Pelvic Inflammatory Disease

What is it?

Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) refers to inflammation of the cervix, uterus (womb) and fallopian tubes. It is serious and can lead to infertility, ongoing lower abdominal pain and ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside the uterus).

PID is caused by bacteria that move from the vagina or cervix into the uterus and fallopian tubes. This can happen when a woman has chlamydia or gonorrhoea. There are other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), which are not routinely tested for, that can cause PID. Normal vaginal bacteria can also cause PID. This is more common in young women who are sexually active. Having a procedure such as a termination of pregnancy or an intrauterine device (IUD) inserted can cause bacteria to enter the uterus and cause PID.

Symptoms

Symptoms of PID include any of the following:

- pain or discomfort low in the pelvis
- pain or discomfort during sex
- bleeding (spotting) between periods or after sex
- periods that are heavier and more painful than usual

In severe cases, women may experience fevers and severe pain and may become very unwell.

In some women, the symptoms may be very mild and may go unnoticed.

What is the treatment?

You may receive an antibiotic injection (Ceftriaxone 500mg) prior to starting a course of oral antibiotics. The oral antibiotics used are:

- **Azithromycin 500mg**
  2 tablets immediately (once only)
- **Doxycycline 100mg**
  1 tablet 2 times a day for 14 days
- **Metronidazole 400mg**
  1 tablet 2 times a day for 14 days

It is essential to take all your tablets as prescribed and follow-up with your healthcare providers.

What to do next?

Follow-up is essential. You will have had swabs and urine collected and sent for testing for STIs. You should arrange to be seen by your GP or at a local sexual health clinic within 2-3 days to check your results and review whether your symptoms are improving. Negative STI tests are common and they don't mean that you do not have PID.

Your sexual partner needs to have a sexual health check. If your PID was caused by a STI then you can be re-infected if your partner is not treated. **Ongoing partners should be treated even if STI tests are negative.**

Prevention

Practise safe sex. Using condoms when you have sex is the best way to reduce the risk of PID. Using water-based lubricant with condoms is recommended.