



Sexual & Reproductive Health Day · February 12, 2010
Journée de sensibilisation à la santé sexuelle et génésique · Le 12 février 2010

Chlamydia in Canada

Chlamydia is the most commonly reported STI in Canada. There were nearly 63,000 cases of chlamydia reported in 2004, the highest number since chlamydia became reportable in 1990. The rate of chlamydia infection in Canada has increased over 70% since 1997. Yet these figures underestimate the true burden of disease as many chlamydia infections are asymptomatic and remain undiagnosed.

Because chlamydia is the most common reportable STI in Canada, infection rates are the most reflective gauge available of the magnitude of STI infection within the population. Chlamydia can also cause serious long-term health consequences. Particularly if it is left untreated, it can cause sub-fertility or infertility and pelvic inflammatory disease and ectopic pregnancy in women. Infection is often undetected due to its frequently asymptomatic nature (40% to 70% of infections), suggesting that prevalence is substantially higher than reported.

- Chlamydia infection also significantly increases the risk of HIV transmission. Consistent condom users have substantially lower rates of chlamydia infection than inconsistent condom users.
- There is a distinct gender difference in chlamydia infection rates, with women accounting for over two-thirds of reported cases in 2004. While the number of chlamydia infections reported among women is substantially higher than for men, the rate of infection is increasing faster among men.
- Since 1997, rates among males more than doubled, from 59 to 129.5 per 100,000, while rates among women increased by less than one-half, from 168 to 263 per 100,000. This gender disparity may be in part a reflection of a greater number of women being screened for Chlamydia. The introduction of the improved diagnostic technology which can utilize urine is predicted to increase the number of men screened.
- Youth and adolescents are also disproportionately affected by chlamydia, with nearly 70% of all reported cases occurring within the 15-24 year old age cohort. In 2004, the rate of infection among adolescents between 15 and 19 was 847 per 100,000. The rate was 1,087 per 100,000 among 20 to 24 year olds.
- Northern territories in particular suffer disproportionately high rates of chlamydia, with an average in 2003 that was nearly eight times the national figure. Nunavut had the highest rate of chlamydia in Canada in 2003 (2,520 per 100,000) at over 13 times the national average.

The most up to date facts and figures about chlamydia can be obtained from The Public Health Agency of Canada: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/2008/sti-its/chlam-eng.php>

Health Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Aboriginal Health branch also has data about chlamydia in its First Nations Comparable Health Indicators statistics: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/diseases-maladies/2005-01_health-sante_indicat-eng.php#chlamydia

Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange has links to explain how STI infection, including Chlamydia, increases the risk of HIV transmission: <http://www.catie.ca/eng/PreventingHIV/fact-sheets/stis.shtml>

You can find more information about Sexual Health in Canada in CFSH's report called "Sexual Health in Canada: Baseline 2007": <http://www.cfsh.ca/Resources/Research/SexualHealthBaseline2007.aspx>