



Cervicitis

PATIENT EDUCATION SERIES

What is cervicitis?

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

How does it occur?

Infections by bacteria or viruses are common causes of cervicitis. Often the infections are transmitted by sexual contact. Examples of cervical infections include bacterial vaginosis, trichomonas, gonorrhea, genital warts, chlamydia, ureaplasma, mycoplasma and herpes. Some of these microorganisms, if left untreated, may ascend into the female 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 symptoms in women such as:

- ◆ a vaginal discharge that is not normal for you
- ◆ discomfort or pain in the lower abdomen, especially after sexual intercourse
- ◆ bleeding or spotting from the vagina after intercourse or between menstrual periods

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

How is it diagnosed?

Your provider will run a number of tests on the cervical or vaginal discharge to determine what organism is causing the inflammation. This may include a Pap smear, cervical culture, and blood work.

How is it treated?

Treatment for cervicitis is usually very successful. Treatment may require that you take a course of antibiotics. 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 insure 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. If you are treated and a sexual partner is not, you may become reinfected if the partner still has the organism. During treatment, it is important to abstain from intercourse or any exchange of genital fluids. If treatment is a single dose, then you should abstain from sex for the seven days following. If given a seven day course of antibiotics, partners, should abstain for that seven day time period. Untreated male partners can develop infections in the urethra, testicles and/or prostate gland. Always use a latex condom or dental dam during intercourse.

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