Discussing chlamydia re-testing with young adults: A guide for healthcare professionals
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Individuals diagnosed with chlamydia once have an increased chance of getting the infection again. As such, the National Chlamydia Screening Programme recommends that: any young adult that tests positive for chlamydia should be offered a re-test at around three months. This guide provides advice on how to include the re-testing conversation within the patient care pathway.

1. Discussing at the initial chlamydia test

   **Key information to give to all young adults on chlamydia, testing and safer sex:**
   - chlamydia is one of the most common STIs, affecting young adults more than any other age
   - chlamydia usually has no symptoms, but left untreated can have serious health consequences
   - diagnosing chlamydia as early as possible reduces the risk of complications, and of passing it on
   - all young adults are advised to take a chlamydia test annually or on change of sexual partner
   - the test is confidential, free and simple to do - you do not have to be examined
   - you can reduce your risk of getting chlamydia, and other STIs, by:
     - always using a condom when having sex with casual and new partners
     - reducing your number of sexual partners and avoiding overlapping sexual relationships
     - getting screened for chlamydia every year, and on change of sexual partner

   **Brief information on re-testing:** “If you test positive, then we’ll offer you a re-test in around three months. This is something we recommended routinely.” There is no need to provide detail on why and how re-testing will be offered, unless requested.

2. Discussing when a positive diagnosis received

   **Key information to give to all young adults receiving a positive first test result**
   - it is important to take your antibiotic treatment as prescribed and to not have sex for seven days
   - all sexual partners need to be contacted to ensure they can be tested, and treated
   - [as per stage 1, above] give advice on reducing STI risk through condom use, reducing sexual partners and avoiding overlapping relationships

   **Recommended a re-test in around three months:**
   - it’s a good idea to get tested again about three months after you finish your treatment
   - we recommend this because it’s been shown people who have chlamydia once can be more likely to get it again, and repeat infections increase the risk of developing serious health consequences
   - we will/may get in touch to offer you a re-test in around three months – outline how e.g. text
   - following the safer sex advice discussed today will significantly reduce the chance of another STI
   - [If asked] - explain re-testing around three months allows sufficient time for the initial infection to clear from their system
3. Considerations around offering a re-test

The NCSP consultation on re-testing identified the following key points for consideration:

- the consent needed to contact young adults about re-testing will vary by the method of contact used
- opt-out approaches may have advantages but caution may be required if test kits are to be sent out
- young adults selected text and telephone call follow up as the preferred options
- these are also likely to be low cost, as already widely used for initial results notification
- telephone calls provide an opportunity to talk to someone and have questions answered

The NCSP engaged with healthcare professionals and young adults to seek views on recommending re-testing following a positive diagnoses, which found:

Young adults:

- the large majority believed re-testing after a positive initial test is a good idea
- they would prefer to be told early on that a re-test will be offered if their initial test is positive
- this should be positioned as an option, rather than prescriptive (eg not: “You should/must re-test”)

Healthcare professionals:

- re-testing should form a standard part of patient management, along with partner notification
- re-testing should be combined with, not substituted for, partner notification and advice on safer sex
- a window of “around three months” is considered long enough that re-infections might have occurred, but short enough that infections are not left untreated for a long period

FURTHER INFORMATION

Health professionals can access the following resources on the NCSP website:

- full NCSP consultation report, re-testing evidence summary and position statement
- chlamydia screening patient leaflet and “Initiating Conversations” leaflet
- NCSP text message guidance
- NCSP guide to engaging young men in screening

The NCSP will develop additional materials for sexual health / chlamydia screening teams, including local implementation case studies and monitoring and evaluation guidance. These will be made available on the NCSP website.
The NCSP Standards can be accessed here. The next issue, due in early 2014, will be updated to include the recommendation to offer re-testing, as part of standard case management.

Young adults looking for information on chlamydia screening can visit: www.chlamydiасscreening.co.uk.

For any further information: nscpteam@phe.gov.uk