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## **Worries Grow About Treating Gonorrhea**

This is the VOA Special English Health Report.

Each year an estimated one hundred six million people get infected with gonorrhea. This sexually transmitted disease is getting harder and harder to treat.

The World Health Organization says gonorrhea is increasingly resistant to antibiotics. The WHO warns that there are few treatment options available, and that the world is running out of ways to cure it.

Manjula Lusti-Narasimhan is a scientist in the Department of Sexually Transmitted Diseases at the WHO. She explains what could happen if this bacterial disease becomes untreatable.

MANJULA LUSTI-NARASIMHAN: "For men and women of reproductive age, they could become infertile. For women who are pregnant, they could have ectopic pregnancies or spontaneous abortions that could increase maternal deaths. And for infants born to these women with untreated gonorrhea, we already know that over half of them develop severe eye infections and many of these could lead to blindness."

Gonorrhea is one of four major sexually transmitted infections that can be cured. The other three are chlamydial infection, syphilis and chancroid.

But the organism that causes gonococcal infections has developed resistance to almost every class of antibiotic that exists. Resistance is caused by the overuse of antibiotics and the use of poor quality antibiotics. It also results from natural genetic changes, or mutations, within disease organisms.

The WHO says it does not know the extent of the resistance worldwide. This is because of a lack of good information in many countries and a lack of research. But it says cases of resistance to treatment are already being reported in several countries. These include Australia, France, Japan, Norway, Sweden and Britain.

The WHO is calling for smarter use of antibiotics and more research into new ways to treat the infections. Dr. Lusti-Marasimhan says there is no current research into new drug treatments for gonorrhea.

MANJULA LUSTI-NARASIMHAN: "We have no plan B right now. There has been this general complacency that has set in because so far, you pop a pill, you get cured, end of story. And, we are no longer there. We are in a state right now where in so many places this organism is rapidly developing resistance. So we do need to start looking into the research."

The World Health Organization is part of the United Nations. The WHO is calling for urgent action to prevent the spread of untreatable gonorrhea. A new global action plan calls for increased monitoring and reporting of resistant strains of the disease. The plan also calls for better efforts to prevent, diagnose and control the infections.

And that's the VOA Special English Health Report. You can find links to more information about gonorrhea at [voaspecialenglish.com](http://voaspecialenglish.com). I'm Faith Lapidus.

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