

Mycoplasma - Patient information leaflet

Key points

Mycoplasma is a sexually transmitted infection
It is passed from one person to another during sex
It often causes no symptoms
If mycoplasma is not treated it can cause serious long-term health problems
You can protect yourself by ALWAYS using condoms when you have sex

What is Mycoplasma?

- ❖ Mycoplasma is a sexually transmitted infection. It is caused by a bacterium called *Mycoplasma genitalium*.

How do you get mycoplasma?

- ❖ You can catch mycoplasma when you have sex with someone who already has the infection. This can be by vaginal sex, oral sex or anal sex.
- ❖ The infection is more common in young people, people who frequently change sexual partners and people who do not use condoms during sex.
- ❖ Even if you have had mycoplasma before, you can still catch it again

What are the symptoms of mycoplasma?

Many men and women who have mycoplasma do not have any genital symptoms when they are infected. Infection in the rectum usually causes no symptoms at all.

- ❖ The most common symptoms in women are
 - A change in the colour or smell or amount of discharge from the vagina
 - Bleeding between periods or heavier periods
 - Bleeding after sex
 - Burning feeling when passing urine
 - There may be pain or discomfort in the lower abdomen
- ❖ The most common symptoms in men are
 - Burning when passing urine
 - Discharge from the end of the penis
 - There may be pain or discomfort in the testicles

Do I need any tests?

- ❖ At the moment tests for mycoplasma are not available in all countries or all clinics.
- ❖ A sample from the genital area is needed to make the diagnosis. In some clinics a urine test may be used.
- ❖ If you think you have been in contact with mycoplasma, or other infections, or have symptoms that could be mycoplasma you should visit your family doctor or local sexual health or venereology/dermatology clinic.

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- ❖ The doctor or a specialist nurse will take a swab (sample) from the penis, vagina or cervix (neck of the womb) and send it to a laboratory where it will be tested for *Mycoplasma genitalium*, if the test is available. If you have had oral or anal sex, the doctor may also take swabs from your throat and anus. In some situations you may be able to take the swab yourself.
- ❖ If you have mycoplasma, you should also be tested for other sexually transmitted infections such as chlamydia and gonorrhoea, HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B, as you can have more than one infection at the same time.

What is the treatment for mycoplasma?

- ❖ It is important to receive treatment for mycoplasma as quickly as possible, as the infection can cause complications and serious health problems if it is left untreated.
- ❖ Mycoplasma is treated with a course of antibiotic tablets.
- ❖ It can be difficult to treat so you should return 3 weeks after you have finished your antibiotics for a test to check the infection has gone.

Should I have sex if I have mycoplasma?

- ❖ You should avoid any unprotected sex, until after both you and your partner have finished all your treatment and your symptoms have gone.

What are the possible complications of mycoplasma?

- ❖ Mycoplasma is unlikely to lead to any long-term problems if it is treated quickly. However, without treatment mycoplasma can cause serious problems.
- ❖ Women can develop pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). This can cause abdominal and pelvic pain. It can also lead to infertility and ectopic pregnancy (a pregnancy that occurs outside the womb). Men may develop a painful infection in their testicles.
- ❖ In rare cases, mycoplasma may cause other symptoms such as arthritis (swollen joints) and inflammation of the eyes. This is more common in men.

Mycoplasma and pregnancy

- ❖ If you are pregnant, mycoplasma can be passed from you to your baby during birth. It is not known if this causes any problems for the baby.

Do I need to tell my partner?

- ❖ If you do have mycoplasma, it is essential that your current sexual partner, and any other sexual partner you have had over the last six months, is tested and treated.
- ❖ This is to stop you getting the infection again, and also so your partners do not develop complications.

Further help and information

- ❖ If you suspect that you have mycoplasma or any other sexually transmitted infection, then see your family doctor or local sexual health or venereology/dermatology clinic.