

Epididymitis

Epididymitis is an inflammation of the epididymis, which is the tube that joins a testicle with the vas deference. It has many causes, but sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are the most common.

Epididymitis can often be cured with antibiotics.

Causes

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

Epididymitis can also be caused by other bacteria or by trauma to the area.

Symptoms

Symptoms of epididymitis can include:

- swelling, tenderness, pain in the testicle – usually one sided, but occasionally on both sides
- abnormal discharge from your urethra
- unusual, painful, itching sensation inside your urethra
- burning or pain when urinating
- fever

Sudden onset of intense pain in one testicle is a medical emergency. If this happens, it is important to get medical attention as soon as possible.

Tests and Diagnosis

Testing for epididymitis is usually done with an exam, urine and a swab. It is best to get tested for epididymitis if you:

- have symptoms
- have a partner who has been diagnosed with epididymitis

Treatment

Epididymitis is treated with prescription antibiotics. It is important to take all your medications as directed. If you miss any doses, 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 10 days after starting treatment. If you do have sex during this time, 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.

Complications

Complications of epididymitis include:

- swelling of a testicle
- infertility (especially if both testicles are involved)

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 infections that cause epididymitis.

Resources

SmartSexResource – If you are worried or have anxiety about epididymitis

<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>