

Actinomyces

You likely have never heard of Actinomyces. That is because it is usually a harmless bacterium that can live in your mouth or your intestines and is unlikely to cause any problems. When we take cervical screens, we find Actinomyces in about 7 per cent of people who are using an intra uterine contraceptive like an IUD.

If Actinomyces is found when you have your cervical screen, and you don't have signs or symptoms of pelvic infection, you don't need to do anything. Your nurse or doctor is not likely to prescribe antibiotics or recommend you have your IUD removed.

They are likely to tell you to be aware of signs you might have an infection.

These signs are:

- Vaginal discharge
- Lower abdominal pain
- Pain with sexual intercourse
- Bleeding between periods.

If you notice any of these, make an appointment to see your nurse or doctor. It is important to know that most infections with these signs are not Actinomyces and can easily be treated.

In extremely rare cases, Actinomyces can cause severe pelvic infection, including abscesses. Treatment involves a long course of antibiotics and the IUD should be removed.

Reference: Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health – Intrauterine contraception. September 2019.