



Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)

What is Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)?

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) is an infection of the uterus (womb), Fallopian tubes (tubes that carry eggs from the ovaries to the womb) and other reproductive organs. PID only affects women.

How can a person get PID?

PID is a very serious complication of some Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) such as Chlamydia and Gonorrhea, occurs when bacteria (germs) moves up a women's reproductive organs. (STI facts sheets are available on BPHC.org)

You can increase your risk of infection by:

- Having sex without using a latex or polyurethane condom
- Having multiple sex partners
- Having a history of other STIs
- Having sex while high on drugs or under the influence of alcohol can increase your risk as this makes it less likely that condoms will be used and used correctly

Who is most at risk for getting PID?

All sexually active women can get PID but certain women have a higher risk. Those at higher risk include: women under 25 years old, women who douche, and women who use an intrauterine device (IUD). Women who have had PID previously or been diagnosed with Chlamydia or Gonorrhea also have a higher risk of having PID.

What are the symptoms of PID?

PID symptoms range from mild to serious but many times go unnoticed. For women who do have symptoms, the most common ones are:

- Lower stomach and back pain
- Fever
- Unusual discharge from the vagina which may have a bad odor
- Pain and/or burning when she pees or during sex
- Bleeding even when it's not her period
- Very rarely, upper stomach pain

How serious is PID?

If left untreated, PID can cause permanent damage to female reproductive organs like the Fallopian tubes (tubes that carry eggs from the ovaries to the womb). This damage can lead to serious health problems such as infertility (unable to have children) or chronic pelvic pain. Some women may even experience ectopic pregnancies (pregnancies outside of the womb). Women who have had PID more than once have a higher chance of experiencing these types of complications.

How can I find out if I have PID?

PID is difficult to diagnosis since many women have mild symptoms. A healthcare provider will need to perform a physical exam and may wipe the infected area with a swab to test for Chlamydia or Gonorrhea. It is important that you talk openly with your provider about symptoms you are experiencing and your sexual history.

Can PID be treated?

Yes, PID can be treated and a health care provider can prescribe the best treatment plan for you. It is important to finish all the medication prescribed even if symptoms go away before you are finished. You should also see your health care provider for any follow-up visits recommended. Treatment cannot cure any damage that has already occurred so early treatment is important. All recent or regular sexual partners should be tested and treated for STIs so you don't get infected again.

How can PID be prevented?

The best way to prevent getting PID is to take steps to prevent STI and to get treated early if you have an STI. For women who are sexually active, getting tested regularly for STIs can help find infections early on.

Where can I get tested?

Most health care providers offer testing for STIs. To find a health care center in a neighborhood near you, call the Mayor's Health Line at **617-534-5050 and Toll-Free: 1-800-847-0710** or visit <http://www.hivtest.org/STDTesting.aspx> and enter your zip code.

How often should I be tested for an STI?

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends **Annual Testing** for:
 - All sexually active women under 25 and,
 - People at high risk, including:
 - Those who have had unprotected sex,
 - Sex with multiple partners, or with a new partner or
- All pregnant women
- 3 months after treatment for a Sexually Transmitted Infection
- Every time you have a new partner if you are unsure of the partner's status

How can you protect yourself from getting PID?

The only 100% effective way to prevent PID is to not have sex.

If you do have sex, you can limit your risk by taking the following steps:

- Always use a latex or polyurethane condom or barrier (dental dam) when having anal, vaginal and/or oral sex
 - Condoms made from "natural" materials may protect against pregnancy but NOT STIs
- Reduce your number of partners if you choose to have sex
- Talk with your partner about their STI status and getting tested
- Talk with your health care provider about sex safety and getting tested
- Understand that having sex while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol can increase the likelihood of unprotected sex
- Contact your health care provider if you experience any symptoms



**For more information contact
Boston Public Health Commission
Infectious Disease Bureau
617-534-5611 or www.bphc.org**