transmitted to its symptoms — check out [C'mon, tell me about Chlamydia](#) <sup>[2]</sup> in the [Go Ask Alice! Sexual and Reproductive Health](#) <sup>[3]</sup> archives.

When it comes to using sex toys, it's crucial to clean them before and after each use and set them aside for a short period of time (approximately 24 hours) to ensure any bacteria or viruses are dead. This includes cleaning them between each use (e.g., washing after use on anus before using on/in vagina). Cleaning them can help decrease the risk for infection and transmission of many STIs — not just chlamydia. Take human papillomavirus (HPV) for example: researchers instructed women with HPV to clean their vibrators (some made from silicone, others thermoplastic) and repeatedly tested the toys for HPV. For almost half of the women, their vibrators still tested positive for HPV immediately after cleaning them. Yet, after 24 hours had passed, none of the silicone vibrators had HPV, while 30 percent of the thermoplastic vibrators were still HPV positive. So, cleaning the toys helped to significantly reduce, if not eliminate, the risk of HPV-reinfection, and researchers found that non-porous (glass and silicone) toys may be easier to clean, compared to porous sex toys. However, while it's best to regularly clean your sex toys to protect you from STIs and other bacterial infections, keep in mind that not all toys can be cleaned in the same manner.

Just as you wouldn't wash your bedding and your delicates in the same way, the material your toys are made of may change how you can clean them. Most toys can be cleaned with an antibacterial sex toy cleaners (available in many sex toy stores) or mild soap and water. Toys made of silicone or Pyrex glass can often be disinfected by boiling them or running them through a dishwasher. Likewise, toys made of cyberskin (a synthetic material intended to feel like real skin) can be cleansed with their respective, and specially-designed solutions, and dried by lightly dusting cornstarch on the surface. Other porous materials can be cleaned with warm water and soap. If you're unsure of which materials your toys are made of or which solution you can use, no worries! Manufacturers usually attach easy-to-follow cleaning instructions in the packages of each toy. If you no longer have the packaging, you may be able to look up details of the toy online and find its accompanying cleaning instructions. Additionally, staff at stores that sell sex toys can typically advise you on how to best take care of your new toy.

Regardless of the material of your toys, there are some general tips to help you care for them. Some include:

- Take out the batteries, unplug, or remove electronic attachments before washing it.
- Avoid using harsh abrasives or rubbing alcohol on porous materials.
- Store toys in a dry cool place and avoid direct sunlight.
- Thoroughly dry your sex toy after cleaning, to help prevent the growth of bacteria, or fungus.

Lastly, you may wish to consider using condoms with your toys. This extra step can be particularly protective if you don't know the material your toy is made from or if you're using it during sex play with a partner. You can even try out a [variety of condoms](#) <sup>[4]</sup> to see what feels best for you — lubed, ribbed, studded — whatever suits your taste! Just remember that, even though it's a toy, you still want to follow condom best practices, which include using a new condom with each use and with each partner. This can help to ensure that reinfection isn't in your future. If reinfection does occur, it's best to reach out to a health care provider to be treated and

Speak with them about additional prevention methods for the future.

Alice!

Category:

[Sexual & Reproductive Health](#) [5]

[Masturbation](#) [6]

[Safer Sex](#) [7]

[Sexually Transmitted Infections \(STI's\)](#) [8]

[Chlamydia](#) [9]

[Tools & Toys](#) [10]

## Related questions

[Chlamydia treatment — 100 percent effective?](#) [11]

[College students and STIs](#) [12]

[Five kinds of condoms: A guide for consumers](#) [13]

## Resources

[Safer Sex Map \(Morningside/ Barnard\)](#) [14]

[Medical Services \(Morningside\)](#) [15]

[Alice! Health Promotion \(Morningside\)](#) [16]

[Medical Services \(CUIMC\)](#) [17]

[Center for Student Wellness \(CUIMC\)](#) [18]

Published date:

May 12, 2006

Last reviewed on:

Oct 13, 2017

## Footer menu

- ▼ [Contact Alice!](#)
  - [Content Use](#)
  - [Media Inquiries](#)
  - [Comments & Corrections](#)
- ▼ [Syndication & Licensing](#)
  - [Licensing Q&As](#)
  - [Get Alice! on Your Website](#)
  - [Full Site Syndication](#)
  - [Link to Go Ask Alice!](#)

**Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.**

If you are in an urgent situation, please [visit our Emergency page](#) to view a list of 24 hour support

services and hotlines.

---

**Source URL:** <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/chlamydia-sex-toys-0>

**Links**

- [1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/chlamydia-sex-toys-0>
- [2] <http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/chlamydia>
- [3] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/sexual-reproductive-health>
- [4] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/time-go-condom-shopping-brands-sizes-textures-%E2%80%94-what-buy>
- [5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/sexual-reproductive-health>
- [6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/masturbation>
- [7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/safer-sex>
- [8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/sexually-transmitted-infections-stis>
- [9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/chlamydia>
- [10] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/tools-toys>
- [11] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/chlamydia-treatment-%E2%80%94-100-percent-effective-0>
- [12] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/college-students-and-stis-0>
- [13] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/five-kinds-condoms-guide-consumers-0>
- [14] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/safer-sex-map-morningside-barnard>
- [15] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-morningside>
- [16] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/alice-health-promotion-morningside>
- [17] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-cuimc>
- [18] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/center-student-wellness-cuimc>