

Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT)?

Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT) is a strategy for treating the sex partner(s) of people diagnosed with chlamydia (*Chlamydia trachomatis*) and gonorrhea (*Neisseria gonorrhoeae*). EPT allows health care providers to provide patients with medication or a prescription for their sex partner(s) without a prior medical evaluation or clinical assessment of those partners.

Why is EPT important?

Studies have found EPT decreases rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea reinfection among patients and increases the number of sex partners reported to be treated for chlamydia and/or gonorrhea.

Who is eligible for EPT?

EPT is recommended for all of the patient's sex partners in the 60 days prior to diagnosis of chlamydia/gonorrhea, or the most recent sexual partner if the patient's last sexual encounter was more than 60 days ago. EPT is not recommended for treatment of gonorrhea infections in the throat or for male partners who have sex with other men.

Can EPT be used for any other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?

No. EPT is not suitable for other STDs.

What is Chlamydia?

Chlamydia is the most commonly reported bacterial sexually transmitted disease nationwide and in Maine. Symptoms are usually mild or absent, especially in women. Repeat and/or untreated chlamydia infections in women can cause serious health problems, such as Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), infertility, and ectopic pregnancy. Having an untreated sex partner is an important risk factor for reinfection. Treatment of the sex partners of a person diagnosed with chlamydia is critical to interrupting the spread of chlamydia and reinfection.

What is Gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is a commonly reported bacterial sexually transmitted disease. Many people infected with gonorrhea have no symptoms. Common symptoms of gonorrhea infection in men include a burning sensation while urinating, or a white, yellow, or green discharge from the penis, or painful or swollen testicles. Gonorrhea can also infect the anus and throat. Repeat and/or untreated gonorrhea infections can cause serious and permanent health problems in both men and women. In women, untreated gonorrhea can lead to Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), infertility, and ectopic pregnancy. In men, untreated gonorrhea can lead to epididymitis and infertility. If not treated, gonorrhea can also spread to the blood and joints, which can be life-threatening. Having an untreated sex partner is an important risk factor for reinfection. Treatment of the sex partners of a person diagnosed with gonorrhea is critical to interrupting the spread of gonorrhea and reinfection.

What is the recommended treatment for Chlamydia and/or Gonorrhea using EPT?

- The recommended EPT treatment for chlamydia is 1 gram of azithromycin orally in a single oral dose.
- The recommended EPT treatment for gonorrhea (regardless of chlamydia test result) is 400mg of cefixime in a single oral dose, plus 1 gram of azithromycin in a single oral dose.
- If a EPT sex partner cannot take azithromycin, or is known to be allergic to erythromycin, clarithromycin, or any macrolide or ketolide, then doxycycline (100mg orally, twice a day for seven days) is acceptable.
- Doxycycline is not recommended if the EPT sex partner cannot take minocycline, tetracycline, or sulfites. Doxycycline is not recommended during pregnancy or lactation.
- *EPT is not recommended if the EPT sex partner cannot take azithromycin or doxycycline, or cefixime or cephalosporins. The EPT sex partner should be instructed to see a physician for appropriate treatment.*

What if the EPT sex partner is taking a medication that interacts with the EPT medication?

The EPT sex partner should seek healthcare from a health care provider or emergency department.

What is the prescription format for providing EPT?

Whenever a health care provider provides EPT using a prescription, the prescription shall include:

- name and address of the health care provider/establishment in which it was dispensed;
- date the prescription was issued;
- name and dosage of the medication;
- directions for the use of the drug by the patient;
- number of refills (which will be “zero”);
- the designation "EPT" must be written in the body of the prescription form above the name of the medication and dosage for all prescriptions issued.
- If the name, address, and date of birth of the sex partner are available at the time the prescription is written, this should be written in the designated area of the prescription form.

How will sex partner(s) know if it's safe to take EPT without seeing a health care provider?

Providers using EPT are required by law to give patients educational materials to give to his/her sex partner(s). These materials address allergic reactions, potential side effects, and contraindications to taking azithromycin or doxycycline. Other states have been using EPT for over ten years and no adverse events and/or life threatening allergic reactions have been reported to date.

Is “EPT” sufficient for the pharmacist to fill the prescription?

According to Maine State Law (Title 22 MRSA c. 251 §1242), a pharmacist can legally fill a prescription with the designation of “EPT” even when a sex partner’s name, address, and date of birth are not listed on the prescription. However, if needed by the pharmacy, the pharmacist can request this information when the prescription is dropped off or picked up at the pharmacy.

Is liability for providers and pharmacists addressed in this legislation?

Maine EPT legislation protects health care professionals (allopathic physicians, osteopathic physicians, physician assistants, advance practice registered nurses and nurse practitioners, and pharmacists) who prescribe, dispense, furnish, or otherwise provide prescription antibiotics as a part of EPT to sex partner(s) without fee or compensation from civil and professional liability, except in cases of willful and wanton misconduct. Maine EPT legislation also protects health care professionals who choose not to provide EPT.

Who will pay for the sex partner’s EPT medication?

Some medical offices may choose to dispense medications to both patients and partners at no cost instead of writing a prescription. If prescribed, medication costs may be self-pay (paid by the person who picks up the prescription) or paid by the EPT sex partner’s health insurance.

How should pharmacists conduct patient record keeping for “EPT” prescriptions?

EPT prescriptions should be documented/filed like any other non-controlled substances prescriptions.

What are the educational material requirements for patients provided with EPT?

Each patient provided with antibiotics or a prescription for EPT in accordance with EPT rules must be given informational materials for the patient to give to his/her sex partner(s). Each patient shall be counseled by his/her health care provider to inform his/her sex partner(s) that it is important to read the information contained in the materials prior to taking the medication.

Where can I find out more information about EPT in Maine?

For more information about EPT, including materials that can be downloaded and printed, visit <http://mainepublichealth.gov/STD>, or call (207) 287-3747.