

***Chancroid is an uncommon sexually transmissible, genital ulcer disease which can cause chronic infection and genital scarring if left untreated.***

***Antibiotics can readily cure chancroid.***

## Chancroid

**Last updated: 1 July 2012**

### What is chancroid?

Chancroid is a sexually transmissible genital ulcer disease which is rarely seen in Australia. The bacterium that causes chancroid, (*Haemophilus ducreyi*), is passed from person to person when having anal, oral, or vaginal sex with an infected person. Chancroid is a known risk factor for the transmission of HIV.

### What are the symptoms?

After infection, one or more ulcers (sores) develop on the genitals, or around the anus. These ulcers have soft, irregular borders that bleed easily on contact. The ulcers can be very painful in men but women are often unaware of them. Painful lymph glands can occur in the groin, usually only on one side; however, both sides are sometimes affected.

Without treatment the ulcers will increase in size and progressively destroy normal skin. Other bacteria can infect these sores, causing them to become painful and distressing with an unpleasant smell.

### How is chancroid spread?

Chancroid is spread by sexual contact. Symptoms usually occur within 4-10 days from exposure to a person infected with chancroid. Symptoms rarely develop earlier than three days or later than 10 days.

### Who is at risk?

Chancroid is increasingly disappearing around the world but can still be found in parts of Africa, south west Asia and the Caribbean. There is a close relationship between the occurrence of HIV and the occurrence of chancroid.

Only 8 cases of chancroid have been reported in Australia since 1991. People at risk of chancroid are those who have sex with someone from a country with high rates of the disease.

### How is chancroid prevented?

- Avoid sex with someone who has a visible genital ulcer or sore. If a sexual partner or intended sexual partner has a genital sore or ulcer, advise that person to have a sexual health check
- Using condoms for vaginal and anal sex significantly reduces the risk of chancroid and other sexually transmitted infections
- If you are planning to visit or live in a developing country, find out about diseases that occur there and how they are best avoided.

### How is it diagnosed?

Because there are a number of causes of genital ulcer disease, the doctor, nurse or health worker will take specimens from the ulcer and collect blood to test for chancroid and other sexually transmitted infections.

## How is it treated?

Chancroid is treated with antibiotics. Pain killers may be taken if the ulcers are painful. It is important to complete the course of antibiotics and attend follow-up visits to ensure that the infection has been cured.

If chancroid is not treated, the ulcers will persist and will slowly and progressively get bigger. They can destroy areas of skin and genital tissues and the infected glands can rupture.

## What is the public health response?

Your doctor, nurse, health worker or sexual health clinic can help you to decide which of your sexual partners may be at risk and help you to contact them so they can be offered testing. If you wish, your health care provider can make contact for you, while keeping your identity confidential.

Avoid unsafe sex until both you and your partner(s) have treated. If not treated, they can give the infection back to you, or infect others.

Chancroid is a notifiable disease in NSW. Doctors and laboratory staff are legally required to notify NSW Health about new cases. Notifications are confidential.

## Further Information

The information in this fact sheet is general and you should talk to a doctor, health worker or sexual health clinic or contraception clinic if you are worried about sexually transmissible diseases.

Contact the NSW Sexual Health Infoline freecall **1800 451 624**

For further information please call your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 or visit the New South Wales Health website [www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au)