

1. Symptom diaries are extremely useful to track occurrences of pain and other symptoms, their severity and effect on your life – as well as medicines taken, lifestyle changes made (such as nutrition, exercise, pain/stress management) and complementary therapies tried.
2. These diaries can reveal trends and the effectiveness of different strategies. This will give both you and the health professionals assisting you, some very valuable information with which to develop your endometriosis management strategies, and add to your feeling of control and your overall sense of wellbeing.
3. A symptom diary can be used in conjunction with a pain scale such as Andrea Mankoski's (below), which is very descriptive - clearly distinguishing impacts on daily life, and the effectiveness of pain relief. You can invent your own scale to better describe your pain or other symptoms.
4. Keep a diary in whatever format best suits you. You might want to buy a diary just for the purpose, or keep a notebook with all the daily details. Make sure you have enough space to record all the information you want to assess.
5. Decide what symptoms you want to track. Pain is often the number one symptom, but there may well be others concerning you, such as bloating and fatigue. You might want to distinguish different types of pain – pain during periods, mid-cycle pain, painful bowel motions, bladder pain, and painful intercourse.
6. At the front of the diary put a copy of your symptom scale and write up a "key" to most easily record the data – eg you might use "PP" for "Painful Period" and "PB" for Painful Bowel motion. In this way, different symptom ratings can be recorded against each.
7. Record changes in symptoms as the result of a treatment. For instance, you might record a Pain Rating of '6' at 8am, and then 1 hour after taking two Ibuprofen note the pain reduces to '2'. An acupuncture session might reduce your pain from '5' to '1' for 24-hours, as well as reducing your stress levels but making you drowsy for an hour. This is all useful information.
8. The more detail you can record, the greater the usefulness - so feel free to write down anything that might be relevant - including nutrition, mood, how well you slept, how fatigued you feel. You may notice patterns - such as your pain being worse or needing stronger pain medications after a stressful incident - or you may identify a trigger food causing your bloating or bowel pain.
9. Consider plotting symptom ratings and your periods on a timeline graph, so you can more easily see trends. If you indicate on the graph when you have started/stopped treatments and lifestyle changes you can get an idea of what has been effective over time.

10. Using a symptom diary will help you feel more in control. You will be able to review the information and assess what treatments/approaches worked best and which didn't seem to give many improvements.
11. Health professionals appreciate good documentation of symptoms and how they affect lifestyle. Careful recording will support you when seeking appropriate care. Consider a second opinion if you believe your health concerns are not being taken seriously.

### **ANDREA MANKOSKI'S PAIN SCALE**

Source: Andrea Molloy's 2006 book "Endometriosis: A New Zealand Guide"

0	Pain free	No medication needed
1	Very minor annoyance, occasional minor twitches	No medication needed
2	Minor annoyance, occasional strong twitches	No medication needed
3	Annoying enough to be distracting	Mild painkillers are effective
4	Can be ignored if really involved in work, but still distracting	Mild painkillers relieve pain for 3-4 hours
5	Can't be ignored for more than 30 minutes	Mild painkillers reduce pain for 3-4 hours
6	Can't be ignored for any length of time, but still able to go to work and participate in social activities	Stronger painkillers reduce pain for 3-4 hours
7	Makes it difficult to concentrate, interferes with sleep. Able to function with effort.	Stronger painkillers only partially effective. Strongest painkillers relieve pain.
8	Physical activity severely limited. Able to read and converse with effort. Nausea and dizziness set in as factors of pain.	Stronger painkillers are minimally effective. Strongest painkillers reduce pain for 3-4 hours.
9	Unable to speak – crying or moaning uncontrollably, near delirium.	Strong painkillers are only partially effective.
10	Unconscious, pain makes you pass out.	Strongest painkillers are only partially effective

### **Suggested reading:**

Fact Sheet #1: Endometriosis Symptoms (*Insight Endometriosis*)

"Endometriosis: A New Zealand Guide" by Andrea Molloy (2006)

– *Insight Endometriosis* have copies in the lending library

"Managing Endometriosis Pain with NSAIDs" by Ros Wood and Ellen T Johnson (2004)

- *Insight Endometriosis* can provide copies

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