Gonorrhea (GC)

Gonorrhea (gon-o-REE-a) is a sexually transmitted disease (STD). The gonorrhea bacteria can be spread from person to person through sexual contact. Gonorrhea is very common among sexually active teens.

Some people with gonorrhea have symptoms and others do not. A guy with gonorrhea may have a discharge from his penis or burning with urination. Girls who have symptoms may develop a vaginal discharge, vaginal discomfort, or burning with urination. People who perform oral sex may have a sore throat from gonorrhea. Those who practice rectal sex may have anal discomfort or discharge. People who have no symptoms or who may not know they have gonorrhea can still spread the infection to other people.

Gonorrhea infections can be treated easily with antibiotics once they are diagnosed. Antibiotics may be given by shot or pill. It is very important that anyone treated for gonorrhea tell their sexual partners, so they too can see a doctor for treatment. There should be no sexual contact until a week after all partners have been treated. People can be infected with gonorrhea more than once.

The most serious problems with gonorrhea occur in girls when the bacteria move from the vagina up into the uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries. This usually causes severe abdominal pain, fever, nausea, or vomiting. This severe infection is called pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and often requires hospitalization. PID can damage a girl’s fallopian tubes and ovaries so that she may have problems getting pregnant later.

The only way to keep yourself safe from sexually transmitted diseases is to abstain from sex. If you do decide that you are going to be sexually active, it is important that you use a condom every time you have sex to prevent the spread of infections. See your doctor for routine checkups to make sure you are disease-free.

For more information about gonorrhea or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), talk to your health care provider or call the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188.