

Cervicitis

Cervicitis is an inflammation of the cervix (the lower part of the uterus that opens into the vagina). Cervicitis is common and affects many adult women at some point.

Cervicitis has many causes. It can result from reactions to latex, douches, and vaginal creams, as well as bacterial imbalances and organisms that are not sexually transmitted. However, it is commonly caused by sexually transmitted infections (STIs) like gonorrhea, chlamydia, trichomoniasis or herpes simplex (a virus). The sexually transmitted organisms that cause cervicitis are spread through unprotected oral, vaginal or anal sex. To find out if you have cervicitis, you must be examined by a health care provider and usually involve lab tests (cervical swabs) done.

Symptoms of cervicitis can include:

- + Changes in the amount and/or color of fluid from the vagina.
- + Abnormal vaginal bleeding or spotting between periods or after sexual intercourse
- + Pain during vaginal sex.

It is also possible to have cervicitis and not have any symptoms.

Untreated infection causing cervicitis can spread to the uterus and fallopian tubes and can lead to difficulty getting pregnant, tubal pregnancies or ongoing pelvic pain.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

Cervicitis if caused by bacteria is treated with antibiotic pills. Follow your treatment instructions carefully. If you were given pills, finish all of them. If the infection is sexually transmitted, sexual partners should be tested and treated. It takes time for the infection to clear from the body, so **DO NOT** have oral, vaginal or anal sex for 7 days after you and your partner(s) start the antibiotic treatment.

If you or your partner(s) do not finish the treatment, miss pills or have unprotected sex before you have finished all of the medication, the infection may stay in your body or may be passed back to you or your partner(s). If this happens, talk with your health care provider who will help you to decide if you need further treatment.

Other treatments may be offered by your health care provider if another cause is identified. Tell your doctor if you are using hygiene products as cervicitis can be a reaction to the prolonged use of these products. Wearing loose cotton underwear may help reduce the buildup of moisture and bacteria causing the infection.

WILL MY BIRTH CONTROL WORK IF I AM TAKING ANTIBIOTICS FOR CERVICITIS?

There is very little evidence to show that antibiotics stop hormonal forms of birth control from working. Examples of hormonal birth control include the pill, the patch, the ring or the shot. If you are being treated with antibiotics, it is important to keep using your birth control as you normally would.

If you have concerns, use condoms until your next period comes after completing the antibiotics, or speak to your health care provider for more information.

HOW CAN I REDUCE MY CHANCE OF GETTING CERVICITIS?

- + **Practice safer sex by using a condom**
When used correctly, external (“male”) and internal (“female”) condoms help prevent the spread of many STIs during vaginal, anal and oral sex. Condoms are less effective at protecting against STIs transmitted by skin-to-skin contact, such as herpes simplex virus, genital warts (human papillomavirus, HPV) and syphilis (when sores are present).

Important things to remember when using condoms:

- **DO NOT** use a damaged condom.
- **DO NOT** use a condom after its expiry date.
- **DO NOT** use a condom that has been torn.
- Keep condoms away from sharp objects such as rings, studs or piercings.

- Store condoms at room temperature.
- **DO NOT** reuse condoms.
- **DO NOT** use 2 condoms at once.
Using 2 condoms together may result in a condom breaking.
- Use only water-based lubricants with external (“male”) latex condoms. Oil-based lubricants, such as petroleum jelly, lotion or baby oil, can weaken and destroy latex.
- Water or oil-based lubricant may be used with polyurethane/nitrile condoms.
- Use only condoms made of latex or polyurethane/nitrile/polyisoprene rubbers (if you are allergic to latex). Latex and polyurethane condoms are the best types of condoms to use to help prevent pregnancy and STIs. (Lambskin/sheepskin condoms help prevent pregnancy but don’t work as well to prevent STIs).
- Avoid using condoms with spermicides containing nonoxynol-9 (N-9) as it can irritate tissue and may increase the chance of getting an STI.

- + **Get vaccinated**
Some STIs, such as hepatitis A, B and human papillomavirus (HPV) can be prevented with vaccines. Talk to your health care provider about how to get these vaccinations.

- + **Know your sexual health status**
If you have recently changed sexual partners, or have multiple sex partners, getting regularly tested for STIs will tell you if you have an infection. Some people can

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have an STI and not have any symptoms. Finding and treating an STI reduces the chances of passing infections on to your partner(s).

The more partners you have, the higher your chances of getting exposed to STIs.

+ **Talk about prevention**

Talk to your partner(s) about STIs and how you would like to prevent them before having sex. If you are having trouble discussing safer sex with your partner(s), talk about it with your health care provider or a counsellor.

For tips on how to talk to your partner(s), please see the link under the “Relevant Resources” section.

+ **Informing Partners**

If you have a sexually transmitted infection and are sexually active, it is important to tell your sexual partner(s). This will enable them to make decisions about their health and getting tested.

RELEVANT RESOURCES

- + For tips on how to talk to your partner(s), visit the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) Smart Sex Resource: <https://smartsexresource.com/sex-talk/talk-about-it>.
- + For more information on how you can reduce your chance of getting an STI, see HealthLinkBC File [#08o Preventing Sexually Transmitted Infections \(STIs\)](#).

TO LEARN MORE ASK

- + Your family doctor.
- + HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca

RECOMMENDED FOLLOW UP

- Follow up with your primary care provider in ___ days.

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Find this information sheet on the BC Emergency Medicine Network website:

www.bcemn.ca/clinical_resource/cervicitis/