

FACT SHEET

ENDOMETRIOSIS SYMPTOMS

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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.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON SYMPTOMS?



Pain that stops you during or around the time of your period (dysmenorrhoea)



Pain during or after intercourse (dyspareunia)



Pain in your pelvic region, lower back or legs



Pain during or around the time of ovulation



Frequent urination or painful urination (dysuria)



Fertility problems



Painful bowel movements (dyschezia)



Cyclical bloated abdomen, constipation, or diarrhoea



Premenstrual spotting



Immune system issues



Constant tiredness / fatigue



Depression, low mood, PMS

You do not need to have all of these symptoms. While period pain that stops you from doing things is the most common symptom, you may have other symptoms that seem vague and unconnected.

WHAT CAN SYMPTOMS BE SIMILAR TO?

- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Pelvic Inflammatory Disease
- Polycystic Ovary Syndrome
- Coeliac Disease
- Fibromyalgia Syndrome
- Ovarian Cancer

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF ENDOMETRIOSIS?

Some people are relatively unaffected by the condition, while a great many others suffer severe pain and distress from problems associated with endometriosis. It tends to be a progressive condition; left untreated it tends to worsen over time. Endometriosis can have a significant impact on people's lives including on:



School



Study



Work



Relationships



Travel

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE SYMPTOMS OF ENDOMETRIOSIS?

The checklist below can help determine if endometriosis should be suspected and you can take this to your GP to discuss your symptoms. You can also keep a symptom diary to share with your GP. Ask for a referral to a gynaecologist specialising in endometriosis. You can also self-refer to many gynaecologists in private practice.

For further information:

- Insight Endometriosis: Endometriosis Factsheet
- Insight Endometriosis: Diagnosing Endometriosis Factsheet
- Insight Endometriosis: Symptom Diary Information Sheet

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>
- Sinaii, Ninet et al. "Differences in characteristics among 1,000 women with endometriosis based on extent of disease." Fertility and sterility vol. 89,3 (2008): 538-45. doi:10.1016/j.fertnstert.2007.03.069 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2939902/>
- Agarwal, et al. (2019). "Clinical diagnosis of endometriosis: a call to action." American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology. 220. 10.1016/j.ajog.2018.12.039 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330190013_Clinical_diagnosis_of_endometriosis_a_call_to_action



Use this checklist to help you decide if you need to seek medical advice:

- Do you take medication for pain at time of period?
- Do you need to take time off work or studies when you have your period?
- Do you need to rest when you have your period?
- Do you have pain during or after sex?
- Do you experience cyclical pain in your pelvic region, lower back or legs?
- Do you have pain midway through your cycle?
- Do you experience pain when you have a full bladder or when urinating?
- Are you, or have you, had fertility problems?
- Are your bowel motions painful, particularly around the time of your period?
- Do you experience cyclical abdominal bloating?
- Do you have diarrhoea or constipation related to your periods?
- Do you suffer from constant tiredness/fatigue?
- Do you experience cyclical depression, mood disturbances or PMS?
- Do you have premenstrual spotting?
- Do you experience heavy bleeding?
- Do you find smear tests painful?
- Do you have a mother, sister, or aunt who has had similar symptoms or been diagnosed with endometriosis?

If you answer 'yes' to a few of these symptoms you may have endometriosis. Take this checklist to your GP or gynaecologist to discuss your symptoms.