Chlamydia from a toilet seat? [1]

Dear Alice,

Recently, someone in my hall told me that another girl who lives in our hall has chlamydia. I do not know if it is simply a rumor, but what she told me got me worried. I know chlamydia is a sexually transmitted disease, but is there any way I can get it from her considering the fact that we share the same bathroom? What are the ways in which I can get it from her? Could I maybe get it through the toilet if I sit on the toilet seat after she sat there? And, what exactly is chlamydia besides being an STD?

? Contagious?

Answer

Dear Contagious?,

The short answer is no; you can get Chlamydia from John (or Sally) but not from using the john. Chlamydia, a common sexually transmitted infection (STI), is caused by the bacteria Chlamydia trachomatis. The only way chlamydia is spread is by sexual contact ? specifically, when infected fluids (vaginal fluids, semen, and/or pre-cum) come into contact with mucous membranes. Both men and women can get chlamydia through vaginal, anal, and, less frequently, oral sex with an infected partner. Using a condom or dam during sex can reduce the risk of transmission. However, you can't get chlamydia by sharing the same bathroom or toilet seats with someone who's infected: the bacteria can't live for long outside of the body, and it's pretty unlikely that a person could come into contact with someone else's body fluids, even in the bathroom.

Because untreated chlamydia can cause serious complications ? including inflammation of the urethra or reproductive organs, resulting in damage and even sterility ? it's recommended that sexually active people get tested. The good news is that testing is usually done using a urine sample and chlamydia is easily cured with antibiotics.

You might want to note that those who are infected often don't have symptoms and so may not get tested or treated. You can talk with your health care provider if you are interested in getting tested for chlamydia and other STIs.

For more information on chlamydia, search through the Go Ask Alice! Sexual and Reproductive Health archive or take a look at the related Q&As. You can also check out the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National STD webpage. In the mean
time, know that you can comfortably use the commode without having to fear getting chlamydia, or any other STIs.

Alice!

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