# UK health agency warns of rising antibiotic-resistant gonorrhoea cases



The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has issued a warning regarding a significant rise in antibiotic-resistant cases of gonorrhoea, a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that poses escalating health risks, especially to UK tourists. As the Easter holidays approach, the agency has emphasised the importance of practising safer sex, drawing parallels to essential travel precautions such as obtaining travel insurance and applying sunscreen.

In a statement published on social media, the UKHSA reported, “Our latest data shows a rise in antibiotic-resistant #Gonorrhoea cases, particularly in popular tourist destinations across the Asia-Pacific region.” The agency's associated blog post highlighted that engaging in condomless sex represents a notable risk, stressing the necessity of using condoms consistently and correctly with new or casual partners.

Traditionally, gonorrhoea is treatable with antibiotics; however, there is an alarming increase in strains resistant to available treatments. These resistant strains, commonly referred to as “super-gonorrhoea,” have been particularly noted in countries such as Thailand, China, Cambodia, and Vietnam. The UKHSA’s post elaborated on this concerning trend, stating, “Gonorrhoea has developed resistance to various antibiotics, including ceftriaxone, considered the 'last-line' treatment option.” It further reported that cases resistant to ceftriaxone have surged from approximately two annually until 2021 to an alarming two per month in 2024.

Dr Katy Sinka, the Consultant Epidemiologist and Head of the STI section at UKHSA, expressed concerns regarding the increasing resistance of gonorrhoea to antibiotics. “Gonorrhoea is becoming increasingly resistant to antibiotics, which could make it untreatable in future,” she noted. Left untreated, the infection poses serious health risks, including pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility for women, as well as testicular infections for men.

The UKHSA indicated that most antibiotic-resistant gonorrhoea cases are linked to international travel, particularly to the Asia-Pacific region, where these resistant strains are common. Recent data revealed a record high of 85,000 gonorrhoea cases across all strains in England in 2023 – the highest number reported in over a century. This count more than triples the figures from a decade earlier, with the rate increasing dramatically from 50.3 infections per 100,000 people in 2012 to 149 per 100,000 in 2023.

Regionally, certain areas, such as Lambeth in London, are experiencing particularly high rates of infection. In 2023, Lambeth recorded 4,101 diagnoses, translating to a staggering rate of 1,295 infections per 100,000 residents. Other regions with notable infection rates include Liverpool, Brighton, Nottingham, and Manchester.

Symptoms of gonorrhoea vary between sexes. Common indicators for women include burning pain during urination, lower abdominal pain, and unusual vaginal discharge. Men typically experience burning sensations while urinating and discharge from the penis. It is critical to note, as reported by the NHS, that many individuals may not exhibit symptoms at all, making regular testing vital, especially for those engaging with new or casual partners.

The UKHSA continues to advocate for increased awareness among travellers and recommends that individuals who have had condomless sex abroad seek testing upon returning to the UK, irrespective of whether they display symptoms. The agency also highlighted the importance of pre-travel health assessments and advisory resources available through the Travel Health Pro website.

In light of the rising contagion and antibiotic resistance, the UKHSA maintains that prevention methods, particularly consistent condom use, remain crucial for protecting public health both domestically and abroad.

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

## References

* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/health/gonorrhoea-sti-untreatable-antibiotics-b2721954.html> - This article supports the claim about the rise in antibiotic-resistant gonorrhoea cases in England and the warnings issued by the UKHSA. It highlights the growing resistance to ceftriaxone and the potential for gonorrhoea to become untreatable.
* <https://www.itv.com/news/2025-03-26/rise-in-antibiotic-resistant-gonorrhoea-means-sti-could-become-untreatable> - This news piece corroborates the increasing trend of antibiotic-resistant gonorrhoea, emphasizing the risks and the need for preventive measures such as using condoms.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/antibiotic-resistant-gonorrhoea-cases-rising-in-england> - This government news release provides data on the rising cases of antibiotic-resistant gonorrhoea in England, linking many cases to international travel and highlighting the public health concerns.
* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/health/gonorrhoea-sti-untreatable-antibiotics-b2721954.html#comments> - This part of the article discusses the importance of testing and the potential health complications arising from untreated gonorrhoea infections, such as pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility.
* <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/country-information/asia-pacific/> - This website from Travel Health Pro offers travel health advice relevant to the Asia-Pacific region, where antibiotic-resistant gonorrhoea is common. It supports the UKHSA’s recommendation for pre-travel health assessments.
* <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/gonorrhoea/symptoms/> - This NHS webpage lists the symptoms of gonorrhoea, including discharge and pain during urination for both men and women, and emphasizes that many cases are asymptomatic, making regular testing crucial.
* <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/super-gonorrhoea-warning-uk-tourists-34976247> - Please view link - unable to able to access data