

Endometriosis

Patient education

What is endometriosis?

Endometriosis is a condition in which endometrium-like tissue grows outside of the uterus. The endometrium is the tissue that lines the inside of the uterus and is shed at the time of menstruation. In endometriosis, this tissue begins to grow on pelvic organs such as the ovaries, fallopian tubes, vagina, and bowel. It most commonly affects the ovaries, and the inner lining of the pelvis, called the peritoneum.

Every menstrual cycle, the uterus sheds the endometrium, causing bleeding. The endometriosis tissue bleeds at the same time, wherever it is growing outside the uterus. Since blood is irritating to tissues that are not normally exposed to it, this can cause pain. Endometriosis can also make it difficult for a woman to conceive.

What causes endometriosis?

The exact cause of endometriosis is unknown, but a number of theories have been proposed, including:

- Retrograde menstrual flow
- Hematogenous or lymphatic spread
- Coelomic metaplasia
- Disorder of the immune system

What increases the risks of developing endometriosis?

- You have a family history of endometriosis
- You are having trouble getting pregnant
- You started your period at age 10 or younger
- An unusual shape to your uterus that causes blood to reflux

How do I know that I have endometriosis?

- Pain in the pelvis, abdomen, or back with menses
- Pain with vaginal intercourse
- Menstrual cycles that are heavy and/or irregular
- Pain or bleeding with bowel movements
- Difficulty getting pregnant

How is this treated?

This condition has no cure, but symptoms can be managed with the following:

- Anti-inflammatory medicines
- Hormone therapy
- Surgery to remove abnormal tissue
 - Laparoscopy
 - Laparotomy

*****Types of treatments also depend on whether you want to become pregnant in the future***

If you have been diagnosed with endometriosis, please contact your doctor or health care provider immediately if you are experiencing any of the following:

- You are experiencing new and uncontrollable pain
- You are having difficulties getting pregnant
- You have worsening nausea and vomiting with your period

If you have been diagnosed with endometriosis, please get help immediately if you are experiencing any of the following:

- Severe pain that does not improve with medication
- Severe nausea and vomiting, or inability to eat or drink without vomiting
- Pain that only affects the lower, right side of your abdomen
- Pain in your abdomen that worsens over time
- Your abdomen is swollen
- You have blood in your stool

Where can I get more information?

The Endometriosis Network Canada

Website: <https://endometriosisnetwork.com/>

Reference: Endometriosis. (2021, June 10). Elsevier Inc: ClinicalKey for Nursing.

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