



Pelvic Inflammatory Disease

Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) is an infection of your reproductive organs that can involve the uterus (womb), fallopian tubes, ovaries and surrounding tissues.

What are the symptoms of PID?

Symptoms of PID can range from being very mild to severe and can include:

- unusual or irregular vaginal discharge
- unusual vaginal bleeding
- pain in your pelvis or lower abdomen
- pain when having sex
- period pain that is worse than usual

Some people have very mild symptoms and don't realise they have PID. It is important to get tested for sexually transmitted infections (STI) if you have any of these symptoms.

What causes PID?

PID is caused by a range of different bacteria, which can include both STIs and other bacteria that live in your vagina and reproductive tract. These bacteria spread from your cervix into your uterus and fallopian tubes.

Things like having an intrauterine device (IUD) inserted, surgical termination of pregnancy and other gynaecological procedures can cause bacteria to spread.

How is PID diagnosed?

PID is diagnosed by taking a history from you, finding out what symptoms you are having, and checking your vagina and abdomen. If your health care provider thinks you might have PID, they will suggest treatment for you. Your partner(s) should also be treated.

What is the treatment for PID?

PID is treated by taking antibiotics for 2 weeks. It is very important to take all the antibiotics in the way your health care provider tells you, to reduce your risk of having other problems from PID.

Make sure you rest and take simple pain relief like paracetamol if you need it. If your symptoms get worse, see your health care provider or go to your nearest hospital Emergency Department.

What can happen if PID is not treated?



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Untreated PID can cause scars and damage to your reproductive organs. This can cause:

- infertility
- long term pain in your pelvis or abdomen
- ectopic (tubal) pregnancy

Getting treatment for PID quickly can reduce your risk of these complications.

Do I need to use a condom?

Yes, you should use condoms and make sure your partner(s) get tested too. Sex without a condom with a partner who has not had an STI check can put you at risk of getting PID again. Use condoms with partner(s) until you are sure that they have had an STI check-up. Also have regular STI check-ups so that any infection can be diagnosed and treated early.

Do sexual partners need treatment?

As PID can be caused by STIs it is important that all current partners be tested for STI and treated with antibiotics (even if their STI tests are negative).

When can I have sex again?

It is important that you don't have sex during your treatment. If you do, and the infection has not been completely treated, it could be passed back and forth between you and your partner(s). We recommended that you do not have sex (even with a condom) until you and your partner(s) have finished your/their antibiotics.

If you need more information or have any questions, please contact the Canberra Sexual Health Clinic on (02) 5124 2184.

References

Victorian Sexual Health Network (2020). *Pelvic Inflammatory Disease*. <https://www.staystifree.org.au/get-the-facts/pelvic-inflammatory-disease>

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