

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)

Brown Health Services Patient Education Series

What is PID?

PID (pelvic inflammatory disease) is inflammation caused by infection ascending from the vagina or cervix to the upper genital tract, including the lining of the uterus, the ovaries, the fallopian tubes, the uterine wall and the uterine ligaments.

What causes it?

Most cases of PID are caused by sexually transmitted infections (STIs), such as gonorrhea and chlamydia. Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) can be associated with PID; if you notice abnormal discharge and a fishy vaginal odor (signs of BV) you should be evaluated at Health Services. PID may also occur following certain gynecologic procedures involving instrumentation of the cervix: biopsy from the lining of the uterus, D&C (dilation and curettage) and surgical abortion.

Why is it important to treat PID?

- PID is a common serious infection
- Untreated PID may cause adhesions in the fallopian tubes, which may lead to infertility

What are the symptoms?

- Pain and tenderness of the lower abdomen, cervix, uterus and ovaries including painful intercourse
- Fever and chills
- Abnormal vaginal bleeding or discharge

How is it treated?

If treated early, PID usually resolves. If untreated, the infection may spread to other abdominal organs and can be very serious.

- treatment involves using a combination of antibiotics- injection/IV and oral form.
- complete all of the prescribed medications
- keep all follow-up appointments
- rest and take acetaminophen or ibuprofen for pain relief and fever.
- do not have sexual intercourse until your medical provider tells you it is okay
- very important that the sexual partner(s) be treated, even if they have no symptoms of infection
- partner treatment of any possible infection prevents the partner from spreading it back or spreading it to another partner
- occasionally, hospitalization may be needed to receive antibiotics intravenously or to have a surgical procedure performed

How can PID be prevented?

Either avoid intercourse or:

- always use a condom/barrier method
- if you are allergic to latex condoms there are alternatives available and easily obtained at pharmacies or BWell Health Promotion
- discuss STI prevention methods with your partner ahead of time
- avoid having sex with a partner who has symptoms of an infection
- have yearly GYN exams to discuss risks and sexual health
- be screened for chlamydia and gonorrhea and if positive, be treated