

Fact Sheet

January 2007

PELVIC INFLAMMATORY DISEASE (PID)

What is it?

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease is an infection of a woman's reproductive organs specifically the uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries.

What causes it?

A woman can get PID:

- if she has had unprotected sexual intercourse
- if she has an untreated Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) such as chlamydia or gonorrhea
- if a vaginal infection spreads from the vagina to the uterus and fallopian tubes
- if she has an untreated STI or vaginal infection at the time she has an abortion
- rarely, within the first month of IUD insertion

A woman who has had PID in the past is at higher risk of getting it again.

What are the symptoms?

A woman with PID may have some of the following signs and symptoms:

- pain in the pelvic area or lower abdomen
- unusual and/or increased vaginal discharge
- pain during or after vaginal intercourse
- bleeding from the vagina when it is not her period
- fever

Sometimes the symptoms go unnoticed because they are mild. Some women do not have any signs until PID has caused damage.

What should I do if I think I have PID?

You should see your doctor or go to a clinic.

How is it diagnosed and treated?

- The doctor will ask you some questions, do a physical examination including a pelvic exam and take some tests for sexually transmitted infections and vaginal infections.
- If the doctor diagnoses PID, you will be treated with antibiotics.
- You will be asked to return to the clinic to be re-examined in 2 or 3 days. This is very important.
- The doctor may decide to put you in the hospital for further tests and treatment.

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What are the complications?

- The later PID is treated, the greater the chance of serious damage.
- The infection may have damaged the Fallopian tubes. It may be more difficult for you to become pregnant in the future. You may also be more likely to have an ectopic (tubal) pregnancy.
- You may have chronic pelvic pain, abscesses and/or scarring.
- You are at higher risk of getting PID again.

How can I prevent PID?

- Use latex condoms every time you have sexual intercourse unless you are sure neither you nor your partner has an infection. Both of you need to be tested to be sure of this.
- If you think you have a vaginal infection, go to the clinic or doctor to get tested.
- If you get an STI or other vaginal infection, make sure that you finish all of your medications and return to your doctor if you have been instructed to do so.

Can partners get PID?

- No, but partners can get an infection from the STIs that can cause PID, such as chlamydia and gonorrhea.
- In men, chlamydia or gonorrhea can lead to a variety of symptoms including pain and swelling in the testicles.
- When a woman has PID and has tested positive for STIs, her partner(s) must also be treated. If they are not treated, they could pass the infection back to her the next time they have unprotected sex.

Is follow-up important?

YES. Once you have been diagnosed with PID it is very important to follow up with the doctor as instructed. If you are taking medication and do not feel better within two days, make sure to tell your doctor. If your doctor has asked you to come back, make sure that you do. It is very important that the doctor make sure that the PID is cured to prevent further complications.

For more information:

Call the AIDS and Sexual Health InfoLine at 416-392-2437

or go to

www.toronto.ca/health

Safer sex

To reduce your risk of getting a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI), use a condom every time you have genital contact, vaginal, anal or oral sex.