

# Antibiotic-Resistant Gonorrhea

**TALKING POINTS**  
FOR PUBLIC HEALTH LEADERSHIP

## Overview and Purpose

*The following talking points provide public health leaders with concise, compelling messages about antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea that can be used to communicate with public health partners, along with healthcare professionals, decisionmakers, media, and the general public. Use these talking points to establish credibility and consistency with antibiotic-resistant*

*gonorrhea messages and equip key partners with information to become more engaged on this topic. For more information on antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea, visit [www.astho.org/std](http://www.astho.org/std) and [www.cdc.gov/std/gonorrhea/arg](http://www.cdc.gov/std/gonorrhea/arg), and connect with the director of your health department's STD program.*

## Talking Points

**Antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea is an urgent public health threat.**



### Supporting message 1

Gonorrhea is the second most commonly reported disease in the United States, with an estimated 820,000 new cases per year.<sup>1,2</sup>

### Supporting message 2

Antibiotics have successfully treated gonorrhea for several decades; however, the bacteria have now developed resistance to almost every antibiotic used to treat it.<sup>3,4</sup>

### Supporting message 3

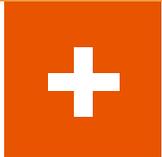
Today, there is only one recommended treatment for gonorrhea.<sup>5</sup> If the number of gonorrhea cases continues to rise and no new treatments become available, it could become a serious epidemic.

### Supporting message 4

In response to this urgent threat, the federal government developed the National Strategy for Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria (CARB), which calls for the prevention, detection, and control of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, including gonorrhea.<sup>6</sup>

**Tip:** Use available data about local cases of antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea to highlight the impact in your jurisdiction.

## Unchecked, the spread of antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea would result in serious health and economic consequences.



### Supporting message 1

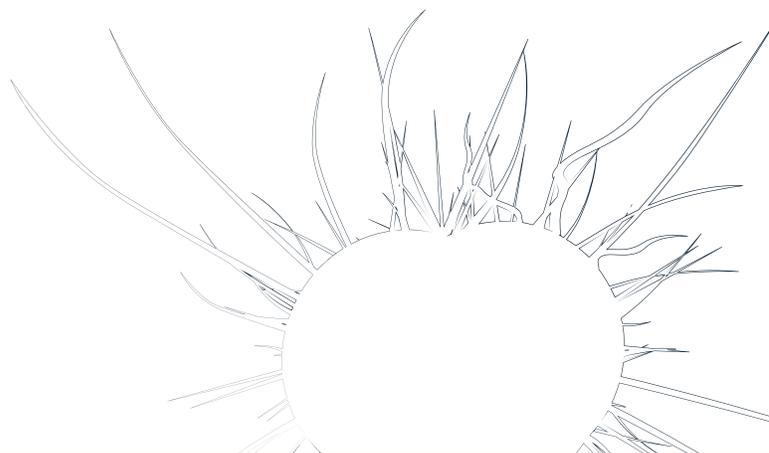
If untreated, gonorrhea can result in severe health consequences, including an increased risk of getting or transmitting HIV, due to behavioral and/or biological factors.<sup>7,8</sup> Other risks include transmitting infection from mother to baby during childbirth, and infertility and pelvic inflammatory disease in women.<sup>9</sup>

### Supporting message 2

Emerging antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea could lead to over 1 million additional gonorrhea infections and 600 additional gonorrhea-attributable HIV infections — with direct medical costs of \$466 million over the next 10 years.<sup>10</sup>

### Supporting message 3

Preventing, detecting, and controlling antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea is key to preventing an epidemic. STD program resources are critical in order to monitor and respond to future antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea outbreaks.



## Public health departments play an important role in stopping the spread of antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea and preventing its consequences.



### Supporting message 1

Combating antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea is a priority at the national level. Public health leaders at the state and local levels are currently leveraging Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) CARB activities and strategies to enhance antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea prevention and control in their states and local communities.

### Supporting message 2

Public health infrastructure provides the foundation to detect and respond to untreatable cases of gonorrhea and other STDs. To respond to the threat of antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea, we must develop and strengthen core components of the public health infrastructure, including the local and state health department's laboratory, epidemiological, and informatics capacity.

## Supporting message 3

Public health coordination is key. Health department leaders must ensure that efforts to detect and stop the spread of antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea are integrated with related antibiotic resistance initiatives and infectious disease programming.

## Supporting message 4

Public health leaders must also engage healthcare providers to educate them about screening and treatment guidelines and encourage them to report treatment failures to their state or local public health authority. Healthcare providers are critical partners in stopping the spread of antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea and can help protect our last treatment option for gonorrhea.

**Tip:** Share stories about what your health department is doing to stop the spread of antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea. Are there successful public health and healthcare partnerships around this topic that you can highlight?

## References:

1. CDC. "2016 Sexually Transmitted Diseases Surveillance." Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/std/stats16/toc.htm>. Accessed 3-15-18.
2. CDC. "Drug-Resistant Gonorrhea." Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/solutions-initiative/drug-resistant-gonorrhea.html>. Accessed 3-15-18.
3. Ibid.
4. NCSd and ASTHO. "Drug Resistant Gonorrhea: A Challenge We Can Meet Through Public Health Investment." Available at <http://www.astho.org/Programs/Infectious-Disease/Hepatitis-HIV-STD-TB/Sexually-Transmitted-Diseases/Fact-Sheet--Drug-Resistant-Gonorrhea/>. Accessed 3-15-18.
5. St. Cyr S, Barbee L, Workowski KA, et al. Update to CDC's Treatment Guidelines for Gonococcal Infection, 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2020;69:1911-1916. DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6950a6external icon](http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6950a6external-icon).
6. CDC. "National Strategy to Combat Antibiotic Resistance." Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/federal-engagement-in-ar/national-strategy/index.html>. Accessed 3-15-18.
7. CDC. "Drug-Resistant Gonorrhea." Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/solutions-initiative/drug-resistant-gonorrhea.html>. Accessed 3-15-2018.
8. CDC. "STDs and HIV – CDC Fact Sheet." Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/std/hiv/stdfact-std-hiv.htm>. Accessed 3-15-18.
9. CDC. "Gonorrhea – CDC Fact Sheet." Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/std/gonorrhea/stdfact-gonorrhea.htm>. Accessed 3-15-18.
10. Chesson HW, Kirkcaldy RD., Gift TL et al. "The estimated medical costs averted by maintaining the prevalence of ceftriaxone-resistant *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* below 2% in accordance with the targets of the *National Strategy for Combating Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria*." Presented at STD Prevention Conference. 2016. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/stdconference/2016/highlights/images/chesson.jpg>. Accessed 3-15-18.

## To learn more about antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea, visit:

CDC: Antibiotic-Resistant Gonorrhea  
[www.cdc.gov/std/gonorrhea/arg](http://www.cdc.gov/std/gonorrhea/arg)

ASTHO: Sexually Transmitted Diseases  
[www.astho.org/std](http://www.astho.org/std)

For local information, connect with the director of your health department's STD program and visit:  
[www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/stateprofiles](http://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/stateprofiles)