

# INFORMATION SHEET

## GYNAECOLOGIST APPOINTMENTS

31 August 2021



Going to a gynaecologist appointment can feel overwhelming, so being well-prepared and having a support person with you can relieve pressure and reduce any feelings of anxiety.

After an initial discussion of symptoms and their impact on your life, your gynaecologist may recommend laparoscopic (key-hole) surgery to definitively diagnosis endometriosis as well as ongoing lifelong treatment options. Below are some things to consider when preparing for your appointment and things to discuss at your appointment

### BEFORE YOUR GYNAECOLOGIST APPOINTMENT

Write down all your symptoms and questions, as well as the medications and supplements you are currently taking.

You may want to ask your gynaecologist similar questions you asked your GP (see our GP Appointment Information Sheet) as well as:

- Will you want me to have an ultrasound or MRI scan? What are you looking for?
- Is a laparoscopy recommended? What will you look for and where?
- Do you think my fertility may be affected? What options should I consider?
- Are there waiting lists for scans, procedures and treatments and how do these work?
- How can I control my symptoms? What other treatments should I consider?

If surgery is suggested you may want to ask the following questions:

- What is the goal of surgery?
- How likely is surgery to help with my pain? And fertility?
- How will you know for certain that I have endometriosis?
- What is your experience with endometriosis surgery? What surgical method/s are you planning to use?:
  - What is your approach to endometrioma?
  - Am I likely to have deeply infiltrating endometriosis (DIE)? What is your approach to deeply infiltrative endometriosis?
  - What is your plan for adhesion prevention?
  - If you find more than expected, what will you do?
- How long will the surgery take?
- What is the typical recovery time after surgery? When can I return to work? When can I have intercourse?
- What complications could arise?
- Under what circumstances would you consider a laparotomy or removal of organs?
- If I want to get pregnant, will this surgery improve my chances of getting pregnant?

- If I never want to become pregnant, would this affect my treatment plan?
- Will surgery permanently remove any endometriosis?
- What are the chances that my pain will return after surgery?
- Is hormone therapy (before or after surgery) part of the treatment plan? Why /why not?
- What are my pain management options while waiting for surgery?

### **DURING THE APPOINTMENT**

It's important not to minimise your symptoms or be vague in any way. Don't say "It's probably nothing". You may not get the care you need and deserve if you under-report your pain and the impacts your symptoms are having on your lifestyle.

Don't be embarrassed about your symptoms. Talk in straightforward language that makes your symptoms clear to your gynaecologist. Simply saying you have "cramps" usually doesn't raise a red flag in the doctor's mind. But telling the doctor you have sharp, knife-like pain in your lower pelvis for five days each month does. By providing specific descriptions, you can play an important role in obtaining a correct diagnosis and treatment plan.

Taking our completed Endometriosis Symptom Tracker will help to discuss with your gynaecologist your symptoms and provide them with as much accurate information as possible to get to a diagnosis and manage your symptoms.

Your gynaecologist will have questions for you, which may be similar to what your GP asked (see our GP Appointment Information Sheet)

### **IF YOU FEEL YOUR GYNAECOLOGIST WASN'T LISTENING**

If your gynaecologist minimises your symptoms, tells you it's all in your head, to "just relax," or recommends pregnancy as a treatment, you may want to consider seeking an appointment with another gynaecologist who listens and understands.

### **AT THE END OF THE APPOINTMENT**

You should be clear at the end of the appointment about the next steps that will now be taken to lead to a diagnosis such as blood tests, ultrasounds, MRI, colonoscopy, and / or laparoscopy and what the expected timeframes are for these. Ask your gynaecologist if, and when you should expect to return for any follow-up appointments.

### FOLLOWING SURGERY

Following surgery, you may want to ask these questions:

- Did you find any endometriosis deposits, lesions, cysts and / or adhesions (scar tissue)?
- Where did you find the endometriosis?
- What stage endometriosis do I have?
- Were you able to remove all the endometriosis?
- What type/s of surgery did you perform?
- Were any of my organs involved?
- Do my incisions look like they're healing well?
- What are my pain management and other treatment options post-surgery and beyond?

For further information:

- Insight Endometriosis: Endo 101 Factsheet
- Insight Endometriosis: Endometriosis Symptoms Factsheet
- Insight Endometriosis: Diagnosing Endometriosis Factsheet
- Insight Endometriosis: Endometriosis Symptoms and Pain Tracker
- Insight Endometriosis Code of Health Services Consumer's Rights Information Sheet
- Insight Endometriosis: Advocating for Yourself Information Sheet
- Insight Endometriosis: Effective Communication Information Sheet
- Insight Endometriosis: GP Appointment Information Sheet

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