

PELVIC INFLAMMATORY DISEASE (PID)

WHAT IS PID?

Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) refers to infection or inflammation of the organs and tissues in the pelvis, but is commonly used to indicate infection of the fallopian tubes, which carry the eggs from the ovaries to the uterus. Inflammation of the tubes is also called salpingitis.

HOW DO YOU GET PID?

PID is usually (though not always) the result of infection with bacteria such as chlamydia and gonorrhoea which can move upwards from the cervix, into the uterus and then into the tubes.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?

Many women don't have any signs or symptoms at all. This is especially the case with infection due to Chlamydia.

Those that do have symptoms may have:

- Abnormal vaginal discharge
- Unusual bleeding
- Pelvic pain
- Increased period pain

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU'VE GOT PID?

Often you don't. But it's important to be checked for chlamydia and sometimes gonorrhoea if you change sexual partners or if you have any of the above symptoms. As well as doing tests, your practitioner will also usually do a pelvic or internal examination to check for tenderness or pain.

HOW IS PID TREATED?

PID is treated with the same antibiotics that we use for chlamydial or gonococcal infections, but we usually give a course over 2 to 3 weeks.

ARE THERE ANY COMPLICATIONS IF PID IS NOT TREATED?

Untreated PID can result in pelvic pain that sometimes persists for years. If the tubes are damaged an egg travelling from the ovary to the uterus can get stuck. If fertilised this pregnancy is called ectopic. An ectopic pregnancy may rupture the tube and this can be an emergency. Badly damaged tubes can also become completely blocked, leading to infertility.

WILL I BE ABLE TO BECOME PREGNANT IF I HAVE PID?

Studies suggest that after one episode of PID you may have decreased your chances of a successful pregnancy by around 10%. After 2 or 3 episodes, this figure rises to 50% or more.

HOW CAN I AVOID GETTING PID?

Practising safe sex by always using condoms with new partners is the best way to prevent infection. Having regular check-ups (especially for Chlamydia) if you change partners.

This fact sheet is designed to provide you with information on Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). It is not intended to replace the need for a consultation with your doctor. All clients are strongly advised to check with their doctor about any specific questions or concerns they may have. Every effort has been taken to ensure that the information in this pamphlet is correct at the time of printing.