

New York State Department of Health

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)

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What is pelvic inflammatory disease?

Pelvic inflammatory disease, or PID, is when part of a woman's reproductive system gets infected. This includes the uterus, fallopian tubes, ovaries and even inside the lower belly (abdomen). About one million women get PID each year in the United States. Most often, women under 25, especially teens, get PID.

What causes PID?

Many kinds of bacteria can cause PID. The most common bacteria are two sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), gonorrhea and chlamydia. But, bacteria that are usually found in the vagina may also cause PID.

Most people have an STD before they get PID. But, not everyone gets PID by having sex.

Your risk for getting PID may rise if you:

- Have sex with many partners,
- Use an IUD (an intrauterine device for birth control), or
- Douche

Once you have had PID, you have a greater risk of getting it again.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Sometimes it's not easy to know if you have PID.

Some signs and symptoms are:

- Pain in your pelvis or lower belly (abdomen). This is the most common symptom.
- Unusual bleeding from the vagina or bleeding after sex
- Pain during sex
- An unknown discharge from the vagina
- A fever
- Upset stomach with or without nausea or vomiting

When PID first starts, you may be like many women and not notice any signs. Or, you may have only mild symptoms. If you do not find out that you have PID, you may suffer permanent damage to your reproductive system.

Can PID cause other problems if it's not treated?

Yes. One of every four women with PID gets one of these problems:

- Infertility — when a woman is unable to have children
- Ectopic pregnancy — when the baby grows outside the uterus.
- Pain in your lower belly (abdomen) that doesn't go away (chronic pelvic pain).

Ectopic pregnancy is more common for teenage women. It is rare, but it is possible to die from an ectopic pregnancy.

How will I know if I have PID?

To know for sure, you should visit a health care provider. He or she should give you a complete physical, including a pelvic exam. Your provider will look for pain or signs of swollen pelvic organs. He or she will also send samples of your cervical and vaginal fluids to a lab. The lab will check to see if you have gonorrhea, chlamydia or any other STDs.

Is there a cure?

Yes. Antibiotics can cure PID. If you find out you have PID when it first starts, you can often avoid problems. But, problems can happen even if your treatment goes well. If your symptoms are mild, you should see your health care provider for treatment with two or more antibiotics. You must return to your provider, usually within three days. This is very important to make sure you are getting better. If your symptoms are severe, you may need to be treated in a hospital. Some women with PID may need surgery.

What about my partner(s)?

This is very important! A health care provider should examine and treat all your sex partners. This includes anyone who has had sexual contact with you in the last two months. While many partners may not notice any symptoms, they still need to be checked for infection. If your partners are not treated, you may get PID again.

When can I have sex again?

It is best to wait for one week after you and your partner(s) have finished your medicine before you have oral, vaginal or anal sex again. If you finish your medicine and you still have symptoms, return to your provider.

Can I get this infection again?

Yes. You are definitely at risk of getting PID again if you have oral, vaginal or anal contact and you and your partners have not been treated.

Some women get PID again, even if they are not re-infected. This is because their first infection was not fully treated.

How can I prevent PID?

Not having sex (abstinence) is the only sure way to avoid infection.

If you choose to be sexually active, use latex or polyurethane condoms every time you have oral, anal or vaginal sex. This will lower your chances of having PID again. But, using condoms will not totally stop your risk of giving or getting PID. This is because condoms are not 100 percent effective. Condoms do help prevent the spread of other STDs including HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Usually, women who

have had PID should not use an IUD for birth control.

If you are sexually active, you and your partners should get a full physical checkup. This includes a complete sexual history and testing for HIV and common STDs such as gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, herpes, genital warts and trichomoniasis.

Will anyone know the results of the exams?

The test results and any treatment will be kept ***absolutely confidential***. No one can find out your results, except you. If you are under 18 you can be checked and treated for STDs without getting permission from your parents.

To learn more:

If you have more questions about PID, or you want to know how to find a clinic near you, call your local health department.

You may also call the National STD Hotline at 1-800-CDC-INFO 1-800-232-4636

Questions or comments: stdc@health.state.ny.us

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