

## Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)

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

Pelvic inflammatory disease is an infection and inflammation of the pelvic organs of women. The organs it affects can include the fallopian tubes, ovaries, womb and the surrounding pelvis.

**PID may happen following one or more of the following reasons:**

- **As a result of a sexually transmitted disease**  
Various infections may be passed from one partner to the other by way of sexual intercourse. The infection may produce few or no symptoms leading to the sufferer not being aware of its presence. Consequently, the infection may be passed back and forth between partners and to other partners. The infection may also have been present for some time (perhaps from a previous relationship) without the person being aware of it.
- **Following a gynaecological procedure**  
Procedures, such as insertion of the contraceptive coil and termination of pregnancy, may occasionally introduce bugs (bacteria mainly) into an area that does not have the resistance for them. This may lead to the development of infection. Sometimes, the infection is already present, but made worse by the procedure. This is the reason for having precautionary antibiotics during and after some of these procedures.
- **Following childbirth**  
Childbirth opens up the opportunities that bacteria may gain entry into the womb and the pelvis. This is particularly more so if the labour and delivery have been complicated.
- **It could be as a result of a previous operation where infection was present (e.g. appendicitis) and adhesions (scarred tissue) has formed causing inflammation.**

There are a number of bacterial organisms that can cause PID. These include chlamydia, gonorrhoea, E coli and syphilis. Chlamydia and gonorrhoea, in particular, are becoming increasingly common.

### How do I know I have got PID?

There are some symptoms that may be suggestive of PID. These include abdominal pain, unusual and/or offensive vaginal discharge, pain during intercourse, and soreness in the private region. In severe infections, there may be a high fever, general malaise, nausea and vomiting, and severe pain.

As mentioned previously, some sufferers do not have any symptoms at all. It is therefore important that if pelvic infection is suspected, for whatever reason, one should seek medical advice early.

Infection can only be confirmed by taking swabs from the vagina and the cervix (neck of the womb). These can be done at the GP surgery. Alternatively, these can be done at the local sexual health clinic which provides a convenient and confidential setting. In severe infections, admission to hospital is required, and swabs and blood tests are obtained.

## How can the infection be treated?

- Both partners (and their other sexual contacts, if any) must be treated at the same time with a course of antibiotics. Tracing, screening and treating all partners over the previous two to six months is important in stopping the spread of the infection.
- Results from vaginal swabs will show the type of bacteria that are responsible for the infection, and determine the most appropriate antibiotic treatment
- It is important to complete the full course of antibiotics to stop the infection and prevent spread.
- If the symptoms are severe, intravenous antibiotics through a drip into a vein of the arm may be needed. This will give rapid initial treatment of the infection. Your stay in hospital can be 48 hours or more depending on your response to treatment.
- Abstaining from sexual intercourse during treatment until the infection is clear will also prevent spread.

## What can I do to prevent the infection coming back?

1. Ensure that all parties concerned are treated fully at the same time.
2. If not in a stable relationship, practice safe sex by always using a condom, even if already using another form of contraception.
3. Having more than one sexual partner, particularly if those partners have other partners, will increase the chance of contracting infections and re-infections. A monogamous relationship will therefore reduce the risk of infection.
4. If symptoms happen again, seek medical advice promptly as early treatment can help to reduce the severity of the disease and prevent complications.

## Does PID have an effect on fertility?

If the infection is treated promptly, the affected organs should not be damaged. Repeated infections can however, damage your fallopian tubes and ovaries and may cause infertility problems in the future. This is the reason for practising safe sex, and to seek medical advice early.

## How can I learn more about PID?

Help, confidential advice and treatment are available at your local genito-urinary clinic:

Avenue House  
The Avenue  
Eastbourne  
East Sussex, BN2 13 XY  
Tel: (01323) 639209

Ore Clinic  
407 Old London Road  
Hastings  
East Sussex, TN35 5BH  
Tel: (01424) 448410

These clinics are self-referring or referred via your GP. They offer a consultation with a qualified doctor or consultant. Health advisors are also on hand to answer any questions and they offer a wide variety of information on all aspects of sexual health. The clinics can also help in tracing contacts in a sensitive and confidential manner.

## PID Support Network

Puts women in contact with fellow sufferers for mutual support.  
C/O Women's Health

58 Featherstone Street  
London EC1 8RT

## Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: (01323) 417400 Ext: 5860 or by email at: [esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net)

## Hand hygiene

The Trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

## Other formats

**If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.**

**Tel: 01424 755255 Ext: 2620**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

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## Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:  
David Chui and Dexter Pascall Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist

The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet:  
Guideline Implementation Group

Next review date: August 2021  
Responsible clinician/author: David Chui Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist

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