

MANAGING YOUR CERVICITIS

What Is Cervicitis?

The button-like cervix is at the end of the vaginal canal. It has a narrow opening that leads into the uterus (womb). Cervicitis is inflammation of the cervix. It's common and will affect more than half of all women at some time during their lives.

What Causes Cervicitis?

Causes include infections such as gonorrhea, chlamydia, and trichomoniasis (infection with the parasite *Trichomonas vaginalis*). Infections with viruses such as herpes simplex virus or human papillomavirus (HPV), the virus that causes genital warts, can also cause cervicitis. Bacteria such as staphylococcus and streptococcus are other causes. Sometimes a foreign body such as an intrauterine device (IUD) or a forgotten tampon, diaphragm, or pessary can lead to cervicitis. Risk factors include being younger than 25 years old, being single, having many sex partners, and having a history of sexually transmitted disease.

What Are the Symptoms of Cervicitis?

Cervicitis may not cause symptoms and may be found only during a routine gynecological examination. Some women can have increased yellow or cream-colored vaginal discharge. Also, very slight vaginal bleeding may occur, as a pinkish or brownish discharge. Pain in the vagina or during sex may occur.

If cervicitis is caused by chlamydia or gonorrhea and the infection spreads to fallopian tubes, pelvic pain and infertility can result. Itching, irritation, and increased vaginal discharge can occur

if *Trichomonas* is the cause. Herpes simplex virus may cause symptoms only if the infection is outside the body, on the vulva.

How Is Cervicitis Diagnosed?

The health care provider makes a diagnosis from a pelvic examination, cultures of the vaginal discharge, and blood tests to check for infections.

How Is Cervicitis Treated?

Treatment depends on the cause. Cervicitis caused by chlamydia, gonorrhea, or *Trichomonas* needs antibiotics. Taking antibiotics can make it more likely that a yeast infection will develop because the antibiotic kills healthy, protective bacteria, so yeast can grow.

Viral infections causing cervicitis cannot be cured, but antiviral medicines can make them less severe and shorten the duration of symptoms.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Cervicitis

- ✓ **DO** take all your medicines as prescribed, even if your symptoms go away.
- ✓ **DO** protect yourself from sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea, chlamydia, *Trichomonas*, herpes, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and HPV infections.
Know your partner. Use condoms.
- ✓ **DO** avoid sex until you finish the antibiotic treatment and your vaginal discharge has stopped.
- ✓ **DO** avoid douches or vaginal sprays. They can irritate the cervix.
- ✓ **DO** have regular Pap smears.

- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you continue to have symptoms, such as vaginal discharge or bleeding, after you finish taking your medicine.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you get a fever or pelvic pain while you're taking medicine.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you cannot tolerate the medicine (e.g., you have nausea), or you have allergic symptoms (e.g., you get a rash).
- ⊗ **DON'T** drink alcoholic beverages if you're taking metronidazole for *Trichomonas* infection. Combining metronidazole and alcohol can cause severe nausea.

FROM THE DESK OF

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists: Tel: (202) 638-5577; Website: <http://www.acog.org>

Copyright © 2021 by Elsevier, Inc.