



Urethritis and Urethral Irritation

Urethritis is inflammation of the urethra (the passage in the penis that urine and semen pass through). It has several causes. The most common are chlamydia and gonorrhoea, but other bacteria or viruses may be involved. Often the cause is not identified.

Symptoms

There may be no symptoms.

When symptoms are present, they may include:

- discharge (milky or pus-like) from the penis
- stinging or burning during urination
- itching, tingling, burning or irritation inside the penis.

Diagnosis

If you have any of these symptoms, you need tests to find out whether you have urethritis.

The doctor gently inserts a swab into the urethra. The specimen is then examined in the laboratory for signs of infection. Swabs are best taken 3 or 4 hours after you last passed urine.

If an infection is present, it can sometimes be detected at the STD clinic on the same day. However, it usually takes several days for chlamydia and gonorrhoea results to become available.

Treatment of urethritis

Urethritis is usually treated with doxycycline (Doryx, Vibramycin) or azithromycin (Zithromax).

Doxycycline

- Take a single dose of two capsules daily for 10 days.
- Take the capsules after a meal.
- Drink a full glass of water after taking the capsules, and do not lie down for at least half an hour.

Side Effects:

The main side effect of doxycycline is irritation of the stomach. If you follow the instructions but experience abdominal pain after taking doxycycline, try taking two daily doses of one capsule. Stomach irritation is less likely if you avoid alcohol.

Doxycycline may make the skin more sensitive to sunlight. Avoid direct sunlight, and wear a hat, long sleeves and sunscreen while you are taking the capsules.

Doxycycline must never be taken by pregnant women or young children.

IMPORTANT!

Do not have sex until the results of your tests are back and you have finished taking all the tablets.

Never share your treatment with anyone else. Partners do not automatically require treatment. They should be examined by a doctor first.

Azithromycin

Take one gram of azithromycin as a single dose. This may be either 2 or 4 tablets depending on their strength.

Side Effects:

Azithromycin may cause abdominal pain and nausea. If this happens, eating sometimes helps. The symptoms usually settle within a few hours.

IMPORTANT!

Do not have sex until the results of your tests are back and at least a week has passed.

General notes

Symptoms such as discharge, stinging or irritation will settle down much more quickly if you do not have sex (vaginal, oral or anal), masturbate, or squeeze the penis.

Return to the clinic for the results of all your tests.

Non specific urethritis (NSU)

Urethritis not caused by either gonorrhoea or chlamydia is called non specific urethritis (NSU). The cause of NSU frequently is not known, but antibiotic treatment is usually effective. Although NSU does not cause symptoms in women, female partners of men with NSU may need to be examined.

Recurrent or persistent urethritis

Sometimes the symptoms of urethritis may be slow to settle, or they may return after a week or two.

If you have taken the antibiotics and have not had sex, it is unlikely that an infection is still present. In most cases, the symptoms should resolve in a week or two and you should not need further treatment.

If you have had sex or did not take the medication as directed, or have persistent symptoms for longer than two weeks, you should consult a doctor.

Urethral irritation

Occasionally, men may experience a discharge from the penis or discomfort when urinating, but laboratory tests show no evidence of infection (ie the swab results are normal). This condition is called urethral irritation. It means the urethra has been affected by something other than an infection.

Possible causes of this condition include:

- repeated squeezing or milking of the urethra
- very frequent or vigorous masturbation or sexual activity
- concentrated urine caused by dehydration
- caffeine and/or alcohol, possibly some medications
- general illness
- allergies.

Urethral irritation is not sexually transmitted and always settles without antibiotic treatment. It will settle faster if you avoid sex, masturbation, squeezing or milking the penis, alcohol and caffeine consumption.

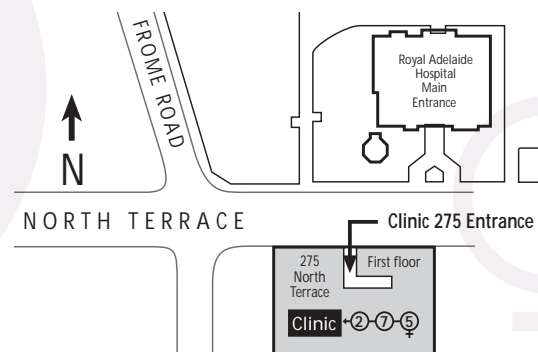
More Information

STD Services web site:
www.stdservices.on.net/std/nsu

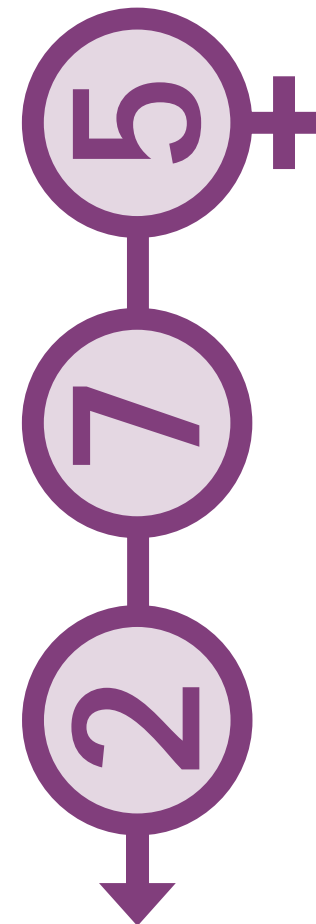
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Sexually Transmitted Diseases Services

Royal Adelaide Hospital

Free and confidential advice, testing and treatment for all STDs including HIV/AIDS

No appointment necessary

Monday, Thursday & Friday

10am – 4.30pm

Tuesday & Wednesday

11.00am - 6.30pm

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