# UK health officials warn of rising antibiotic-resistant gonorrhoea



Health officials in the United Kingdom have issued alarming warnings regarding the rising prevalence of antibiotic-resistant gonorrhoea, labelled as "super gonorrhoea," which could potentially lead to the infection becoming untreatable. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has reported a significant increase in cases related to this sexually transmitted infection (STI), typically contracted through unprotected sexual intercourse.

In 2023, the number of gonorrhoea diagnoses reached 85,000 in England, marking a 7.5% increase from the previous year, and representing the highest figures recorded since the UKHSA began tracking cases in 2018. The agency's latest data indicates that there were 54,965 diagnoses reported at sexual health services from January to September 2024. These figures underscore the urgency of the situation, as many infections are reported to have emerged from travel to Asia-Pacific countries, particularly Thailand, where antibiotic resistance is more prevalent.

Dr Katy Sinka, a Consultant Epidemiologist and head of the STI section at the UKHSA, has highlighted the concerns surrounding the increasing resistance of gonorrhoea to antibiotics. “Gonorrhoea is becoming increasingly resistant to antibiotics, which could make it untreatable in the future,” Dr Sinka stated. She further emphasised the risks associated with untreated gonorrhoea, including severe complications such as pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility.

The bacteria responsible for gonorrhoea, Neisseria gonorrhoeae, has been included on the UKHSA's priority pathogen watch list, signalling its status as a significant threat to public health. While the overall numbers of super gonorrhoea cases remain relatively small, there has been a notable rise in patients resistant to ceftriaxone, the primary antibiotic used for treatment. Since its first detection in England in 2015, there have been 42 reported cases of ceftriaxone-resistant gonorrhoea, with 15 of these being classified as extensively drug-resistant (XDR), standing resistant to both ceftriaxone and other second-line treatment options.

In the 15-month period from January 2024 to 20 March 2025, the UKHSA has recorded 17 cases of ceftriaxone-resistant gonorrhoea, a stark contrast to the 16 cases identified in the preceding two years (2022 and 2023). Additionally, nine cases of extensively drug-resistant gonorrhoea have been reported since January 2024, compared to five total cases during the previous two years.

As the UK grapples with this burgeoning public health challenge, the UKHSA has recommended that anyone who has engaged in casual or unprotected sex seek regular STI testing. Symptoms of gonorrhoea can vary and include painful urination, abdominal pain, abnormal discharge, and in some cases, may present without any noticeable symptoms, which complicates early detection.

With rising numbers of syphilis cases also noted—7,000 recorded between January and September 2024, compared to 9,513 in 2023—health officials are advising vigilance regarding STI symptoms and consulting healthcare professionals when necessary.

Dr Sinka reiterated the importance of using condoms as a preventive measure against STIs and emphasised the benefits of early detection. “The best way to stop STIs is by using a condom. If you’ve had condomless sex with a new or casual partner, get tested, whatever your age, gender, or sexual orientation. Early detection not only protects your health but prevents transmission to others,” she explained.

The situation reflects a growing public health challenge as health officials strive to manage and mitigate the implications of rising antibiotic resistance in sexually transmitted infections.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/antimicrobial-stewardship/uk-health-officials-warn-rise-ceftriaxone-resistant-gonorrhea> - This article supports the claim that UK health officials are warning about the rise of ceftriaxone-resistant gonorrhoea, which could lead to the infection becoming untreatable. It mentions the increase in cases of gonorrhoea with 85,223 reported in England in 2023, the highest since records began.
* <https://vaccinenation.org/infection/ukhsa-data-shows-resistant-gonorrhoea-rising-in-england/> - This source corroborates the increase in antibiotic-resistant gonorrhoea in England, highlighting that over 85,000 cases were reported in 2023, the highest number since records began. It also mentions the importance of STI testing and the growing concern over antibiotic resistance.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gonococcal-resistance-to-antimicrobials-surveillance-programme-grasp-report/grasp-report-data-to-june-2023> - This report supports the claim of rising antibiotic resistance in gonorrhoea by detailing surveillance data on Neisseria gonorrhoeae and its resistance to various antimicrobials, including ceftriaxone.
* <https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/antimicrobial-stewardship/uk-health-officials-warn-rise-ceftriaxone-resistant-gonorrhea> - This source highlights the risks of untreated gonorrhoea, including pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility, emphasizing the importance of using condoms as a preventive measure.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gonococcal-resistance-to-antimicrobials-surveillance-programme-grasp-report/grasp-report-data-to-june-2023> - This report explains the surveillance efforts by the UKHSA to monitor and address antibiotic resistance in gonorrhoea, underscoring the importance of continued vigilance and public health strategies.
* <https://vaccinenation.org/infection/ukhsa-data-shows-resistant-gonorrhoea-rising-in-england/> - This article discusses the UKHSA's concerns about the potential for gonorrhoea to become untreatable due to rising antibiotic resistance and emphasizes the need for regular STI testing and preventive measures like condom use.