

Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT)

Guide for Patients

Why am I getting extra medicine or a prescription?

You have been diagnosed for chlamydia and/or gonorrhea, diseases that are transmitted by having sex. Your sex partners also need to be treated so they don't develop serious health problems, re-infect you or pass it on to others. You are getting extra medicine or a prescription to give to your sex partners to help treat them.

What is Expedited Partner Therapy?

Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT) is a convenient, fast and private way to get your sex partners treated for chlamydia without them having to see a health care provider. EPT lets your provider give you extra medicine or a prescription to give to your sex partners so they can be treated for chlamydia and/or gonorrhea as soon as possible.

Is Expedited Partner Therapy legal and is it safe?

Yes, Maine State law lets health care providers give patients who have chlamydia and/or gonorrhea extra medicine or a prescription to share with their sex partners. The medicine prescribed to you and your partner(s) is safe and almost 100% effective when used as directed.

What is chlamydia?

Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) passed through oral, anal and vaginal sex. People who have chlamydia, especially women, usually have no symptoms. If there are symptoms, they can include pain or burning during urination, and pus or discharge from the penis, vagina and/or anus. **Even without symptoms, chlamydia can be passed on to sex partners.**

If not treated, chlamydia infections can lead to serious and permanent health problems like infertility (not being able to have children) and pelvic inflammatory disease. This disease can be very painful and can affect the uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries. Chlamydia can also lead to ectopic pregnancy (an unusual pregnancy in the fallopian tubes).

What is gonorrhea?

Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) passed through oral, anal, and vaginal sex. People who have gonorrhea, especially women, usually have no symptoms. If there are symptoms, symptoms in women can include pain or burning during urination, increased vaginal discharge, or vaginal bleeding between periods. 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. Symptoms of rectal infection may include discharge, anal itching, soreness, bleeding, or painful bowel movements. Infections in the throat may cause a sore throat. **Even without symptoms, gonorrhea can be passed on to sex partners.**

If not treated, gonorrhea infections can lead to 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 (an unusual pregnancy in the fallopian tubes). In men, gonorrhea can lead to epididymitis and infertility. If not treated, gonorrhea can also spread to the blood and joints, which can be life-threatening.

What should I do next?

- **Get treated.**
- **Tell all your recent sex partners in the past 60 days, or your most recent sex partner if you've had none in the past 60 days.** Explain that you have been diagnosed and treated for an STD called chlamydia and/or gonorrhea and that they may have been exposed to it.
- **Give them the medicine or the prescription for medicine.**
- Encourage partners to **read the fact sheet information** you give to them.
- Encourage all your sex partners to **visit a doctor or clinic** to get tested for other STDs, *even if they take the medicine.*
- **Visit a doctor in 3 months** to get retested for chlamydia and/or gonorrhea.

How do I tell my sex partners I was treated for chlamydia and/or gonorrhea?

Telling sex partners that you have an STD can be difficult, but it is the right thing to do. The best way to tell your partners is by being open and honest. You could say:

“This medicine is to treat an STD called chlamydia and you should take it because I was infected and you may be infected too. You should read the information that came with the medicine and visit a health care provider to get checked for other STDs.”

Your partners may feel embarrassed, ashamed, guilty, angry or scared. These feelings are normal. By offering them treatment, you are showing that you care enough to help.

What if my sex partner blames me?

People worry about their partners being angry, but you may not be the one who has infected them with chlamydia/gonorrhea. The disease usually doesn't have symptoms, so a person can have it for a long time and not know it. The most important thing is to tell your partners about the infection, take steps so anyone involved gets healthy, and avoids future STDs.

What if my partner becomes violent when I tell him/her I have an STD?

If you think a partner could become violent, EPT may not be the best approach. Ask your provider for help notifying your partner. **Call 911 immediately if a partner does threaten you or becomes violent.**

How will my partners know EPT is okay? What if they have questions?

Your partners can call (207) 287-3747 or the phone number on the prescription, read the enclosed fact sheet, or visit <http://mainepublichealth.gov/std>

My sex partners have no symptoms. Should they still take this medicine?

Yes. People with chlamydia/gonorrhea may not experience any symptoms. Taking the medicine will cure it.

What if my sex partner is pregnant or thinks she may be pregnant?

If your sex partner is pregnant or thinks she may be pregnant, it is okay for her to take azithromycin and/or cefixime. *Doxycycline is not recommended for women who are pregnant, thinks they may be pregnant, or is nursing.* **If your sex partner is pregnant or thinks she is pregnant, she should see a health care provider as soon as possible to be tested for other STDs, which can be passed on from a mother to her baby during pregnancy and delivery.**

What should I do after giving my partners this medicine?

The medicine takes 7 days to work. **Do not have sex (vaginal, oral, or anal) for at least 7 days after both you and your sex partners have been treated.** You can get chlamydia/gonorrhea again if you have sex before the medicine cures you and your partners.

What should my sex partners expect when they go to the pharmacy to pick up the medicine?

If you gave your partners a prescription, the pharmacist may ask for some information such as name, address, date of birth, and form of payment (insurance, co-payment, self-pay) when the prescription is dropped off or picked up at the pharmacy.

What if a partner won't take the medicine?

If a sex partner won't take the medicine, he/she should see a health care provider as soon as possible to be tested and treated for chlamydia. Tell the partner that not getting treated could result in serious health problems. In the meantime, do not have sex with new or past sex partners until they are treated and the medicine has 7 days to work.

What if I can't get the medicine to all of my sex partners?

If you are unable to give the medicine to all of your partners, return it to the health care provider who gave it to you. **Do not share medicine that was intended for you to take yourself.** You need to take all of your medicine and so do your partners.

How do I avoid Sexually Transmitted Diseases?

- The only way to completely avoid STDs, including HIV, is to not have sex.
- If you do have sex, do it safely. Use a latex condom every time and for every kind of sex – oral, anal and vaginal.
- You can reduce your chances of getting chlamydia, gonorrhea, HIV, and other STDs by limiting the number of people you have sex with. The more sex partners you have, the higher your risk of getting an STD.

For more information please call (207) 287-3747 or visit us at <http://mainepublichealth.gov/std>