



Public Health
England

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

Recommending 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.chlamydia-screening.co.uk.

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