



## **Pelvic Inflammatory Disease**

### **What is Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)?**

PID is the name of infection and inflammation of the pelvic organs (the uterus, tubes, and ovaries). However, it is most common for the infection to localize in the fallopian tubes.

### **What Are the Symptoms of PID?**

PID can sometimes be difficult to diagnose, therefore it is important to know which symptoms to watch out for.

These symptoms include:

- Lower abdominal pain
  - Fatigue
  - Fever
- Vaginal discharge
- Vaginal bleeding
- Abdominal swelling
- A feeling of being full
- Pain during intercourse
- Increased pain during menstruation

It is important to know that very few individuals will experience all the symptoms. It is more common to experience only one or two symptoms and often these are mild. Some individuals experience no symptoms.

### **What Are the Causes of PID?**

PID occurs when bacteria move upward from the vagina or cervix (opening to the uterus) into the reproductive organs. Many different organisms can cause PID. A prior episode of PID increases the risk of another episode because the reproductive organs may be damaged during the initial bout of infection.

### ***Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs):***

STIs are caused by organisms, such as bacteria or viruses, which are passed from one person to another during sex. Some of these organisms can pass through the cervix and into the uterus and tubes, causing PID. The most common STIs that can lead to PID are chlamydia and gonorrhea. Allowing an STI to go undetected, and therefore untreated, is the most common cause for PID.

### ***Intrauterine Device (IUD) Insertion and Use:***

Individuals who have an intrauterine device (IUD) inserted may have a slightly increased risk of PID near the time of insertion compared to those using other contraceptives or no contraceptive at all. However, this risk is greatly reduced if a person is tested and, if necessary, treated for STIs before an IUD is inserted.

### ***Vigorous Douching:***

Individuals who douche may have a higher risk of developing PID compared with those who do not douche. Research has shown that douching changes the vaginal flora (organisms that live in the vagina) in harmful ways and can force bacteria into the upper reproductive organs from the vagina. Therefore, douching should not be done on a regular basis, if at all. It is better to allow the vagina to naturally clean itself through lubrication and discharge.

## **What Are Some of the Contributing Factors Of PID?**

### ***Age:***

Sexually active individuals in their childbearing years are most at risk, and those under age 25 are more likely to develop PID than those older than 25. This is partly because the cervix of teenagers and younger individuals, is not fully matured, increasing their susceptibility to the STI's that are often linked to PID.

The more sex partners a person has, the greater the risk of developing PID. Also, an individual whose partner has more than one sex partner is at greater risk of developing PID, because of the potential for more exposure to infectious agents.

### ***Previous Infections:***

Those who have had one episode of PID are much more likely to have additional episodes than those who have never had a PID episode.

### ***Other Vaginal Infections:***

Individuals who are prone to bacterial infections such as yeast infections or bacterial vaginosis are more at risk for PID.

## **How is PID Diagnosed?**

PID is most commonly diagnosed through a pelvic exam completed by a doctor. The doctor checks for any unusual discharge coming through the cervix. If there is a discharge, a sample can be taken and tested for bacteria. A blood test can also be done to check to see if the body is fighting an infection.

## **What Are the Treatment Options Treating for PID?**

PID is a serious disease, which does more damage and becomes more difficult to cure the longer it goes on. Therefore, it is important to take action quickly to treat the infection.

### ***Antibiotic Treatment:***

Antibiotics, given orally or intravenously, are the most common treatment for PID. It works to kill the specific bacteria involved, and if it is given in the correct doses, it will work very rapidly to kill the bacteria causing the PID. It is extremely important that once the antibiotic treatment is completed the person should be reexamined to see if the infection has cleared up.

### ***Hospitalization:***

Hospitalization to treat PID may be recommended if the person (1) is severely ill (e.g., nausea, vomiting, and high fever); (2) is pregnant; (3) does not respond to or cannot take oral medication and needs intravenous antibiotics; (4) has an abscess in the fallopian tube or ovary (tubo-ovarian abscess); or (5) needs to be monitored to be sure that symptoms are not due to another condition that would require emergency surgery (e.g., appendicitis). If symptoms continue or if an abscess does not go away, surgery may be needed. Complications of PID, such as chronic pelvic pain and scarring are difficult to treat, but sometimes they improve with surgery.

### ***Treatment of Sexual Partners:***

Most experts recommend that *both* a person and their sexual partner(s) be tested and treated for bacterial infections if treatment is to be effective. If the person is treated for an infection but their sexual partner has an STI that goes untreated, that individual may contract PID again.

### ***Surgery:***

In very extreme cases of untreated PID, surgery may be necessary.

### **Possible Long-Term Problems:**

Most individuals recover completely from PID; However, some can experience long term problems.

These can include:

- Recurrent infection
- Chronic pain
- Infertility
- Ectopic pregnancy

If you have had PID, talk to your doctor about these possible consequences.

### **PID Prevention:**

If you have already had an episode of PID, is it important to follow some preventative measures in order to help you remain PID free.

### ***Testing for STIs:***

Since STIs is the most common cause of PID, it is really important for individuals with vaginas and their partners to go for regular STI testing. Those individuals who have several sexual partners should particularly undergo testing. It is important to be aware that many STIs, particularly the bacterial ones, do not always cause symptoms, therefore you may be infected and not know. Testing is the only way to be 100% sure.

### ***Birth Control Choice:***

If you have already had an episode of PID, it may be important to avoid the use of an IUD and look for other birth control methods. Discuss this with your doctor.

### ***Treating Vaginal Infections:***

Yeast infections and other vaginal infections should be treated promptly, whether it appears minor or not. This can prevent further episodes of PID.

If you have further questions regarding PID or would like to see a health care provider regarding any sexual health matter, please contact us.

### **Sexual Health Questions? We Have Answers!**

#### **Location:**

47 St. Clare Avenue, St. John's, NL, A1C 2J9

#### **Hours:**

Monday: 9am – 4:30pm

Tuesday: 9am – 4:30pm

Wednesday: 9am – 4:30pm

Thursday: 12pm – 6:00pm

Friday: 9am – 4:30pm

#### **Phone:**

579-1009

Toll Free: 1-877-NO MYTHS

(1-877-666-9847)

#### **Website:**

[www.plannedparenthoodnlshc.com](http://www.plannedparenthoodnlshc.com)

#### **Email:**

[pp.nlshc@gmail.com](mailto:pp.nlshc@gmail.com)

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