

ITM maps the presence of chlamydia among Belgians

Chlamydia is most common in young people. However, little is known about its actual spread in our country, because certain sections of the population do not, or rarely, participate in screening activities.

08-07-19



Dit is de omschrijving

Chlamydia is on the rise in Belgium. This sexually transmitted disease (STD) is most common in young people, especially in young women. However, little is known about its actual spread in our country, because certain sections of the population do not, or rarely, participate in screening activities. Sciensano and the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) started screening on a national scale to gain insight into chlamydia transmission in Belgium and to find out how many people are infected with the disease.

Many of those infected do not show any symptoms but can transmit the disease through sexual contact. If left untreated, chlamydia can have serious consequences and lead to infertility in women. Young women are more often tested for the bacterium and may therefore be overrepresented in the statistics. The STD is less often diagnosed in men and older people. This research will allow scientists to make an estimate of how many Belgians are infected.

About 6,000 people were randomly selected to participate in a 'first screening wave'. The next wave will be carried out in the autumn 2019. The aim is to obtain a sample of 2,000 people, representative of the Belgian population. The chosen group completes a questionnaire and sends a urine sample to the National STD Reference Centre (NRC STDs) based at ITM.

"The NRC STD analyses these samples and communicates the results to Sciensano," says ITM researcher Irith De Baetselier. Participants can consult their result online or via the [Swab2Know platform](#). If participants are infected, they are informed and told to contact their doctor. "Chlamydia and other STDs have been on the rise for several years. It is a trend that we should not ignore. It is the first time that the prevalence of chlamydia has been investigated on such a large scale. We will be able to find out in which populations this STD is still common and who we should target with our prevention measures," concludes Irith.