

News story: Two cases of resistant gonorrhoea diagnosed in the UK

Public Health England (PHE) is investigating 2 cases of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* in heterosexual females with similar resistance patterns to the antibiotics (ceftriaxone and azithromycin) that are used as the first line treatment for gonorrhoea. While this type of resistance is unusual, there have been cases in other countries. Both cases were successfully treated and we are following up sexual contacts to minimise the risk of any onward transmission.

One of these cases appears to have been acquired in Europe and the other has links to Europe but was acquired in the UK.

Finding this sort of extensively drug resistant gonorrhoea in the UK serves as an important reminder of the need to practice safer sex. This includes using condoms consistently and correctly with all new and casual sexual partners. Anyone with symptoms of a sexually transmitted infection (STI) or who is concerned they may have an STI should seek advice from their sexual health clinic.

Investigations are actively looking for any links between these 2 cases to determine if they may be connected.

A case of resistant gonorrhoea was acquired in South East Asia by a UK national in 2018. The type of resistance seen in these 2 cases is different and therefore unrelated.

PHE actively monitors, and acts on, the spread of antibiotic resistance in gonorrhoea and potential treatment failures, and has introduced enhanced surveillance to identify and manage resistant strains of infection promptly to help reduce further spread.

Dr Nick Phin, Deputy Director of the National Infection Service at Public Health England, said:

Although these 2 cases of extensively resistant gonorrhoea have been successfully treated, contact tracing is underway to ensure there is no onward spread. This is a timely reminder of the importance of avoiding getting or passing on gonorrhoea.

Everyone can substantially reduce their risk by using condoms consistently and correctly with all new and casual partners. Anyone who thinks they may have been at risk of getting an STI should seek an STI screen at a sexual health clinic.

Background

About gonorrhoea

You can read more about gonorrhoea on the [NHS website](#).

Gonorrhoea is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by bacteria called *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* or gonococcus. The bacteria are mainly found in discharge from the penis (1 in 10 infected men do not have a discharge) and in vaginal fluid but can also infect the rectum and throat.

Gonorrhoea is easily passed between people through unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex or sharing vibrators or other sex toys that have not been washed or covered with a new condom each time they're used.

Typical symptoms of gonorrhoea include a thick green or yellow discharge from the vagina or penis, pain when urinating, pain and discomfort in the rectum and, in women, lower abdominal pain and bleeding between periods. However, around 1 in 10 infected men and almost half of infected women do not experience any symptoms.

If you have any of the symptoms of gonorrhoea, or you're worried you may have an STI, you should visit your local sexual health clinic for a sexual health test.

Gonorrhoea can be easily diagnosed in both men and women, either from a vaginal swab in women or a sample of urine from men. All of these tests can be self-administered.

Treating gonorrhoea as soon as possible is very important because gonorrhoea can lead to serious long-term health problems including pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in women (infection of the womb) that may result in infertility and infection in the testicles in men.

Gonorrhoea and other STIs can be successfully prevented by:

- using male or female condoms every time you have vaginal sex or male condoms during anal sex
- using a condom to cover the penis if you have oral sex
- not sharing sex toys, or washing them and covering them with a new condom before anyone else uses them