

Cervicitis

Cervicitis is an inflammation of the cervix. The cervix is a narrow passage that connects the vagina or internal genitals and the uterus. Cervicitis has many causes, but sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are the most common.

Cervicitis can usually be cured with antibiotics.

Causes

Cervicitis is most often caused by STIs such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, herpes simplex virus, and trichomonas, which are passed through vaginal and oral sexual contact. This includes both penetrative sex and sexual activities where there is an exchange of body fluids or skin-to-skin contact. You can also get these STIs by sharing sex toys. If you have one of these infections, you can pass it to others even if you don't have symptoms.

Cervicitis can also be caused by other bacteria or from reactions to chemical irritants, douches, or vaginal creams.

Symptoms

Symptoms of cervicitis may include:

- abnormal vaginal discharge
- abnormal vaginal bleeding
- pain during sex
- a herpes outbreak (if you have HSV1 or HSV2)

Note: if you have had lower surgery, your genital symptoms may vary.

Tests and Diagnosis

Testing for cervicitis is usually done with an exam and a swab. It is best to get tested for cervicitis if you have symptoms.

Treatment

Cervicitis is treated with prescription antibiotics. It is important to take all your medications as directed. If you miss any pills, the infection may not be cured. See your health care provider if this happens, or if you still have symptoms a week after starting treatment.

It is important to not have sex (even with a condom) for 7 days after starting treatment. If you do have sex, you could pass the infection to your sexual partner or get it again. If this happens, talk to your health care provider.

Sexual Partners

Your sexual partners within the last two months should also be tested and treated for STIs. If you haven't had sex in the last two months, your last partner should be tested and treated.

There are a few ways to tell partners. You can tell partners yourself or anonymously. Talk to your health care provider about what is right for you.

Complications

If you treat cervicitis early, there are usually no other health problems. If left untreated, it can lead to serious complications including:

- pelvic inflammatory disease
- infertility
- ectopic pregnancy
- chronic pelvic pain
- reactive arthritis

Prevention

It is a good idea to be tested regularly for STIs, especially if you have new sexual partners or open relationships. Talking with partners about safer sex makes sure everyone knows what to expect. Condoms are great if they work for you – the correct use of condoms reduces your chances of getting and passing some STIs that cause cervicitis.

Resources

HealthLink BC – Information about cervicitis in multiple languages

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/cervicitis>

SmartSexResource – If you are worried or have anxiety about cervicitis

<https://smartsexresource.com/topics/worry-and-anxiety>

TransCareBC – Gender-affirming sexual and reproductive health information

<http://www.phsa.ca/transcarebc/care-support/access-care/sexual-hlth>