



# CHANCROID

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Chancroid is a sexually transmitted disease characterized by the presence of painful genital ulcers. This sexually transmitted disease is caused by a bacterium called, *Haemophilus ducreyi*. It is highly infectious and easily transmissible from one person to another through sexual contact with infected individuals. The bacteria enters the body through an opening in the skin such as an open wound or cut and eventually will develop into a painful ulcer within 1-2 weeks of exposure.

The number of ulcers that present are variable among individuals and not limited to a certain number to achieve a diagnosis. A small bump is usually the first presenting sign of the disease within a few days of exposure, followed by the development of a painful genital ulcer. Sometimes painful swollen lymph nodes on one side of the body can occur. These swollen lymph nodes may drain pus or fluid indicating a strong association with the diagnosis of chancroid. Chancroid is very slow to heal without treatment and can sometimes last up to a month before symptoms begin to resolve.

Although chancroid is quite rare in the United States, it is still a disease that is not always diagnosed when visiting your doctor. Many facilities lack diagnostic tests and experience required to detect the presence of the *Haemophilus ducreyi* organism, which is required for a precise and accurate diagnosis to be made. The incidence of chancroid is strongly associated with high risk populations such as prostitution, drug abuse, and poor inner-city communities. Non-white, heterosexual, uncircumcised men are more commonly affected with this disease occurring at an average age of 22 years old. Women are also affected with this disease, but to a much lesser extent than men. Most women that are infected with chancroid do not have any presenting symptoms and usually are not diagnosed with this sexually transmitted disease. There are no reported cases of chancroid between homosexual males, bisexuals, and lesbian females in the United States.

It is important to keep in mind that people who have chancroid are at increased risk of acquiring HIV in comparison to individuals without chancroid. This disease facilitates easy transmission of HIV due to production of certain toxins during the infection. It is more commonly seen in small underserved communities of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, thus explaining the correlation between such high rates of HIV and chancroid.

Chancroid is not a life threatening sexually transmitted disease and is easily treated. Previously infected individuals are still at risk for developing chancroid again in the future upon contact with another infected individual. It is important to remember to use some form of protection during sexual contact or intercourse to decrease the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases. Treatment of chancroid is fairly simple and can improve symptoms rapidly. If chancroid is suspected, physicians will prescribe a single dose of antibiotic (azithromycin or ceftriaxone). Many times people infected with chancroid are also treated for syphilis due to the high rate of co-infection between these two organisms.

In summary, chancroid is uncommon in the United States but still a major cause of genital ulcers due to its highly infectious transmission. If you suspect or notice any similar symptoms, please contact your doctor immediately for an appointment to be tested.

**This information has been provided to you compliments of the American Osteopathic College of Dermatology and your physician.**

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