



## LYMPHOGRANULOMA VENEREUM (LGV)

### The Issue

Lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV) is a previously rare sexually transmitted infection (STI) in Canada, which has recently re-emerged. If left untreated, LGV can lead to painful health problems, and in rare cases, genital mutilation and death.

### Background

Until recently, LGV was a rare infection in Canada. Before 2004, it had most often been seen in tropical areas of Africa, Asia, South America and the Caribbean. Recently cases have been reported in the United States, Canada, the Netherlands and other European countries. In Canada, 1-5 new cases have been detected each month since enhanced surveillance began. Most have involved men having sex with men.

LGV is caused by the same type of bacteria that cause chlamydia, a common STI. However, the infections caused by LGV are much more invasive, cause different symptoms and have different results if left untreated.

LGV is transmitted during unprotected oral, vaginal or anal sex. LGV can be prevented by using condoms or other barrier methods during sex. It can be detected by a taking a swab from the infected area. A blood test may also be needed, as well as further tests, since other STIs are often contracted at the same time.

LGV can be treated and cured by a three week course of antibiotics. If the infected person has had sex within the last 60

days, those partners should also be notified, tested and treated.

### Symptoms of LGV

Symptoms of LGV start to appear 3 three to 30 days after infection. A painless sore or lump may appear where the bacteria entered the body - in the vagina, penis, rectum, cervix or mouth. Because the sore or lump can be painless, often internal, and clears up without treatment, you may not know you are infected.

During the second phase you may experience flu-like symptoms, including:

- low-grade fever
- chills
- fatigue
- muscle and joint aches.

Your lymph nodes may become swollen in the area where you were infected - your groin, anal region or neck. If you were infected through anal sex, you may have discharge of blood or pus from your anus and you may experience constipation.

### The Health Risks of LGV

If left untreated, LGV can cause scarring and deformity in the genital or anal area, depending on the area of infection. This deformity cannot be reversed through medication and may require surgery to repair. In rare cases, an untreated infection can cause meningoenzephalitis



(inflammation of the brain and spinal cord tissue), and even death.

If you have LGV, you are at increased risk of getting HIV, other STIs and infections that are transmitted through the blood, such as hepatitis C.

## Minimizing Your Risk

Following these suggestions may help you protect yourself from LGV, as well as other STIs.

- Learn about safer sex methods.
- Make informed decisions. Talk to your partner(s) about their STI status and the use of protection.
- Correct use of condoms and other barriers such as dental dams, reduces the risk of getting LGV and other STIs.
- Get tested for STIs if you have had unprotected sex. Remember, you can be infected without having any obvious symptoms.
- If you are diagnosed and treated for LGV, be sure to follow your doctor's treatment and follow-up recommendations. If infected, you should abstain from sex until both you and your sexual partner(s) have completed your antibiotic treatment.
- It is important that you or someone from your public health department notify any of your sexual partners who may have been put at risk of infection. They will also need to be tested and possibly

treated. A public health nurse or other health care provider can help with this.

## Public Health Agency of Canada's Role

As this is a relatively new infection in Canada and there are concerns about outbreaks internationally, the Community Acquired Infections Division (CAID) of the Public Health Agency of Canada is currently gathering available data on LGV in Canada. Working with the Provinces and Territories, the Sexual Health and STI Section of CAID is undertaking activities to build awareness of LGV and capacity to deal with it.

## Need More Info?

For more information on LGV, talk to your doctor or visit your local public health clinic. You can also find helpful information on LGV, other STIs and sexual health at the following websites:

What you need to know about STI  
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/std-mts/index.html>

LGV in Canada  
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/lgv/index.html>

Sexual Health and Sexually Transmitted Infections  
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/>

Where to go for help  
[http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/std-mts/sti\\_t.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/std-mts/sti_t.html)

STI Helpline Telephone Numbers  
[http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/phone\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/phone_e.html)

For additional articles on health and safety issues go to the It's Your Health Web site at:  
[www.healthcanada.gc.ca/iyh](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/iyh)  
You can also call toll free at 1-866-225-0709 or TTY at 1-800-267-1245\*