



Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)

What is pelvic inflammatory disease?

Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) is an infection of the upper reproductive organs in women, and it is often sexually transmitted. It may also occur as an infection of the lower belly. PID usually begins as an infection of the cervix, which spreads from the cervix up into the uterus and fallopian tubes. An infection may also occur outside of the female reproductive organs in the tissues surrounding these organs. The infection could be present and a woman might not know.

To find out if you have PID, a doctor or nurse must examine you. Lab tests will be done to identify the bacteria that have caused the infection.

How is it spread?

Any woman can get PID. Those who are at higher risk of getting PID include younger women, women who have unprotected sex with someone with a sexually transmitted infection such as chlamydia or gonorrhea, and women who have had PID infection before. Having a new sex partner or having more than two sex partners in the past 6 months is also linked with having PID.

Using an intrauterine device (IUD) is also linked with PID. Using oral birth control pills, a condom, or diaphragm may reduce the risk of getting PID.

What are the symptoms?

Women who have PID often do not have any symptoms. The most common symptoms are pain or pressure in the lower belly, usually described as constant and dull. This pain may get worse during bowel movements, urination, or sexual activity. Other symptoms may include fever, abnormal vaginal bleeding, chills, lower back pain, nausea, and vomiting. Sometimes PID is only noticed during a pelvic exam. The pain caused by PID may be so bad that it sometimes requires hospital admission.

What are the complications?

The main complications from PID include:

- Permanent, long lasting or chronic pelvic pain;
- Infertility; and

- An increased chance of tubal pregnancy or a pregnancy where the fertilized egg attaches to an area outside of the uterus.

The likelihood of having a complication from PID increases each time a woman has a pelvic infection.

What is the treatment?

The usual treatment for PID is antibiotic pills. If you are treated sooner, you are less likely to have complications. In some cases, PID may be severe enough that a woman needs to be admitted to the hospital for intravenous antibiotic treatment.

Important directions for treatment:

1. You must take all your medication(s) as directed.
2. You should rest in bed for 1 to 3 days – or until there is much less pain.
3. You should return to your doctor or clinic in 2 to 4 days, and again 7 to 10 days later, and then about 6 to 8 weeks after completing treatment to ensure the infection has stopped completely.
4. You should not have sexual intercourse until you have finished taking all your medication.
5. Your sexual partner(s) must be treated as well.

Should I be tested for other sexually transmitted infections?

If you have different sexual partners, or if your partner has different partners, you should also be tested for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis and HIV virus linked to AIDS. You should also consider getting vaccine shots to prevent hepatitis B infection. The more sexual partners you have, the higher your risk of getting a STI.

Birth control pills

Birth control pills may not work very well when you are taking some antibiotics. Keep taking your birth control pills while taking any medication. Use also a second form of birth control, such as a condom, until your next period after completing the antibiotics.

Ways to reduce your risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection

- The more partners you have, the more likely you are to be exposed to a sexually transmitted infection.
- To help protect yourself and your partner(s) from a sexually transmitted infection (STI), use a condom during any vaginal, oral, or anal sex.
- Latex and polyurethane male and female condoms help prevent the spread of many sexually transmitted infections including HIV.
- A new condom must be used each time you have sex.
- If a condom breaks, a pregnancy or sexually transmitted infection may occur. If a condom breaks during sex and you are concerned, talk to your health care provider.
- Use only water-based lubricants with male latex condoms. Oil-based lubricants, such as petroleum jelly, lotion or baby oil, can weaken and destroy latex.
- Store latex condoms at room temperature (not too hot and not too cold) and check the expiry date on the condom package.
- Spermicides containing nonoxynol-9 (N-9) may increase the risk of infection/transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, and it is not recommended to prevent HIV or these infections.

For more information, see HealthLink BC File [#08o Condoms Help Prevent Sexually Transmitted Infections \(STIs\)](#).



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