

Cervicitis

Brown Health Services Patient Education Series

What is cervicitis?

Cervicitis is a general term describing inflammation of the cervix. The cervix is the portion of the uterus that opens into the vagina.

How does it occur?

- Infections by bacteria or viruses
- Often transmitted by sexual contact
- including bacterial vaginosis, trichomonas, gonorrhea, chlamydia, ureaplasma, mycoplasma and herpes
- frequent douching may also be associated with cervicitis
- if left untreated, infection may ascend into the reproductive tract to infect the uterus and/or fallopian tubes, and result in pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)
- PID is a serious condition which can damage reproductive organs and possibly lead to infertility

What are the symptoms?

Cervicitis may produce no symptoms at all and may go undetected until your medical provider discovers the inflammation during a routine pelvic exam.

Symptoms of cervicitis include:

- abnormal vaginal discharge
- discomfort or pain in the lower abdomen, including after sexual intercourse
- bleeding or spotting from the vagina after intercourse or between menstrual periods

How is it diagnosed?

Your provider performs a pelvic exam and swabs the cervical or vaginal discharge to determine what organism is causing the inflammation.

How is it treated?

Treatment for cervicitis is usually very successful.

- Requires that you take a course of prescription medication
- Take all of the medication you are given, even if the symptoms start to go away before the medicine is gone
- If you stop taking the medicine, you may leave some of the infection in your body
- See your medical provider again for a follow-up visit to ensure that the treatment was effective.

If you are sexually active, and your cervicitis is due to an STI, it is very important that any sexual partner(s) within the past 60 days be treated as well. Even if you are treated and a sexual partner is not, you may become reinfected if the partner still has the infection. During treatment, it is important to abstain from intercourse or any exchange of genital fluids. If your treatment is a week long, abstain from intercourse throughout the course of treatment. Even if your treatment is a single dose, you should still abstain for the seven days following. Untreated male partners can develop infections in the urethra, testicles and/or prostate gland. Use of condoms and dental dams is advised for the best STI protection.