

Patient Information:

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease Questions and Answers

What is pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)?

PID is an infection of the female reproductive organs (uterus, fallopian tubes, ovaries and surrounding pelvic tissues). As a result of infection these organs may become inflamed, irritated, swollen and possibly scarred. The most common causes of PID are the sexually transmitted infections of Chlamydia and Gonorrhea. Sometimes other types of infections play a role. PID is one of the leading causes of infertility in women.

How does someone get PID?

PID is caused by sexually transmitted infections (STD's) or other bacterial infections that have been left untreated. The risk factors for PID include having sex without using latex condoms, having sex with more than one partner and/or having sex with someone who has or has had multiple sexual partners.

How can PID be prevented?

The risk of infection can significantly be decreased by:

- Using latex condoms whenever there is any genital to genital contact.
- Getting to know a partner before deciding to have sex with them.
- Limiting the total number of sexual partners.

What are symptoms of PID?

The primary symptom of PID is lower abdominal or pelvic pain. The pain may range from mild cramping to constant intense pain. Physical exercise and sexual activity might significantly increase the pain. Other symptoms may include an increase in vaginal discharge usually yellow in color, abnormal and/or heavy vaginal bleeding, bleeding between menses, fever, chills, nausea and vomiting. Women may have few or no symptoms or the symptoms may not be those typically experienced with PID.

Can PID cause other health problems?

PID can lead to infertility, chronic pelvic pain, pelvic abscess and an increased risk of a pregnancy

developing inside a fallopian tube instead of in the uterus. After one episode of PID the risk of infertility is estimated at 15 % and the risk increases to approximately 35 % with a second infection and 75 % if there is a third infection.

How is PID diagnosed?

PID is diagnosed through signs, symptoms, a pelvic exam and lab tests. The cervix, ovaries, and fallopian tubes are usually painful during the pelvic exam. A sample of the cervical discharge may be taken using a cotton swab and may test positive for the presence of Chlamydia or Gonorrhea.

What is the treatment for PID?

PID is usually treated with a combination of antibiotics. Surgery may be necessary if the infection spreads deep into the pelvic organs. Follow-up examination and testing is usually recommended after completion of treatment. All sexual partners should be treated to prevent re-infection. A couple should not have sexual intercourse until both have completed any prescribed treatment.