

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)

What is Pelvic Inflammatory Disease?

Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) is a general term to refer to infections of the uterus, fallopian tubes, or ovaries. It is one of the most common preventable causes of infertility in women since scarring of reproductive organ tissue may occur and block the fallopian tube. It is also the leading cause of ectopic pregnancy (tubal pregnancy). Each year, about 1 million women are treated for PID in the United States.

Other long-term problems resulting from PID are:

- Pelvic abscess formation
- Chronic abdominal pain
- Infertility
- Recurrent or chronic pelvic infection
- Hysterectomy

Understanding about PID and how to prevent it can lower your risk of getting it.

What are the Causes?

PID can develop as a result of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as gonorrhea and Chlamydia. PID is usually caused one of two ways. The most common mode of infection occurs when organisms find their way to the uterus, fallopian tubes, or ovaries and cause infection. Less commonly, infectious organisms can be introduced into the upper reproductive organs after an induced abortion or by the insertion of an intrauterine device (IUD).

What are the symptoms?

Many women with PID have no symptoms. However, one or more of the following symptoms may occur:

- Abnormal vaginal discharge
- Painful urination
- Pain or aching in the lower abdomen
- Abnormal menstrual bleeding
- Fever and chills
- Nausea and vomiting

Remember

If any of the above symptoms occur, be sure to consult a medical provider for diagnosis and treatment immediately.

Diagnosis

PID is generally difficult to diagnose because the site of infection may not easily be seen and the symptoms may not always be apparent. Some procedures that may be performed are as follows:

- Pelvic Exam to determine if your reproductive organs are tender or swollen
- Samples of vaginal and cervical mucus to test for any growth of infectious organisms
- Blood tests to further detect infection
- Culdocentesis procedure where a needle is inserted into the area behind the vagina to look for any pus in the abdominal cavity

If the diagnosis is uncertain, further tests may be performed:

Laparoscopy- A slender, fiber optic instrument is used to view the pelvic organs through a small incision made just below the navel

Ultrasound- An electronic device that uses sound waves to create pictures of the internal organs.

Treatment

Antibiotics are generally the first type of treatment administered for those infected with PID. They can kill the infectious organisms and generally get rid of most infections. When more than one organism may be causing PID, two or more antibiotics are sometimes taken to combat a wide variety of organisms.

Since PID is most commonly associated with an STD, treatment of partners is needed to prevent repeated infection.

Bed rest and proper nutrition are always good methods towards a recovery. In addition to pain medicines, very warm baths and heating pads applied to the lower back and abdomen may help to relieve pain and discomfort.

In some cases, hospitalization may be necessary. Symptoms which may require hospitalization are very high fever, severe nausea and vomiting, and/or severe abdominal tenderness and pain. Antibiotics would then be administered intravenously (into the vein). In extreme cases, surgery of the infected regions may be needed to remove an abscess or non-clearing area of infection.

Whenever antibiotics are administered, it is important to finish the entire prescription!

Although symptoms may have gone away the infection may still be present.

Who's at risk for PID?

PID is most common in:

- Young women under 25 who have had more than one sexual partner
- Women who have had STDs or PID before
- Women who have IUDs inserted, especially during the first few months after insertion
- Women whose partner has had more than one sexual partner

How can you prevent PID?

There are a few suggestions for prevention of PID:

- Have tests done for STDs before beginning sexual relations with a new partner
- Ask a prospective partner to have tests for STDs before beginning sexual activity in the relationship
- Use barrier methods when engaging in sexual intercourse (i.e., condoms, diaphragms)
- Use vaginal spermicides along with a barrier method
- Use hormonal contraceptive (birth control pills) or Nuva Ring or Patch

Remember

*If you are being treated for PID, it is important to follow your doctor's advice carefully,
finish all medication and return for follow-up visits.*

PREVENTION IS THE KEY TO AVOIDING THE DANGEROUS EFFECTS OF PID.

For More Information

Student Health Services. 619-594-5281

Facebook & Twitter. @AztecHealth

Visit Our Website atshs.sdsu.edu