

CHLAMYDIA SCREENING & TREATMENT

Your health challenge

- The most commonly diagnosed sexually transmitted infection (STI) is chlamydia, with 203,116 diagnoses made in 2017¹
- There is wide variation across the country in rates of chlamydia testing and diagnoses – In 2017 only 20% of local authorities reached the recommended chlamydia detection rate (2,300 diagnoses per 100,000 among 15 to 24 year olds per year)¹



How can community pharmacies help?

Community pharmacy teams have a significant role in chlamydia prevention and treatment. Pharmacies are accessible and conveniently located, and pharmacy teams are therefore well placed to deliver a number of sexual health services and interventions including chlamydia screening and treatment.

By embedding chlamydia screening within community pharmacies, as recommended by the National Chlamydia Screening Programme², this will support timely detection and treatment of infection, and prevent onward transmission and subsequent healthcare costs.

Community pharmacies in Birmingham are currently commissioned to provide chlamydia testing and treatment as part of a wider community sexual health service. Headline data³ shows that for 2017/18:

- the service is available from 132 pharmacies across Birmingham;
- 531 of self-sampling kits were issued by community pharmacies to test for STIs (sampling kits can be ordered by patients directly via the website and delivered to the pharmacy, so this figure will be higher); and
- over 400 courses of antibiotics were initiated by the pharmacy for the treatment of chlamydia.

CHOOSEPHARMACY

What the experts say

"... I didn't want to go to my doctor's and have all the hassle of making an appointment and being questioned... Collecting a pack [from the pharmacy] was easy and discreet and no hassle as I just called in at the weekend. I'm surprised it's a positive test but am glad that I found out. Probably wouldn't have bothered having a test if I'd have had to take time off work to go to a clinic..."⁴

Patient

"In the last financial year our pharmacies gave out almost 2,000 screens and went on to treat 112 patients that presented with a positive result. We have many competent and confident pharmacists and pharmacy staff that provide sexual health information and advice which is a testament to the success of the community pharmacy Chlamydia Screening and Treatment service."³

Commissioner, Dudley Office of Public Health

1. Public Health England, STI annual data tables (2018)

2. Public Health England, Health Protection Report: Sexually Transmitted Infections and chlamydia screening in England, 2017 (2018)

3. Umbrella Birmingham and Solihull Sexual Health Annual Report 2016-17

4. Department of Health, Choosing health through pharmacy, A programme for pharmaceutical public health (2005)

THINKPHARMACY

Potential benefits of a community pharmacy chlamydia screening & treatment service

1. Accessible and convenient

Community pharmacies are located close to people's homes, work and educational institutions, making them convenient locations for young people to get to. Overall 89.2% of the population are estimated to have access to a community pharmacy within a 20-minute walk.⁵ Many pharmacies are also open late in the evening and at weekends making them an accessible location for young people to reach.

2. Sexually active young people are already using other pharmacy services

Sexually active young people are already using pharmacies to purchase condoms, collect their contraceptive medicines or to request emergency hormonal contraception (EHC). This therefore gives pharmacy teams opportunities to highlight and recruit young people into using the chlamydia screening service.

3. Patient choice

By commissioning a community pharmacy chlamydia screening and treatment service, young people are given more choice as to where they can go for screening and treatment. The pharmacy setting also provides a more informal environment, which some young people may find less intimidating than a GP practice or a sexual health clinic.

Fact: In 2017, over 13,000 chlamydia tests and 1,277 diagnoses were made in pharmacies amongst 15-24-year-olds¹.

4. Anonymous environment

Since there is no need to be registered or book an appointment at a pharmacy (unlike a GP practice) young people can visit any pharmacy they choose to collect a testing kit providing them with a more discreet and anonymous option to obtain a testing kit.

How might your local service work?

A chlamydia screening service or a treatment service could be offered as standalone services or both parts could be offered as one combined service.

Chlamydia screening kits would be provided to sexually active males and females of specific ages, for example, those between the age of 15 and 25 and partners of patients who have tested positive for chlamydia.

Depending on the requirements of the service, kits would be offered to patients when purchasing condoms, dispensing contraceptive medicines, supplying EHC or opportunistically when appropriate. The other option would be to have counter-top screening kits displayed at the point of sale or a self-service bin to enable patients of specific ages to opportunistically pick up a kit, without a consultation.

Where possible, completion of screening in on-site toilets would be encouraged and pharmacy staff would assist with the completion of the paperwork to send the sample off for testing. The pharmacy team could also take on the responsibility of posting the kits to ensure these are sent off for testing.

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Pharmacy teams would be able to signpost to sexual health and community contraceptive services for those who required on-going contraception and diagnosis and management of STIs, and also provide general sexual health advice.

If a treatment service is also commissioned, pharmacists would be able to supply young people who tested positive for chlamydia with antibiotics to treat the infection, such as doxycycline or erythromycin under a Patient Group Direction.

Public Health England has published *The Pharmacy Offer for Sexual Health, Reproductive Health and HIV – A resource for commissioners and providers* which contains information to raise awareness with commissioners and providers of the community pharmacy offer for sexual health, reproductive health and HIV services.

5. The positive pharmacy care law: an area-level analysis of the relationship between community pharmacy distribution, urbanity and social deprivation in England, *BMJ Open*, August 2014