This section aims to encourage students to develop accurate perceptions of the risk of sexually transmitted infections.

Using chlamydia as an example, it helps students to understand an individuals’ susceptibility to infection and the potential severity of its consequences.

This is done through powerful stories and visual demonstrations.

To help students develop skills in negotiating sex and condom use, they are also presented with common problems faced by young people and asked to suggest ways of overcoming these. Rehearsing these skills forms the basis of an extension activity.
2.4 Spread of Infection
STIs: Chlamydia

Background Information
Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by bacteria called *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

The highest incidence of chlamydia is amongst 16-24 year olds. Of this group approximately one in ten is thought to be infected.

About 70% of females and 50% of males with chlamydia don’t experience any symptoms at all which means that many infected people don’t realise they carry the infection. For women who do experience symptoms these might include abnormal discharge, pain and/or bleeding during sex and pain when urinating. In men these include a cloudy or watery discharge from the tip of the penis, pain when urinating and testicular pain.

Diagnosis can be made using a sample of urine (males and females) or vaginal swab (females only). Infection is treatable with one dose of antibiotics.

Untreated chlamydia is a well-established cause of pelvic inflammatory disease (serious inflammation of the ovaries and fallopian tubes), ectopic pregnancy (when foetus grows in a fallopian tube) and infertility in women. In men infection can cause prostate and testicular problems, and a growing body of evidence also links it to infertility in men.

Why a lesson on Chlamydia?
Although chlamydia is a serious and growing public health problem, there are a number of characteristics of this infection which may mean that young people may not find it particularly threatening.

In making a decision about whether to use condoms, young people most likely weigh up the consequences. Some of these will be positive such as protecting against STIs but there are likely to be many more negative ones (such as “it interrupts the mood”). Often the negative ones can win over so that motivations to use condoms are not particularly strong.

To counteract this and bolster intentions to use condoms, it is really important therefore that young people have accurate perceptions of the threat caused by sexually transmitted infections. This lesson has been designed to encourage strong and realistic perceptions of the threat caused by chlamydia.

Advance Preparation
1. Gather information on local facilities offering STI testing
2. Download the following animations from www.e-bug.eu
   a. ‘Pants’
   b. ‘Chlamydia – the movie’
   c. ‘Jeopardy’
**Introduction**

1. Recap on your sex education ground rules or use those provided (see SH 1).

2. Begin by explaining that you are going to discuss a specific type of sexually transmitted infection known as chlamydia. Ask the class what they already know about this STI. At this point you might want to highlight the lesson objectives using the PowerPoint provided. Explain that:
   a) chlamydia is a type of sexually transmitted infection caused by bacteria
   b) it is most common amongst young people (16 – 24 year olds).
   c) many people don’t realise they have the disease because, for many people, there are no symptoms
   d) but some people do have symptoms and these include… (see TS 1)

3. Show the class the Pants animation. Click play
   a) Explain this is a group of young people (50 girls, 50 boys) aged between 16 - 24. Ask the class to guess, from the 100 people, how many are likely to be infected with chlamydia?
   Click next
   b) Ten teenagers are highlighted and have flashing pants. Explain that 1 in 10 young people have a Chlamydia infection. Click next
   c) Ask how many are likely to know they have a Chlamydia infection. Click next X2
   d) One female and two males will change to look unhappy (i.e. just 3 of our group) indicating most young people with a Chlamydia infection do not know they have it. Explain this is why some people refer to it as the ‘silent disease’.

4. Discuss with the class that many people don’t know they have chlamydia and that those who do know, generally don’t tell anyone they have it. Explain that it is very likely that they know people with or who have had chlamydia.

**Main Activity**

1. Explain that if a chlamydia infection is not treated it can lead to serious problems for both men and women. Tell students that they are going to hear about what happens inside the body once a person becomes infected with Chlamydia bacteria – from the bacteria’s point of view!

2. Provide students with a copy of SH 2 – If Chlamydia could talk. Explain that a girl Chloe has been infected with Chlamydia bacteria and the bacterium is telling Chloe their story. Select 5 students to read a paragraph each.

3. At the end ask the students what, if anything, they have learned from the Chlamydia bacteria.

4. It may now be helpful for students to actually see how Chlamydia bacteria spread through the female body. Either show the class group the animation ‘Chlamydia – the movie’ or allow students to watch it individually.

5. Discuss with the class how the chlamydia infection can lead to permanent, irreversible damage if left undetected and untreated. Remind students that most people won’t know they have infection so won’t get tested (therefore getting tested after unprotected sex is vital).

6. Emphasise that anyone who has ever had unprotected sex should get tested for chlamydia and other STIs. Provide local information on the nearest testing facility and how to access it. Explain that under-16s have the right to confidentiality i.e. health professionals are not allowed to tell anyone, including their parents/guardians of their visit. Explain that treatment is a single dose of antibiotics. Also provide information on where they can access free condoms locally.
Main Activity continued

7. So now students know how *Chlamydia* bacteria cause the disease, ask them how easily they think chlamydia can be spread from one person to another.

8. Divide the class into smaller groups of 5 – 7 people and provide each group with **SH 3** and **SH 4**. HINT: you may want to cut **SH1-2** into laminated cards and give these to each group.

9. Ask each group to watch the animation *Jeopardy*. The animation shows a network of eight characters. Each person has a story to tell and they are linked through sexual contact. A pink line shows chlamydia has spread and a green line shows that it has not. By moving the cursor over the characters we learn about character contact with chlamydia and how this has passed through the group. Move around the network until you have covered all stories (students can decide in what order they want to hear stories).

10. If time permits, each group should discuss and answer the questions provided – alternatively assign each group to a particular character. After a few minutes, ask each group to feedback to the class on their discussion. In turn, click on the ‘comments’ button to see our advice. Discuss as a whole class.

11. To end, 1) show the image of the 100 young people from the ‘pants’ exercise. Discuss how easily chlamydia can be spread through unprotected sex, 2) emphasise that it’s not just their own partner they need to be able to know and trust but also everyone else in the network (which of course they can’t) – their partner may have been unwittingly exposed 3) reinforce the message that anyone can get chlamydia - the only way to be sure they aren’t exposed to it is to avoid sex or use a condom, 4) And ‘it’s OK to wait’ – despite impressions that other young people may give, most people their age have not had sex yet (about 75% of 13-16 year olds have not).

Plenary

Reinforce the following messages:
- *Chlamydia* can cause irreversible damage if left untreated
- There is a very real possibility that it could mean that they are unable to have a child of their own in the future
- Young women are at higher risk than older women (over 30) because their internal tissue is softer making it easier for the bacteria to attack it
- It can be inside you without any symptoms at all
- As most people don’t know that they have chlamydia (even when it spreads) there is nothing to prompt them to get checked out, which can allow the infection to cause this level of damage.

Extension Activity

a. Building on the ‘jeopardy’ exercise, ask students to rehearse some of the skills needed to overcome the problems experienced by the characters e.g. overcoming embarrassment of buying condoms or resisting pressure to have unprotected sex. Depending on your class and how confident they are, develop an activity that allows them to practice e.g. using role-play or drama.

b. Run the ‘Spread of Infection’ activity from the senior e-Bug pack to reinforce how easily an STI can be spread amongst a group.
Ground Rules

- No one (teacher or pupil) will have to answer a personal question
- No one will be forced to take part in a discussion
- Only the correct names for body parts will be used
- Meanings of words will be explained in a sensible and factual way
- Others (as agreed by class)
I'm sorry Sarah, but I'm not to blame. I didn't pick you up. You picked me up when you had sex with that guy two weeks ago at that party. Don't you remember, no of course not, why would you? You'd fancied him for ages and didn't use a condom. I'm very grateful indeed. Little did you know then that you had been infected with me, chlamydia! I'm silent but don't confuse that for weak because I'm nothing of the sort.

Hi! Yes that’s right, here I am. Passed on to you through bacteria in Mark’s semen and as long as I keep quiet, it’s easier for me to make myself at home in your body. Mark’s semen stayed in your body after sex allowing me to start spreading myself around. Because you’re young it’s particularly easy for me to infect your body. Like I said, I’m very good at keeping quiet. So good in fact that I’ll be with you 24 hours a day and you’ll have no idea.

Although some do sadly become aware I’m there, most don’t, allowing me to linger for months, even years undetected and let's be honest, I prefer it that way; I can cause the most damage then you see. In the beginning I live and start to cause problems in the cervix and urethra. Once I’ve entered your body I multiply massively. I’m always so proud of my little ones, all going off spreading further than I could go just on my own. Together we’re strong, like an army, making our way to your fallopian tubes, they’re our favourite. Yes that right, an important part of your reproductive system where babies are formed. Oh yes, I know you’re not worried about babies right now, you’re more interested in being young and having fun, well that’s just perfect for me because that way I’ll have plenty of time to get on with my work. I’m really good at blocking the tubes at both ends by causing a build up of scar tissue. The result? You could experience painful inflammation of your fallopian tubes and ovaries, and struggle to have children in the future.

So now you know the reality of living with me undetected and untreated. Another bonus of you not knowing about me is that the next time you have unprotected sex you’ll pass me on. More of me! Isn’t that just great news?! Bad news for that poor fella though... I can stay a secret in men too you know, but sometimes I like to show them I am there every now and again. He might find a nasty discharge coming from the tip of the penis. Hi, yes that’s me! I can cause pain too while he’s peeing... OUCH... Oh and just for fun, I can even cause his testicles to swell up! To walk around like that feeling so bad... and he’ll have you to thank for that. On the other hand I may just decide to keep quite inside him too and then in the future he might find he can’t have children either.

Anyway, must go. I've got important work to be getting on with.............
Hi I’m Chloe
I have a boyfriend called Chris, he’s 17 and we’ve been going out for 5 months.
Lately though things have been weird between us.
It’s embarrassing to say but we were kinda fighting about sex. I was a virgin see and he wasn’t. He wanted to have sex. At first we were ok with touching each other and kissing but then last month he really had a go at me over the phone about having sex.
To me it is a big deal but I got well nervous to say anything in case he got angry and dumped me or something. He said that if I loved him I would do it to make him happy but what about me? I’m not that happy.
He said I was acting like a stupid child so I just did it in the end. He still dumped me a few weeks later.

Chloe was pressured into having sex by Chris and although she doesn’t know it, she has been infected with chlamydia.
How did Chris make her feel? How else could she have handled the situation? How else could Chris have handled the situation? What should Chloe do now?

I’m Ash, you alright?
Fashion photography is my passion. So many hot women in fashion! I’m starting a course in college in September. Before meeting my Kate Moss though I met this girl Chloe.
She’s shy, it’s cute. She told me her last fella was an idiot; I wanna make sure I treat the girl right. So when we started getting it on I say “I gotta get a condom” she says it doesn’t matter. I thought HOLD UP LOVE!
I like you but I don’t want your babies, I can’t take care of you and a kid if I’m off on fashion week! Plus I don’t wanna catch a disease and I don’t want my penis to fall off!

We talked it over and she said she thought I wouldn’t want to use ‘em cuz her ex didn’t. I thought nah not for me, I gotta use them. So we talked some more then we waited till we had some. Then it was all great man.

Although Chloe has chlamydia, Ash didn’t get it because they used a condom.

How had Chloe’s previous experience affected her attitude towards condom use? What do you think of Ash’s approach to condom use? Can you think of any good ways of bringing up condom use?

I’m Anna
I went to a party at Chris’ house last week. I didn’t know him really well before but now, I had sex with him.
We clicked when we started chatting, talked for ages. ‘Cuz of the noise we went upstairs to his room.
We just kissed and I honestly liked it. Then, before I knew it, he took his top off, then so did I, then we kissed more and then we had sex.
I’ve had sex before but I used condoms, I’m shocked at myself for not using one with Chris but it happened so quickly. I kept thinking, I’ll say something in a minute.
But there was never a right time. He pulled out before he came though. Does that even count as proper sex? I gave myself a good wash after too to make sure I was clean.
I feel a bit stupid now though, how could I have let that happen?

Anna has been infected by Chris with Chlamydia because they didn’t use a condom.

Why do you think Chris ‘pulling out’ (also known as the withdrawal method) didn’t work? Why do you think washing didn’t work? At what point should Anna have brought up condom use? What could she have said?
Hi! I’m Alisha

I’ve started seeing Immi. He’s a little older than me and all my friends are dead jealous. He’s so hot...

Wears dead nice clothes and picks me up from school in his car.

I think we’re going to have sex. We’ve been going down on each other. I can tell he wants to go further though.

All I’m worried about is if he’ll like me ‘cuz Immi’s not the type to have diseases or anything.

Immi has picked up chlamydia from Anna.

How might being on holiday change how people normally behave? If you were Immi’s mate how would you respond to what he says?

I’m Immi

I went to Spain with my parents and met this girl Anna. She’s gorgeous. We were together the whole holiday. On the last night we had sex.

When I told my best mate Rocky he said I should have used a condom but he’s always been a stress head. He said I should do a test but... forget that, I’m fit, I’m fine.

I wouldn’t even know where to find a test or anything; would they have to look at my penis? No way then, I’m not doing it! It’ll be fine.

Immi has picked up chlamydia from Anna.

Although Anna has chlamydia, Jamie didn’t get it because they used a condom

Why do you think Jamie might find buying condoms difficult?

What advice would you give him to make it easier?

Where can young people get hold of condoms in your local area?

Hi! I’m Alisha

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Wears dead nice clothes and picks me up from school in his car.

I think we’re going to have sex. We’ve been going down on each other. I can tell he wants to go further though.

All I’m worried about is if he’ll like me ‘cuz Immi’s not the type to have diseases or anything.

Alisha has picked up oral chlamydia from Immi

What is it about a person that would make you think they were the type to have an STI

What is it about a person that would make you think they were not the type to have an STI

Why might people use these ‘clues’ to help them decide if a person has an STI? What is the problem with this approach?
Hey guys I’m Mark

I’m gay and came out about 6 months ago. I’ve had sex a few times, anal sex that is. Once with a guy I met through friends and once more recently with a guy called Immi.

I’ve known him for ages, would never have thought he was gay though – although he said he wasn’t sure. It’s no bother to me, you fancy who you fancy right?

Obviously there’s no worries about anyone getting pregnant but there’s still concerns about diseases and stuff so I always use a condom. If not, I won’t even go there.

Although Immi has chlamydia, Mark didn’t get it because they used a condom.

Mark is very clear in his mind that he will always use a condom when having sex.

In what ways do you think having a firm plan can help?

Have a go at writing a plan for condom use i.e. when (every time? When might this be more difficult?), with who (everyone or just some people?), under what circumstances (would you bring condom use up, get one out?)

Hey I’m Chris

I had a party at my house last night... things look blurry today... end of exams... messy night... loads of people... whoa... I had sex with Anna, I HAD SEX WITH ANNA! What the hell, I don’t even know how that happened!... It was great!!!... oh but what about... I mean I have a girlfriend... Chloe... damn it...

Oh well she won’t give it up so what can I do?

Chris has Chlamydia. Last night Chris had unprotected sex with Anna and passed it on.

How do you think Chris will be feeling today? What will be his range of emotions (positive and negative)?

If you were Chris’s friend, what advice would you give him?