

A new infection affecting gay and bisexual men

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LGV



LGV causes serious inflammation inside the bum.

Most at risk are men having anal sex without condoms – or fisting without gloves.

LGV is easily cured with antibiotics if treated soon enough.

Left untreated it can end in serious damage to the bum and penis.

What is LGV?

LGV stands for 'lymphogranuloma venereum'. It's a serious sexually transmitted infection caused by a type of chlamydia bacteria.

Is LGV new?

It was thought to be very rare in the UK until 2004 when cases were first noticed in gay and bisexual men. It's been spreading among them since.

What happens if a man gets LGV?

A few people have had LGV without noticing but most get symptoms within a few weeks, some within a week of getting infected. Most gay and bisexual men are getting infected with LGV inside their bum. Blood or pus can come from it, with painful inflammation (called 'proctitis'). You might try to go to the toilet but find you can't or that it hurts. You might get painful anal abscesses or ulcers. You can feel ill, get a fever and might lose weight.

There may be a small, painless sore where the bacteria got into your bum or penis but most people don't get or notice a sore.

If you get LGV in your penis you might also get a discharge or pain when you urinate. The glands in your groin can swell - so much that they might push through your skin and leak fluid.

It's rare to get LGV in the mouth or throat. If you do, the glands in your neck might swell.

If LGV isn't treated?

Left untreated LGV can cause lasting damage. The inside of your bum can be so seriously damaged that you might need surgery. Your penis and scrotum can swell massively with blocked fluid.

How is LGV passed on?

The bacteria usually get into someone's body through the bum, but can also get in through the penis or the mouth.

Anal sex without condoms and fisting without gloves are the easiest way this happens. LGV can also spread when bacteria are carried from one bum to another on things like fingers, fists, dildos, enema or douching equipment - even on a condom-covered penis or a gloved hand.

Who gets LGV?

So far the infection's been mostly seen in gay and bisexual men who:

- Have anal sex without condoms
- Fist without gloves
- Have lots of sexual partners
- Go to sex parties, sex clubs or saunas.

Most of the men infected so far also have HIV.

What can be done if I get LGV?

Here's the good news: as long as it's treated soon enough LGV is cured with three weeks of antibiotics and leaves no lasting damage.

How can I stop the spread of LGV?

You cut your risk of getting LGV by using condoms – or latex gloves for fisting. If several men are having anal sex or being fisted in the same sex session then condoms and gloves should be changed with each man – or hands washed between each bum. This stops the infection being passed from man to man.

Sex toys like dildos shouldn't be used on more than one bum in a sex session unless covered with a fresh condom with each bum they're used on – or the toys are cleaned with warm water and anti-bacterial soap before being used on a new man. Enema or douching equipment shouldn't be shared.

If you've had LGV once you can get it again.

The test for LGV

If you have LGV, a swab taken from your penis or bum will test positive for chlamydia. If you have symptoms then that swab will then have more tests to be sure you have LGV and not the more common type of chlamydia. A check-up is crucial if you have any symptoms of inflammation in or around your bum – or in your penis. When going for a check-up ask for your bum to be checked for chlamydia if the clinic doesn't already do this. Don't have sex until you've been checked and treated.

Anything else I need to know?

Because of the bleeding and skin damage LGV causes it makes it easier to pick up or pass on HIV. It also means you're more likely to get or pass on hepatitis C (a serious viral liver disease), syphilis and other STIs. If you get LGV, people you've had sex with also need to be tested and treated. If you don't want to tell people yourself you can ask a clinic to contact them anonymously.

This booklet is brought to you by **CHAPS**, a Department of Health-funded partnership of the following community-based organisations carrying out HIV prevention and sexual health promotion with gay and bisexual men in England.



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