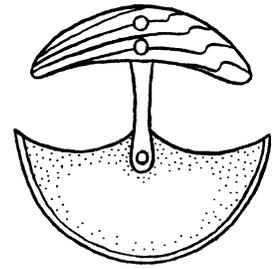


Information for Inuit Community Members

Fact Sheet HIV Treatment Issues for Women



What kinds of gynecological problems?

Vaginal Candidiasis Vaginal candidiasis is a yeast infection that is common among women. Vaginal yeast infections are common and easily treated in most women. However, these infections are often more frequent and difficult to treat in HIV-infected women.

Often a chronic yeast infection is the first sign of HIV infection in women. Symptoms include thick, white or yellow vaginal discharge and raised white or grey patches on the vagina. Often the infection keeps coming back and gets harder to treat and cure with medication.

It is a good idea for a woman who is HIV positive to write down when she has a yeast infection, how long it lasts and the name of the medication used to treat it. You shouldn't have sex with a yeast infection because you can pass it to your partner and sex can be very painful. There are over the counter treatments or natural ways of treating like eating yogurt and taking acidophilus. Also, reducing sugar intake in your diet is very helpful.

Genital Herpes Genital herpes is a very common infection caused by a virus that results in outbreaks of sores in the genital area. HIV-positive women can experience these sores more frequently and with more seriousness than HIV-negative women. Symptoms of genital herpes include: itching and/or burning in the vaginal or anal area, pain in the legs, buttock or vaginal area; unusual discharge; and pressure in the stomach.

Changes in your periods Women who are HIV-positive find that the timing of their periods changes after they are infected with HIV. Some HIV-positive women experience more bleeding when they have their periods. Others find that their PMS is worse. Another condition that many HIV-positive women experience is their periods can disappear for more than three months in a row. This can happen in women who are neither pregnant nor going through menopause.

You should give your doctor regular updates about your period and inform him/her of any changes in your cycle. If you stop having periods, it is important for you and your doctor to try and find the cause. Sometimes this is caused by ovarian cysts and other gynecological problems.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Human papillomavirus (HPV) is spread through sexual activity and can cause other diseases. It can cause warts (small hard bumps that grow in clumps in or around the vagina or anus). HPV can also cause dysplasia (patches of abnormal cells that can grow and develop into cancer of the cervix or in the anus).

HIV-positive women are more likely to be infected with HPV than HIV-negative women. It is also more likely that a woman with HPV who is HIV-positive will develop dysplasia and cancers than HIV-negative women.

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) is a serious infection that is often caused by a number of common infections including trichomoniasis, chlamydia and gonorrhea. PID begins after these diseases have climbed up from the vagina to other organs in the body where they can cause serious damage. The most common symptoms of PID are lower abdominal pain, irregular menstrual cycles, vaginal discharge, and painful or frequent urinating. PID may become a regular condition as a woman's immune system deteriorates. The good news is that this can be treated with antibiotics.

