

I am 20 year old Priscilla. I currently live in Hamilton and am between jobs.

I was diagnosed with mild endometriosis via surgery earlier this year. It was such a relief for me — I had been struggling with painful and heavy periods on and off since I was about 15.

One thing that really put me off thinking I had endometriosis was reading all the 'horror' stories online about people who had it really bad. I was never as bad as them so I hid it and thought what I had was the norm and I was being a little 'Nancy' over period pains and heavy bleeding. Also a part of me assumed the cramps could be due to being sexually abused when I was younger.

I first started to notice problems with my period when I was about 13/14, I went to my GP for a regular check up, and asked him about my periods, if they were normal. He told me pain can be perfectly normal, and heavy bleeding can happen to some. This made me feel a little better. But over the next year they were getting slightly worse, so I went back and he put me on the OCP. This helped quite a bit for the bleeding, but not so much the cramps. But like he said, cramps were perfectly normal so I just 'hardened' up and carried on with life. I still attended school and had a bit of a social life for a 14/15 year old, but during these and the next few years of my life, I became a bit depressed dealing with what happened when I was younger. This had me turn to a bit of a 'promiscuous' stage. I used this as a coping mechanism; each time it hurt me, and I felt like I deserved it, like I wasn't worth much more than that to a man. This stage lasted about 2-3 years before I got help and got myself out of that kind of lifestyle and mind frame.

As years went on, I heard the word 'endometriosis' from friends. But again, reading the stories online made me believe there was no way in hell I could have it—those women had it way worse than I ever had. The pains and bleeding got worse over time, and I was even having painful bowel motions. I just thought it was my body punishing me for what I had done to it. I still regularly visited my GP and he gave me prescriptions for different pain medication, which at first I took and they helped keep my pain at bay. But after a while I refused to take them as I hated taking medications. Without taking them I was in pain about five days before my period, five days during, and sometimes up to five days after. But I carried on with life as normal— I attended work and school, and very rarely missed due to my periods. I refused to think I had this condition; I just wanted to be normal. I was also sent off to have scans which showed up nothing, this helped me keep in my head that I was normal and nothing was wrong.

When I was about 18 I went to my GP for a check up - my regular one was away so I saw a lady at the same practice. After looking at my notes she asked me heaps of questions about my period, and since my mother wasn't in the room as she usually was, and as she was a female doctor, I opened up to her about the last few years, and when I was younger, and also the period problems I was having. She told me that my past 'experiences' were unlikely to be causing me pain, but that the symptoms were linked with endometriosis. She then explained what endometriosis is, who it affects, and the different scenarios. She had the approach that 'surgery is a last option' and explained how if we treat the symptoms that will help fix it.

Different GPs at the practice gave me different ideas on what endometriosis is and how it is treated; one of them said surgery is the only true way to diagnose. I decided to change my stance from 'I don't have this condition' to 'I may have this condition'. I kept this under my hat though—I didn't really want people to know that I may be different.

Over the next few years nothing really worked well for me. The GPs decided to refer me to a gynaecologist. So off I went to see a gynaecologist to tell him my story. He said judging from my symptoms I may have mild to moderate endometriosis. This was a big shock to me; how could I have this condition and not be as bad as the others? He talked me through the possible options, the ideal ones being: going without surgery and getting a Mirena, or using OCP combined with pain meds, or having surgery to remove the endometriosis and have a Mirena inserted to help slow down the growth of it coming back.

After thinking about it, I decided to have the surgery, so put myself on the public waiting list. After about a year or so of pestering the hospital I finally was given a date.

The days leading up to the surgery, I wasn't really phased by it. I had had surgery before and it was really no biggie to me. It wasn't until I was in my hospital gown and waiting to be 'piped' up to be put under that I broke down. I was terrified. This was the moment I would find out if I had it or not, and the fear of not having it was overwhelming. What if I didn't have it? I would have to struggle to find out what else was wrong – or I could have something worse. Or I could just be a massive wimp! I had to calm myself by remembering the gynaecologist thought I had mild to moderate endometriosis.

But now I am glad I had the surgery— it finally gave me an answer—and the support group has helped me realise I am still normal with or without the condition.

Although I still get a few pains now and again, I have not had a period since the bleeding stopped after having surgery. I am now a much happier and healthier lady.

For more information:

Visit us at: www.InsightEndometriosis.org.nz or [www.Facebook.com/InsightEndometriosis](https://www.facebook.com/InsightEndometriosis)
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