



# Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)

## PATIENT EDUCATION SERIES

### What is PID?

PID (pelvic inflammatory disease) is inflammation caused by infections ascending from the vagina or cervix to the upper genital tract. This includes the lining of the uterus, the ovaries, the fallopian tubes, the uterine wall and the uterine ligaments that hold these structures in place. It is estimated that there are approximately 1 million cases of PID in the U.S. each year.

### What causes it?

Most cases of PID are caused by sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The disease can be caused by many different organisms or combinations of organisms, but is frequently caused by gonorrhea and chlamydia. PID may occur following procedures that create an open wound where infectious organisms can more easily enter, such as:

- Biopsy from the lining of the uterus
- D & C (dilation and curettage – a procedure which involves scraping of the uterine lining to treat abnormal bleeding)
- Insertion of an IUD (intrauterine device) - usually in the first 3 weeks post insertion.
- Abortion

### Why is it important to treat PID?

- PID is the most common serious infection of women aged 16 to 25 years of age.
- Untreated pelvic infections may cause adhesions in the fallopian tubes, which may lead to infertility.
- 1 in 4 women with acute PID develop future problems such as ectopic pregnancy or chronic pelvic pain from adhesions.

### What are the symptoms?

- **Painful intercourse** could be the first sign of infection.
- Pain and tenderness involving the lower abdomen, cervix, uterus and ovaries
- Fever and chills
- Nausea and/or diarrhea
- Abnormal vaginal bleeding or discharge

Early treatment can usually prevent these problems.

### 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.

- PID is treated with antibiotics, often using a combination of antibiotics. The antibiotics may be an injection, an oral form, or both.
- It is **critical** for a patient to complete all of the prescribed medications and to 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 ok.
- *It is also very important that the woman's partner(s) be treated, even if they have no symptoms of infection.* This assures treatment of any possible infection and prevents the partner from spreading it back to the woman or to another partner.
- Occasionally, if the infection is severe, a woman may need to be hospitalized to receive antibiotics intravenously or to have a surgical procedure performed.

### How can PID be prevented?

- PID is usually a result of sexually transmitted infection and is much more common among women who have multiple partners and among women who don't use latex/barrier protection.
- Limit number of sexual partners to as few as possible.
- Always use latex and/or avoid intercourse.
- Discuss STI prevention methods with your partner ahead of time.
- Have yearly GYN exams and Pap smears.
- See your medical provider if you have concerns about abdominal pain, abnormal bleeding or discharge, painful sex, fever, chills or any other unusual gynecological symptoms.