

FACT SHEET

PAIN MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES FOR ENDOMETRIOSIS



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ENDOMETRIOSIS AT A GLANCE

Endometriosis is a condition where tissue similar to the endometrium (the lining of the uterus) grows elsewhere in the body. This tissue responds to reproductive hormones where oestrogen stimulates patches forming superficial, lesions or endometrioma (ovarian cysts). Inflammation is generally present, and adhesions (scar tissue) can also form in response. Endometriosis within the muscle tissue of the uterus is known as adenomyosis, typically characterised by an enlarged uterus and heavy menstrual flow as well as pain at time of period.

There are pain management techniques that a person can implement and below are techniques that have helped many people with endometriosis.

HEAT

Heat can help relax pelvic muscles and reduce cramping, it increases circulation, opens up blood vessels, heals damaged tissue and affects pain receptors in the body. Moist heat can come in the form of warm baths, warm wet towels, wheat bags or hot water bottles. Dry heat can come from electric heating pads, or dry heating packs.

TRANSCUTANEOUS ELECTRICAL NERVE STIMULATOR (TENS) MACHINE

TENS machines are small, unobtrusive machines with electrodes that attach to the skin and send electrical pulses into the body. The electrical pulses are thought to work by either blocking the pain messages as they travel through the nerves or by helping the body produce endorphins which are natural pain-fighters.

AROMATHERAPY

Some research indicates that aromatherapy can help relieve endometriosis symptoms. Individual oils and combinations that may be effective include:

- Clove, cinnamon, lavender and rose
- Lavender
- Marjoram, sage and lavender
- Clary sage, rose and lavender

A person may apply essential oils to the chest, neck, or under the nose, to breathe in the vapors. Alternately, a person could rub essential oils directly onto the lower belly.

People can also use drops of oil in a diffuser or pot of steaming water to help spread the aroma throughout the room.

PACING

Pacing is when activity is regulated. The aim of pacing is to help achieve goals, rather than avoiding activity.

Pacing has two parts to it:

1. Conserving energy for activities / tasks valued or needed to do (for example, social activities or cooking a meal)
2. Setting graduated activity / task quotas to help increase ability and tolerance to do activities / tasks

See Pacing for Pain Management Information Sheet and Pacing Plan Template.

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Stress can worsen pain sensations and practice relaxation techniques can reduce stress levels. These include:

- Meditation
- Deep breathing
- Guided relaxations
- Visualisation
- Positive affirmations

SELF-HYPNOSIS

Self-hypnosis can help with pain, anxiety, helplessness and sleeplessness. Clinical hypnotherapists provide coaching in self-hypnosis techniques.

DISTRACTION

Keep busy doing things that are enjoyable such as reading, listening to music, dancing, exercising, gardening etc. Distraction can reduce pain by 30%.

For further information:

- Insight Endometriosis: Endometriosis Factsheet
- Insight Endometriosis: Endometriosis Symptoms Factsheet
- Insight Endometriosis: Symptom Diary Information Sheet
- Insight Endometriosis: Analgesic (Pain Relief) Treatment for Endometriosis Factsheet
- Insight Endometriosis: Hormonal Treatment for Endometriosis Factsheet
- Insight Endometriosis: Surgical Treatment for Endometriosis Factsheet
- Insight Endometriosis: Pacing for Pain Management
- Insight Endometriosis: Pacing Plan Template

References:

- Ministry of Health. 2020. Diagnosis and Management of Endometriosis in New Zealand <https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/diagnosis-and-management-endometriosis-new-zealand>
- Health Navigator <http://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/>
- The effects of massage therapy on dysmenorrhea caused by endometriosis [Valiani M, Ghasemi N, Bahadoran P, Heshmat R. The effects of massage therapy on dysmenorrhea caused by endometriosis. Iran J Nurs Midwifery Res. 2010;15\(4\):167-171](#)

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