

Chancroid

Chancroid is a sexually transmissible infection (STI) which causes ulcers of the genitals. It is caused by a bacterium (*Haemophilus ducreyi*).

Chancroid is rare in Australia. In some tropical and sub-tropical parts of the world, chancroid is the most common cause of genital ulcers. It is common in Southeast Asia, India and parts of Africa and Latin America. In Australia, it usually occurs only in people who have travelled or lived in these areas and have become infected there.

Signs and Symptoms:

After infection, a painless papule occurs that progresses to a pustule, and then to a painful ulcer a few days to two weeks after the initial infection. In men, this most commonly occurs near the tip of the penis and under the foreskin. In women, it most commonly occurs at the entrance of the vagina. The ulcer tends to be irregular in shape and often has raw red edges which bleed easily when scraped. Ulcers are usually painful, especially in men. Women may have ulcers on the vaginal walls and/or cervix which are painless. Lesions might be in other parts of the body caused by the person infecting themselves (auto-inoculation).

There may be more than one ulcer. Sometimes there are several ulcers which join together as they grow. The lymph nodes in the groin may become large and painful and full of exudate (called a bubo).

Testing and treatment

A swab from the ulcer can be tested for the bacterium that causes chancroid. There are other causes of genital ulcers and swollen lymph glands, so other tests would be done at the same time.

Chancroid is treated with a short course of antibiotics. To ensure the infection has been cured it is important to complete the recommended treatment and that you do not have sexual contact for seven days after the treatment is completed.

When people find out that they have chancroid, anyone they have had sex with in the past two weeks will need to have the same tests and treatment as the infected person. This is to make sure that they do not have the infection and to prevent re-infection. For persons who feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about telling their partners, a member of the health care team can assist by contacting partners on their behalf. Names are not mentioned to ensure the process is confidential. Alternatively, online tools and services that assist with telling partners in a confidential and if desired, anonymous way are available:

[Let Them Know](http://www.letthemknow.org.au) (<http://www.letthemknow.org.au>)

[Drama Down Under](http://www.thedramadownunder.info) (<http://www.thedramadownunder.info>)

[Better to Know](http://www.bettertoknow.org.au) (<http://www.bettertoknow.org.au>)

Advising sexual partners of their exposure is essential for their health and the health of any other people they may have had sex with.

Transmission:

Chancroid is transmitted through sexual contact with a person who has ulcers or sores caused by this disease.

Prevention:

Always practise safe sex. Using condoms when having vaginal or anal sex is the best way to avoid getting an STI. Using water-based lubricant with condoms is recommended.

People should not have sex with someone who has a visible genital ulcer or sore even with a condom. Genital ulcers or sores could be due to chancroid or some other STI such as herpes or syphilis. If a sexual partner or intended sexual partner has a genital sore or ulcer, advise the person to have a sexual health check.

People who have more than one sexual partner and do not use condoms should have regular sexual health checkups.

Health outcome:

If not treated, the infection persists for about 3-4 months and the ulcers get progressively bigger. This can result in destruction of the skin and permanent scarring of the genitals.

Infections that cause ulcers and sores around the genitals increase the risk of getting HIV or transmitting it to other sexual partners.

Help and assistance:

For more information on chancroid, talk to:

- a doctor
- a sexual health clinic
- a family planning clinic
- [where you can go for help](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/sex-health/services/default.asp#qld)
(<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/sex-health/services/default.asp#qld>)
- If you are in an emergency situation, call 000
- Get qualified health advice 24/7 for the cost of a local call. 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)

Related Content

[Safe Sex fact sheet](http://conditions.health.qld.gov.au/HealthConditions/2/Infections-Parasites/150/Hiv/774/Safe-Sex)

(<http://conditions.health.qld.gov.au/HealthConditions/2/Infections-Parasites/150/Hiv/774/Safe-Sex>)

[Genital herpes fact sheet](http://conditions.health.qld.gov.au/HealthConditions/2/Infections-Parasites/138/Sexually-Transmitted-Diseases/864/Genital-Herpes)

(<http://conditions.health.qld.gov.au/HealthConditions/2/Infections-Parasites/138/Sexually-Transmitted-Diseases/864/Genital-Herpes>)

[Syphilis fact sheet](http://conditions.health.qld.gov.au/HealthConditions/2/Infections-Parasites/138/Sexually-Transmitted-Diseases/784/Syphilis)

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