



COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES AND LIFESTYLE CHANGES FOR ENDOMETRIOSIS INFORMATION GUIDE

ABOUT INSIGHT ENDOMETRIOSIS

Insight Endometriosis is a community-based Charitable Trust working collaboratively to empower people with endometriosis (suspected or diagnosed). We are based in Hamilton but provide services throughout New Zealand, with a focus on:

- Improving access to quality evidence-based information.
- Connecting those affected by endometriosis to relevant support.
- Ensuring those affected by endometriosis are productive, feel valued in their workplaces, and nurtured to succeed in their places of study.
- Building a strong, connected community network amplifying the voices of those affected by endometriosis.
- Ensuring lived experiences of those affected by endometriosis informs policy development and health system change.
- Other relevant support and assistance.

ABOUT THIS INFORMATION GUIDE

The purpose of this information guide is to empower you with knowledge about endometriosis - whether you suspect you have endometriosis, have a diagnosis of endometriosis, or have a whānau member, friend, or someone in your life that is experiencing endometriosis symptoms.

It is important to remember that each person's experience of endometriosis is different and this information guide provides evidence-based information.



CONTENTS

PAGES 1 - 2

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES AND LIFESTYLE CHANGES

PAGE 3

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

PAGES 3 - 4

ACUPUNCTURE

PAGE 4

PHYSIOTHERAPY

PAGE 4 - 5

PELVIC FLOOR PHYSIOTHERAPY

PAGES 5 - 6

OSTEOPATHY

PAGE 6

MASSAGE

PAGE 6

NATUROPATHY

PAGE 7

NUTRITION FOR ENDOMETRIOSIS

PAGE 8

TIPS FOR EATING WELL WITH ENDOMETRIOSIS

PAGE 9

FOOD AND SYMPTOMS DIARY

PAGE 10

BOWEL MOVEMENT TIPS

PAGE 11

FOODS THAT MAY POSITIVELY AFFECT ENDOMETRIOSIS

PAGE 12

FOODS THAT MAY NEGATIVELY AFFECT ENDOMETRIOSIS

PAGES 13 - 14

GOING GLUTEN FREE

PAGES 15 - 16

OMEGA-3 AND OMEGA-6 BALANCE

PAGES 16 - 18

FODMAP

PAGES 19 - 20

ENDO BELLY

PAGE 21

EXERCISING WITH ENDOMETRIOSIS

PAGE 22

SUPPORT TO EXERCISE

PAGE 22

HOW TO EXERCISE WITH ENDOMETRIOSIS

PAGE 23

GETTING STARTED WITH EXERCISE

PAGE 24

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO EXERCISE

PAGE 25

EXERCISES TO AVOID



insight
ENDOMETRIOSIS

PAGES 26 - 27

YOGA FOR ENDOMETRIOSIS

PAGE 28

MORNING FLOW YOGA POSES

PAGE 29

BEFORE BED YOGA POSES

PAGE 30

YOGA POSES FOR PAIN

PAGES 31 - 32

NOTE PAGES

PAGES 33 - 34

REFERENCES

PAGE 35

DISCLAIMER

PAGE 36

AVAILABLE INFORMATION GUIDES

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES AND LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Complementary therapies are provided by therapists from a wide variety of disciplines and can include Traditional Chinese Medicine, Acupuncture, Physiotherapy, Osteopathy and Massage.

There is little research and evidence about complementary therapies but many people have found them to be helpful, alongside surgical and hormonal treatment.

With endometriosis, therapies are often used to help manage a particular symptom, such as period pain. Treatment may also focus on typical features of the condition, for example, inflammation.

If you are going to use complementary therapies talk to your GP first to check interactions with your conventional medicine or treatment and any safety concerns.

Lifestyle changes are within an individual's control such as dietary changes and exercise.

There is emerging data that shows diet does play a role in the alleviation of symptoms and the self-reported evidence also shows that people find relief and improvement in their symptoms when they make changes to their diet. The research is still limited in establishing the link between endometriosis and diet.



Exercise can help your endometriosis. The hard thing for those with endometriosis is that exercise can cause a flare-up in pain so understanding the benefits of exercise can be helpful as well as finding the right type of exercise that works for you and your endometriosis.

The benefits of exercise for endometriosis management include:

- Pain relief - when we exercise our body releases feel-good chemicals that reduce our awareness of pain messages.
- Improving mobility and reducing abdominal cramping - exercise that focus on the full range of motion of the abdominal muscles, hips, and pelvis is likely to improve relaxation and reduce pelvic floor overactivity.
- Improve fatigue and brain fog.
- Help manage constipation - exercise has proven benefits for digestion and bowel health.
- Improve mood and help manage the symptoms of depression and anxiety.





TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE (TCM)

Acupuncture, acupressure, Chinese herbal medicine and tui na (types of bodywork including massage and acupressure) are the most well-known forms of TCM in many Western countries.

ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncture may be beneficial for the treatment of pain.

Research has shown that after acupuncture the body produces more natural painkillers, and the brain shows a better response to pain medication. It may also reduce inflammation, modulate immunity, and regulate hormones, all beneficial for those with endometriosis.

An acupuncturist inserts needles into certain points on your body to stimulate nerve endings and release endorphins (that have pain relieving qualities).

During your first treatment, your acupuncturist will take a detailed case history to understand your body and develop a treatment plan. Your acupuncture treatments can then begin and at these appointments, your acupuncturist will ask you some questions to see how you have been. There is no set number of treatment sessions, it all depends on how your body responds to the treatment.



insight
ENDOMETRIOSIS

During an acupuncture treatment, you may feel a dull throb or ache at the site of the needle although it shouldn't feel uncomfortable. You may feel a little prick when the needle is inserted but this usually settles in less than a minute. Your acupuncturist will want to make sure you feel safe and relaxed so let them know if at any time you feel uncomfortable.

PHYSIOTHERAPY

Physiotherapists can develop a programme of exercise and relaxation techniques designed to help strengthen pelvic floor muscles, reduce pain, and manage stress and anxiety. After surgery, rehabilitation in the form of gentle exercises, yoga, or Pilates that can help the body get back into shape by strengthening compromised abdominal and back muscles.

Pelvic Floor Physiotherapy

Pelvic Floor Therapy is a form of physiotherapy that focuses on everything that affects the pelvic area, including muscles, bones, ligaments, and fasciae and the role of a pelvic floor physical therapist is to train you to relax your body and restore balance and alignment.

Treatment is always specific to you and your symptoms, and some people progress really quickly. Pelvic Floor Therapy for endometriosis can feature:

- Work on your core, hips, and feet because the way your legs hit the ground can affect the way your pelvis moves.
- Internal physical therapy to work on the affected muscles that line the inside of your pelvis.
- Manual therapy to help break up scar tissue.
- Exercise such as yoga or Pilates.
- Breathing exercises as breathing affects the pelvis through the diaphragm.
- Skin rolling or deep tissue massage.

During your first consultation, expect your Pelvic Floor Physiotherapist to ask a lot of questions so that they can gain an understanding of your history and symptoms and the different aspects of your life that may be affecting your condition and health generally.



A physical assessment of your condition comes next and depending on your individual needs this may include:

- Posture, joint and functional movement assessment.
- Assessment of the myofascial system.
- Pelvic floor examination (internal and external) to assess functional tone and activation of pelvic floor muscles and pelvic organ prolapse presence.

Physical Floor Therapy should not trigger your symptoms beyond 1-2 days, if at all and not all physical floor therapy consists of internal manipulation, you can make progress without it if you aren't comfortable with this type of treatment.

An internal assessment is often very helpful in diagnosis and treatment of pelvic floor conditions. However, it's not essential and your physiotherapist will discuss what is involved and all the options during your consultation.

Your therapist will then discuss the different treatment options and together you will devise a treatment plan.

This may include a home exercise programme that focuses on strength and flexibility and vaginal dilation to stretch and relax the vagina. This helps relieve pain associated with sexual intercourse or tampon use.

OSTEOPATHY

Osteopathy focuses on realigning elements of the musculoskeletal system and aims to remove any stress or strain through the fascia, muscles, ligaments, and joints.

This stress or strain may be loading your central nervous system and your therapist will use a range of osteopathic techniques and manipulation to promote pelvic drainage, relieve uterine congestion and provide relief from the pain associated with the menstrual cycle and endometriosis.



Techniques utilised in treatment can include stretching, massage, manipulation and mobilisation of joints, resistance movements, and deep pressure techniques.

MASSAGE

Studies have shown that regular massage gives short-term and long-term relief from pelvic pain and muscle spasms of endometriosis.

Massage therapy can relieve pain or tightness in soft tissues by helping circulation (blood flow), easing tension (loosening tight muscles), and lowering stress.

A massage therapist presses, rubs and strokes the tissue with light to deep pressure, depending on what is needed to bring relief.

Massage can be combined with aromatherapy through the use of essential oils.

NATUROPATHY

Naturopathy is a form of medicine practiced widely throughout the world.

Naturopathy is a holistic, health care system, considering all the

systems of the body when looking for the underlying causes of illness.

Naturopaths evaluate all aspects of a person - mind, and emotions, as well as the body - as all are believed to be important in returning a person to optimal health and wellness.

Holistic

"Dealing with the whole of something"

A holistic approach to medicine means treating the whole person not only physically, but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually as well.

A Naturopath can advise on herbal medicine, nutrition, nutritional supplements, and lifestyle adjustments, as well as home botanical and/or homeopathic remedies, essential oils, and flower remedies. Some Naturopaths may also utilise massage and acupuncture. Studies have shown that regular massage give short-term and long-term relief from pelvic pain and muscle spasms of endometriosis.



NUTRITION FOR ENDOMETRIOSIS

The experience of endometriosis symptoms is different for each person, as well as each person is unique in their food preferences, lifestyle, medical history, and treatment. Therefore there is no universal diet for endometriosis.

A person with endometriosis might consider reducing foods that either cause inflammation or raises oestrogen levels, both of which may contribute to endometriosis or its symptoms. However, more research is needed to establish the link between endometriosis and diet.

Eating the foods that are right for you can help:

- Combat bloating
- Relieve IBS symptoms
- Reduce flares and pain
- Regulate bowels
- Fight fatigue
- Support your gut health which can optimise immune function.

Taking a closer look at what you eat can not only help manage your endo symptoms but it can also help you feel confident that you are making the right choices for your long-term health it can be overwhelming eliminating foods or adding new foods to your diet.

The best way to determine which dietary changes may help you is to keep a food and symptom journal, recording everything that you eat throughout the day as well as any symptoms you experience.

TIPS FOR EATING WELL WITH ENDOMETRIOSIS

♥ Work out what foods trigger your symptoms - knowing what triggers your symptoms means you can get some relief from your symptoms and you will be in a better place to focus on foods that benefit your endometriosis and health.

♥ Aim for daily bowel movements - healthy and regular bowel movements will reduce bloating and support oestrogen removal, the main hormone involved in endometriosis growth.

♥ Focus on what foods you can add in - how you can enrich your diet with more fruits, veggies, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and legumes rather than worrying about what to remove

♥ Nourish your gut - your gut makes up 70% of your immune system and plays a role in hormone health, motility, reducing inflammation, synthesising vitamins and so much more. Nurture it with nutritious foods.

♥ Strike a balance - don't deprive yourself of cake or your favourite snacks....remember everything in moderation and as long as you are focusing on adding in those nutritious foods you can still enjoy what you eat.

FOOD AND SYMPTOM DIARY

The best way to determine which dietary changes may help you is to keep a food and symptom diary, recording everything that you eat and drink throughout the day as well as any symptoms you experience. A clear pattern may not emerge right away so it's best to keep a food diary for 4-6 weeks.

Here are our tips for keeping a food and symptom diary:

- Stick with it. Try to fill out your food and symptom diary every day for at least four weeks, including four weekends.
- Go into detail. Give as much detail as possible, including what you ate and how it was prepared. For example, instead of writing a 'sandwich', write 'two slices of white bread, mayonnaise, cheese, and tomato'. The same applies to the symptoms you have. Did you have them immediately after eating? How severe were they? How long did they last?
- Include your fluids. Don't forget to note down all fluids you drink. This includes caffeinated drinks (and any sugars added), juices, and alcohol.
- Write things down as you consume them. Keep your food diary with you so you can make note of everything you eat throughout the day. If you try to fill everything out at once, you might forget some vital ingredients.
- Be honest. Even if you know your meal wasn't the healthiest choice, write it down. It's important to get a complete picture of your diet.
- Keep food packaging. It might sometimes be helpful to keep food packaging.



insight
ENDOMETRIOSIS



BOWEL MOVEMENT TIPS

Painful bowel movements and/or constipation is common for people with endometriosis symptoms and/or IBS. Here are our top bowel movement tips:

- try sitting on the toilet after breakfast for 15-20 minutes and wait for the ejection reflex
- raise your feet on a stool and lean forward
- do a pelvic floor contraction when the bowel movement is done to encourage complete closing
- go when you feel the first urge, don't hold it in
- don't hold your breath - relax
- avoid caffeine
- exercise
- eat fibre
- drink plenty of water



FOOD THAT MAY POSITIVELY AFFECT ENDOMETRIOSIS

To fight inflammation and pain caused by endometriosis, consume a nutrient-dense, well-balanced diet that's primarily plant-based and full of vitamins and minerals. Ensure that the following foods are in your diet.



FIBROUS FOODS

- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Legumes
- Whole grains



IRON-RICH FOODS

- Dark leafy greens
- Broccoli
- Beans
- Fortified grains
- Nuts
- Seeds



HEALTHFUL FATS

- Salmon
- Fatty fish
- Tree nuts
- Avocado
- Olive oil
- Olives



FOODS RICH IN ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS

- Salmon
- Sardines
- Herring
- Trout
- Walnuts
- Chia seeds
- Flax seeds



ANTIOXIDANT-RICH FOODS

- Colourful fruits and vegetables
- Dark chocolate
- Spinach
- Beets

If you do not eat fish, it is possible to introduce omega-3 fatty acids into the diet using supplements. These can be purchased at a pharmacy or bought online.

FOODS THAT MAY NEGATIVELY AFFECT ENDOMETRIOSIS

Foods that can influence hormone regulation, particularly estrogen balance, can negatively affect those with endometriosis. In addition, some foods may promote inflammation in the body leading to further pain or progression of endometriosis.

These foods include:

Alcohol

- can contribute to bloating and diarrhoea
- excess alcohol may cause inflammation
- can increase oestrogen and reduce progesterone

Saturated and Trans Fat

- can take longer to digest
- may have a negative impact on period pain
- can increase inflammation
- the risk of endometriosis can increase with high amounts of trans fat consumption

Coffee

- may cause diarrhea
- can worsen symptoms of anxiety
- may impact oestrogen metabolism

Processed foods

- may contain inflammatory omega-6
- can cause bloating
- are low in fibre, zinc, magnesium, and healthy fats
- can increase inflammation



ALCOHOL



SATURATED AND TRANS FAT



COFFEE



PROCESSED FOODS

GOING GLUTEN FREE

Many people have reported some type of gluten sensitivity and experiencing symptoms such as flatulence, bloating and disturbed bowel function.

A 2012 study suggested that 75% of people had improved pain perception in all areas and improved quality of life, with no worsening of pain in the remaining 25% after following a gluten-free diet for 12 months.

So there are some things to be aware of if you are gluten-free or thinking of going gluten-free. Cutting out gluten also means cutting from your diet fructans. Fructans are indigestible carbohydrates in your wheat, rye and barley products that may cause bloating and discomfort in those who have sensitivities. So it can be hard to know whether symptoms improve because of reducing gluten content or fructan content.

Reducing foods that contain gluten can also make it challenging to meet your daily fibre needs and other micronutrient targets such as iodine and folate.

TOP SOURCES OF FIBRE



FRUIT



VEGETABLES



NUTS

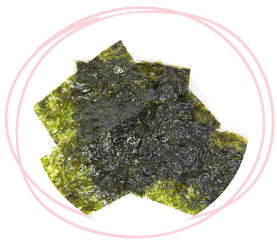


**GROUND
FLAX AND
CHIA SEEDS**



**GLUTEN-FREE
WHOLEGRAINS**

Iodine is a mineral found in some foods and an essential nutrient for brain development. It's found in foods through the soil but the iodine content of New Zealand soils is low which makes it difficult for most people to reach adequate iodine by eating foods that are natural sources of iodine, which is why commercially prepared bread is fortified with iodine. As bread is a major source of iodine in New Zealand, going gluten-free may put you at risk of iodine deficiency.



SEAWEED



EGGS



TUNA



PRAWNS



**IODISED
SALT**

Folate is an essential B vitamin, important for cell growth and reproduction in New Zealand folic acid, the synthetic form of folate, is added to bread and breakfast cereals so by going gluten-free you may be reducing the recommended daily consumption of 400 micrograms of folate.



**COLOURFUL
FRUIT**



LEGUMES



**NUTS AND
SEEDS**



**DARK LEAFY
GREENS**



**CRUCIFEROUS
VEGETABLES**

Gluten is not an essential nutrient though so if you remove gluten from your diet and you feel better for it and have reduced symptoms then this is a good outcome but remember your daily fibre target is 28g, adults should have 150 micrograms of iodine a day and 400 micrograms of folate a day.

OMEGA-3 AND OMEGA-6 BALANCE

Omega-3 and omega-6 are essential fatty acids that you get from your diet and without them, you can develop deficiencies and become ill.

These fatty acids are different from most other fats, they are biologically active and have important roles in processes like blood clotting and inflammation.

Scientists have hypothesized that a diet high in omega-6 but low in omega-3 increases inflammation, while a diet that includes balanced amounts of each reduces inflammation.

Research shows that the average 'Western' diet tends to be high in omega-6 and low in omega-3 with a ratio of about 15:1 so nowhere near balanced!

Omega-3 fats are believed to have the effect of building blocks of your body's inflammation and pain-relieving molecules. Given that endometriosis is often associated with increased pain and inflammation, having omega-3 in the diet may be especially beneficial for those with endometriosis symptoms.

Here are some ways you could balance omega-3 and omega-6 in your diet.

Reduce your omega-6 intake by:

- avoiding seed and vegetable oils high in omega-6 (sunflower, corn, soybean, and cottonseed). These could be in processed foods like chocolate, dips, crackers, and milk alternatives.
- cook with coconut oil or olive oil.
- eat grass-fed meat and choose meat from the leaner part of the animal (animals that are fed grain-based feeds containing soy and corn will have reduced omega-3 contents and the polyunsaturated fats in the meat will mostly be omega-6).

Increase your omega-3 by

- eating oily fish 1-2 times per week - salmon, trout, mackerel, sardines, herring, and anchovies
- if you're not a seafood fan, take a fish oil supplement like cod liver oil
- if you are vegetarian or vegan include in your diet foods high in omega-3 such as flax and chia seeds, leafy greens, avocado, brussel sprouts, hemp seeds, and walnuts.



FODMAP

FODMAP stands for “fermentable oligo-, di-, mono-saccharides and polyols”. These are short-chain carbs that move through your intestines undigested. Instead of being absorbed into your bloodstream, they reach the far end of your intestine where most of your gut bacteria reside.

FODMAP aims to allow the gastrointestinal system to heal by eliminating certain carbohydrates which are potentially irritating. FODMAP is a short-term dietary modification rather than a long-term lifestyle change.

Many foods that contain FODMAPs are considered very healthy, and some FODMAPs function like healthy prebiotic fibres, supporting your friendly gut bacteria. If you can tolerate these types of carbs you should not avoid them.

However, for people with a FODMAP intolerance, foods high in these carbs may cause unpleasant digestive issues as your gut bacteria uses these carbs for fuel, producing hydrogen gas which may lead to gas, bloating, stomach cramps, pain and constipation. FODMAPs also draw liquid into your intestine, which may cause diarrhoea.

Some people with endometriosis symptoms have found that a low FODMAP-diet relieves some of their symptoms and allows the gastrointestinal system to heal. You cannot completely eliminate FODMAPs however you can eliminate all high-FODMAP foods for a few weeks and if FODMAPs are the cause of your problems you may experience relief in your symptoms in as little as a few days.

After a few weeks you can reintroduce some of these foods, one at a time, to help you to determine which foods cause your symptoms. If you find that a certain type of food strongly upsets your digestion you may want to then permanently avoid it.

It can be difficult to get started and follow a low-FODMAP diet on your own, we recommend seeking the advice of a doctor or nutritionist who is trained in this area. This may also help prevent unnecessary dietary restrictions.



HIGH FODMAP FOODS TO AVOID

FRUCTOSE

- APPLE
- MANGO
- PEAR
- TINNED FRUIT
- CHERRIES
- WATERMELON
- RIPE BANANA
- DRIED FRUIT
- FRUIT JUICES
- CORN SYRUP

LACTOSE

- COW MILK
- GOAT MILK
- SHEEP MILK
- CUSTARD
- CONDENSED MILK
- ICE-CREAM
- YOGHURT
- BUTTERMILK
- KEFIR
- MILK FROM SOY BEANS
- COTTAGE
- CHEESE
- CREAM
- MASCARPONE
- RICOTTA

FRUCTANS

- ASPARAGUS
- BEETROOT
- BROCCOLI
- CABBAGE
- BRUSSEL SPROUTS
- EGGPLANT
- GARLIC
- LEEK
- ONION
- FENNEL
- SHALLOTS
- SPRING ONION
- WHEAT AND RYE
- CUSTARD
- APPLE
- WATERMELON
- PERSIMMON
- DATES
- GRAPEFRUIT
- PISTACHIO

GALACTANS

- BAKED BEANS
- CHICKPEAS
- LENTILS
- SOY BEANS
- KIDNEY BEANS
- HUMMUS
- CASHEWS

POLYOLS

- APPLE
- APRICOT
- AVOCADO
- BLACKBERRY
- CHERRY
- LYCHEE
- PEAR
- PEACH
- PLUM
- PRUNE
- WATERMELON
- NECTARINE
- CAULIFLOWER
- GREEN CAPSICUM
- MUSHROOM
- SWEETCORN
- SORBITOL (420)
- MANNITOL (421)
- ISOMALT (952)
- MALTITOL (965)
- XYLITOL (967)

ENDO BELLY

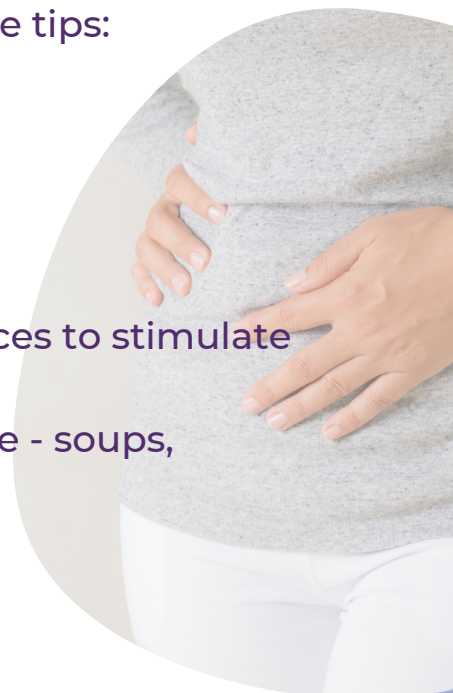
A bloated abdomen is common for people with endometriosis and is often called 'endo belly'. Causes of endo belly include:

- Inflammation from endometriotic lesions and changes within the immune system can also play a role in bloating.
- Dietary triggers & food intolerances.
- Other underlying medical conditions alongside endometriosis can cause bloating such as coeliac disease, Small Intestine Bacterial Growth (SIBO), and Irritable Bowel Disease (IBD) (to name but a few).
- Poor dietary practices such as large portions, eating too quickly, and mindless eating can have an impact on bloating.
- Constipation can cause bloating.
- Other factors include an altered gut microbiota, stress, hormone fluctuations linked with your menstrual cycle, medications, high-intensity exercise, and abnormal abdominal-diaphragmatic reflexes.

If you are experiencing endo belly here are some tips:

Optimise your digestion

- reduce stress
- eat sitting down
- eat in a calm environment
- add digestive enzymes or use herbs and spices to stimulate digestive enzyme production
- eat cooked foods if your digestion is sensitive - soups, stews, smoothies



Feed your gut

- add quality probiotics
- add in probiotic foods
- add in prebiotic foods
- eat 2 servings of fruit a day
- eat 8 servings of vegetables a day

Heal the gut

- reduce or eliminate inflammatory foods
- try peppermint oil capsules
- drink ginger tea
- add in demulcent herbs such as aloe vera and chamomile
- consider supplementing with a digestive healing supplement

Identifying foods that trigger your symptoms and endo belly is really important but we know it's not easy and it can be overwhelming and can add to your stress. It's easy to look back and blame your symptoms on the last thing you ate and this may lead you to a restrictive diet, eliminating things unnecessarily or making many changes all at once.

Try keeping a food and symptom diary. You may find from diary that some of your symptoms may be triggered by certain foods and eliminating these from your daily food intake may be helpful in reducing your symptoms of endometriosis.

After eliminating foods for a month it may be possible to slowly re-introduce specific foods to see how your body tolerates them but continue your food diary to monitor your symptoms to determine if your symptoms improve, stay the same or worsen after reintroducing something.



EXERCISING WITH ENDOMETRIOSIS

Exercise can help with endometriosis symptoms as well as overall health and wellbeing. It's important to find what works best for you and your endometriosis, particularly if you find some types of exercise cause painful flares of symptoms.

HOW MUCH EXERCISE?

The Ministry of Health recommends exercising for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week. It is important that your activity stretches you a little and makes you breathe harder and faster. It should not be painful or cause your symptoms to flare.

Small amounts of activity throughout the day is better than no activity, so don't be fooled into thinking that anything under 30-60 minutes isn't worthwhile. You might want to consider 'snackercise' such as breaking the 30 minutes into three lots of 10 minutes or two lots of 15 minutes. Any physical movement is beneficial.

SUPPORT TO EXERCISE: GREEN PRESCRIPTIONS

If you need help to get more active and make healthy food choices, speak to your doctor or practice nurse about a Green Prescription - a support service that helps you to improve your health and feel better at the same time.

Once you receive your Green Prescription, a trained support person will get in touch to help you get started with a physical activity programme that's right for you, and talk with you about improving your nutrition.

You'll get help with planning regular physical activity to help you stay active. There may also be the opportunity to meet and join other people in your community who are choosing to be more active just like you.

HOW TO EXERCISE WITH ENDOMETRIOSIS

You may find it useful to adjust your exercise intensity and duration throughout your cycle. How you exercise on a good day and during a pain flare-up is going to vary so listen to your body and be flexible. On good days you could work on building fitness and strength, while on bad days choose activities that are calmer and of lower intensity.

Try low-impact aerobics, stretches, or relaxation exercises on bad days. Pilates, Yoga, and Tai Chi are all great mind-body forms of exercise that can get you moving without straining yourself.

On good days build your strength & core with progressive Pilates movements, pelvic floor exercises, or whole-body strength workouts.

Finding the relaxation exercises and strength and core exercises that you enjoy and work best for your body may be a process of trial and error. Don't give up on finding the best physical activity for you.

GETTING STARTED WITH EXERCISE

Below are some tips to get you started with exercise and physical activity:

- Schedule exercise into your day, maybe wake up a little earlier and start your day with some physical activity or try going for a walk during a lunch break.
- Equip yourself with comfortable clothes that you can move freely in, a good pair of trainers so your body is well supported and a water bottle to stay hydrated.
- Finding others to exercise with can help keep you motivated. You might find an exercise buddy, a community exercise class or consider joining a local club.
- Choose what works for you and what you enjoy. If you're not sure, try different exercise and physical activity options - such as yoga, Pilates, dance, Zumba, swimming, water aerobics, brisk walking, cycling, tai-chi, judo, and taekwondo. And don't forget gardening and other hobbies can also be great exercise as well as being rewarding in other ways.
- Keep at it! There may be times that you lose focus or fall out of the habit but come back to exercise and make it a priority to include some exercise and physical activity in your week.
- Set yourself goals and reward yourself. Goals are good focus points and celebration points: set yourself short-term and long-term goals that are realistic and keep track of your achievements. Reward yourself with something that makes you feel good like buying a magazine, book, or scarf, getting a manicure, going to the movies or art exhibition or simply allowing yourself to spend an afternoon, or day, entirely devoted to something that you enjoy.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO EXERCISE

“I’m not well”

While endometriosis flare-ups can make it challenging to exercise, remember the benefits such as pain relief and improvements in mood. On bad days, yoga and a light walk (perhaps in nature) might be beneficial. Any physical activity can be useful on these days.

“I don’t have time”

It’s important to prioritise your health, so schedule activity into your daily routine – perhaps by getting up earlier or fitting a walk into your lunch break. Aim for ‘snackercise’ - if you can't find half an hour try for three 10 minute sessions, use the stairs instead of the lift, park your 10 minutes' walk away from your destination. And remember all activities count - it doesn’t have to be a workout at a gym; gardening and other activities around the home are an important part of your activity routine too.

“I’m too tired”

Remember physical activity actually helps to improve your energy levels and sleep better. Start small and slowly build up as your energy levels increase.

“I can't afford it”

You don’t have to join a gym to exercise! There are lots of free and low-cost options, many of which can be built into daily life – walking, dancing, gardening, and community classes.

EXERCISE TO AVOID

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to this because the severity of the condition and its symptoms vary widely from person to person.

But, in general, try to avoid or limit:

- High-intensity workouts which through an interplay with hormones may further aggravate pain symptoms.
- High-impact exercises may trigger pain through adhesions (scar tissue).
- Abdominal exercises, particularly when already experiencing pain. Working first on relaxing and gently stretching muscles first might be useful.



YOGA FOR ENDOMETRIOSIS

Yoga is a mind-body exercise that works on helping you relax, focus, control your breath, and strengthen your body and your mind.

In Sanskrit (the language spoken in ancient India and the language most yogic texts are written in), yoga means 'to yoke' or tie together. While some forms of yoga have been practised for over 2000 years, the yoga we practice today likely looks quite different from what was practised by Hindu and Buddhist monks thousands of years ago. The monks used to practise yoga to relieve tension in their body so that they could sit in meditation for long periods of time.

By looking at the origins of yoga, we can see that yoga - especially yoga for chronic illness - is about more than just physical postures. It's about the mental state we create using poses, breath work, meditation, mindfulness, visualisation, and other yogic techniques.

While the origins of yoga are spiritual, and the cultural lineage that yoga comes from is widely recognised, there is new understanding of benefits of yoga on calming the central nervous system. Those living with chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, chronic pain, and other illnesses may find relief from their symptoms.

The benefits of yoga

Yoga can offer many benefits for people who are experiencing chronic pain. Some benefits in addition to pain management, include:

- Promoting relaxation
- Increasing psychological wellbeing
- Improving mood
- Reducing stress
- Increasing energy
- Improving mobility and function
- Improving strength, stability, flexibility, and balance
- Protecting the spine and helping to improve posture
- Preventing cartilage and joint breakdown.



insight
ENDOMETRIOSIS

Yoga and chronic pain

Chronic pain can negatively affect muscle strength, breathing patterns, energy levels and even mental health. The practice of yoga can relax, energise and strengthen the body. It can also positively influence mood, emotions and spirit. Practicing yoga restorative poses increases range of motion, which results in better physical functioning. Basic yoga practices, such as meditation and breathing techniques, help to reduce stress, relax the body, calm the mind and the rest of the nervous system. Practicing yoga may reduce inflammation, and therefore, reduce the intensity of chronic pain.

How is yoga beneficial for chronic conditions?

There is no award for being “good” at yoga. Progress is measured by the consistency of your practice not whether or not you can touch your toes or hold plank pose. Yoga accounts for the fact that one day you may be able to do an active flow practice and the next week you might need to do a restorative series in bed. Yoga works with your body, not against it.

In this way it takes a different approach to pacing or graded exercise therapy because, instead of increasing your exercise based on an amount of time, yoga works to meet the needs of your body where it is at every time you practice.

What type of yoga is best for me?

Yin Yoga is often best for chronic pain as it is a slow-paced style, incorporating principles of traditional Chinese medicine, with asanas (body postures) that are held for longer periods of time.

However, with there being many different types of yoga, it is important to find a teacher who understands your condition and is able to make the class accessible to you.

The practice of yoga should not be started during an active flare-up of chronic pain. To learn proper poses or modifications of poses that are appropriate for a specific chronic pain condition, consulting a certified yoga instructor or physical therapist is recommended.



MORNING FLOW YOGA POSES



5 minute meditation

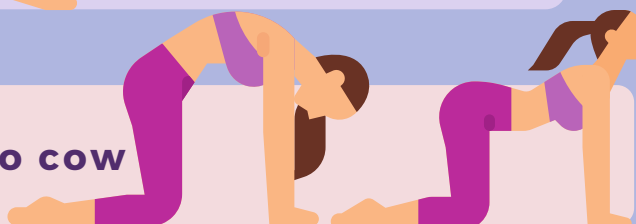
30s cobra pose



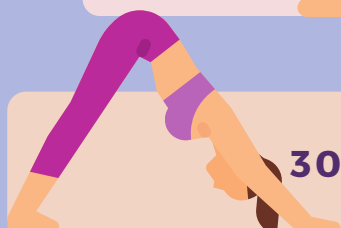
1 minute child's pose



30s cat to cow



30s downward dog



**30s high lunge
on left and right sides**



**30s warrior two
on left and right sides**



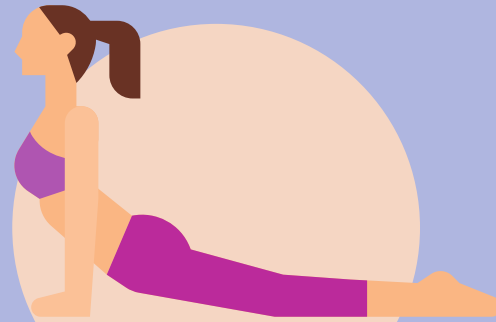
30s malasana



BEFORE BED YOGA POSES



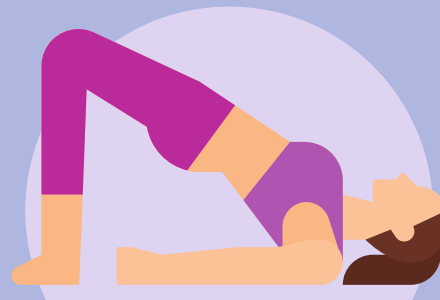
Child pose



Cobra pose



**Legs up
pose**



**Bridge
pose**



**Seated forward
fold pose**

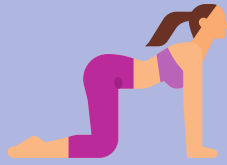


Easy pose

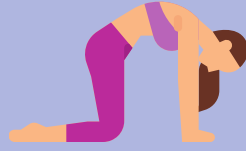


YOGA POSES FOR PAIN

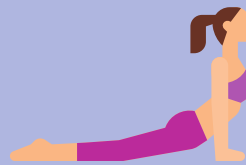
BACK PAIN



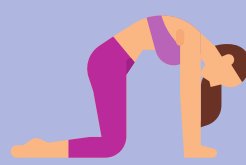
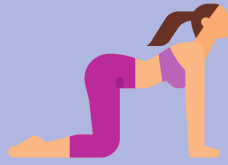
Cat / Cow pose



Cobra pose



Downward-facing dog pose



Eagle pose

Cat / Cow pose

Dolphin pose

Plow pose

SHOULDER PAIN

KNEE PAIN



Bound angle pose



Bridge pose



Extended triangle pose

HIP PAIN



Reclined figure four pose



Boat pose



Child's pose



Seated twist pose



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Handwriting practice area with 20 horizontal dotted lines.

REFERENCES

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](#)

Non-coeliac gluten sensitivity: piecing the puzzle together

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4406911/>

Gluten-free diet: a new strategy for management of painful endometriosis related symptoms?

<http://europepmc.org/article/med/23334113>

Endometriosis in patients with irritable bowel syndrome: Specific symptomatic and demographic profile, and response to the low FODMAP diet

<https://obgyn.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ajo.12594>

Seeing red: diet and endometriosis risk

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6330594/>

A prospective cohort study of meat and fish consumption and endometriosis risk

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29870739/>

The role of iron in the pathogenesis of endometriosis

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19165662/>

REFERENCES

New Zealand Food Composition Data:

<https://www.foodcomposition.co.nz/foodfiles/concise-tables>

The Omega-3 Connection by Andrew L Stoll (MD)

PCOS Diet Book by Colette Harris

'Endometriosis: A Key to Healing Through Nutrition Book by Dian Shepperson Mills

<https://www.verywellmind.com/exercise-and-improving-your-mood-2223781>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression-and-exercise/art-20046495>



DISCLAIMER

This Information Guide reflects current evidence-based research from New Zealand and worldwide at the time of writing. While we endeavour to update as new information becomes available, Insight Endometriosis cannot guarantee or assume legal responsibility for the currency, accuracy, and completeness of the information.

This Information Guide is for educational and support purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical or health advice.

A GP, gynaecologist, or specialist may provide new or different information that is more appropriate to an individual's needs and so Insight Endometriosis advises those seeking a diagnosis, medical advice or treatment to consult their doctor or an appropriate medical professional.

Insight Endometriosis is not responsible for the content of other parties that reference or are referenced within this guide; such references should not be construed as endorsements. Any links to external websites are for your information only, and Insight Endometriosis cannot guarantee their accuracy.

Nothing contained in this guide is, or shall be relied on as, a promise or representation by Insight Endometriosis.

We encourage the distribution and photocopying of the information in this guide to support those affected by endometriosis; please acknowledge 'Insight Endometriosis - Complementary Therapies and Lifestyle Changes for Endometriosis Information Guide' as the source.

We support the Medical Council's statement that:
"... patients may need to be reminded that internet research cannot take the place of a face-to-face consultation."



INSIGHT ENDOMETRIOSIS INFORMATION GUIDES

Insight Endometriosis has the following information guides available on the website:

- Endometriosis Information Guide
- Adenomyosis Information Guide
- Diagnosing Endometriosis in NZ Information Guide
- Surgery and Hormonal Management for Endometriosis in NZ Information Guide
- Endometriosis Pain and Pain Management Information Guide
- Fertility and Endometriosis in NZ Information Guide
- Mental Well-Being and Self-Care with Endometriosis Information Guide
- Talking About Endometriosis with the People in Your Life Information Guide
- Self-Advocacy with Medical Professionals When You Have Endometriosis Information Guide
- Conditions Related to Endometriosis Information Guide
- Being a Teenager with Endometriosis Information Guide
- Supporting Students with Endometriosis Symptoms - A Guide for New Zealand Schools
- An Endometriosis Guide for Employers



insight
ENDOMETRIOSIS

NEED MORE INFORMATION OR SUPPORT?

Visit our website to:

- Book a free/koha-based appointment with our Educator, by zoom, phone, or at our Hamilton office
- Register for a "Let's Talk About...." session
- Join an Endo Meet-Up with other people with Endometriosis (suspected or diagnosed)

CONTACT US

Visit: www.insightendometriosis.org.nz

Email: info@insightendometriosis.org.nz

Call: 07 855 5123



/InsightEndometriosis



/Insight_Endometriosis



/Insight-Endometriosis