

I first saw a gynaecologist in 1993 with symptoms of feeling really unwell, heavy periods and outrageous mood swings. Nothing was done, I was told that this was the way it is for me and I have to learn how to cope with it. So I did just that for the next five years.

In 1998 I saw another gynaecologist that was recommended by a friend of mine. When I saw her she was convinced I had endometriosis but advised that she needed to do a laparoscopy to give me a sure diagnosis. I was in hospital within a week but she didn't find any endometriosis, and said the pain was probably due to a condition called pelvic congestion and a hysterectomy was the only cure. At the age of thirty-four I politely declined her offer and struggled on for the next six years.

In 2004 the pain I was having changed to something that couldn't be controlled with pain killers. I went back to see the gynaecologist, explained to her what was happening and she advised another laparoscopy. She also told me that procedures and equipment had developed a lot since 1998 which enabled her to see more and do more. This time she found extensive endometriosis and removed what she could but there were places that would cause complications if she tried to remove it. She also explained why she couldn't find the endometriosis in 1998. Apparently it had been hiding in the muscle wall of my uterus, a condition called adenomyosis and unfortunately a condition that in my case does require a hysterectomy.

That surgery is scheduled for some time in the future. But in the meantime I have managed to keep myself reasonably pain free by really paying attention to my diet and keeping myself active. I find keeping off wheat, yeast and sugar keeps the bowel symptoms that are commonly associated with endometriosis, down to a minimum. To also assist bowel function I drink at least two litres of water a day and take two magnesium tablets. This keeps everything moving!

One of the other symptoms that can come with endometriosis is fatigue and it's the fatigue that affects me more than anything else now. I decided to give up work six months ago and concentrate on looking after myself. I enrolled in a gym and started training to build my fitness level up. I run at least three times a week and I practice a simple yoga routine at least three times a week. The yoga has been extremely helpful especially if I do have a bit of an outbreak of pain. The stretching through the back and the pelvic area can really help alleviate the pain. Sometimes I am so tired I feel like I am wearing concrete boots but believe me the exercise does work as it creates energy and helps reduce stress levels. However there are times before my period is due and just after my period is finished, that I am so low in energy that I can't keep up the exercise routine, so now I take note of it and allow my body to rest.

I have not cured my endometriosis but I have managed to get it to a place that I can control it rather than it controlling me. I found external factors such as jobs, families and relationships can have a high level of stress involved and I found myself prioritising things of importance and instead of spending all my time doing the things I felt needed doing, I found time to do more of the things that I enjoyed doing. For me this created a sense of emotional well-being which couldn't help but have a knock-on effect into my physical well-being.

I hope some of these simple ideas that have proved effective for me will help you with your journey through endometriosis.

**Anne Taylor- Singer/Songwriter**

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