



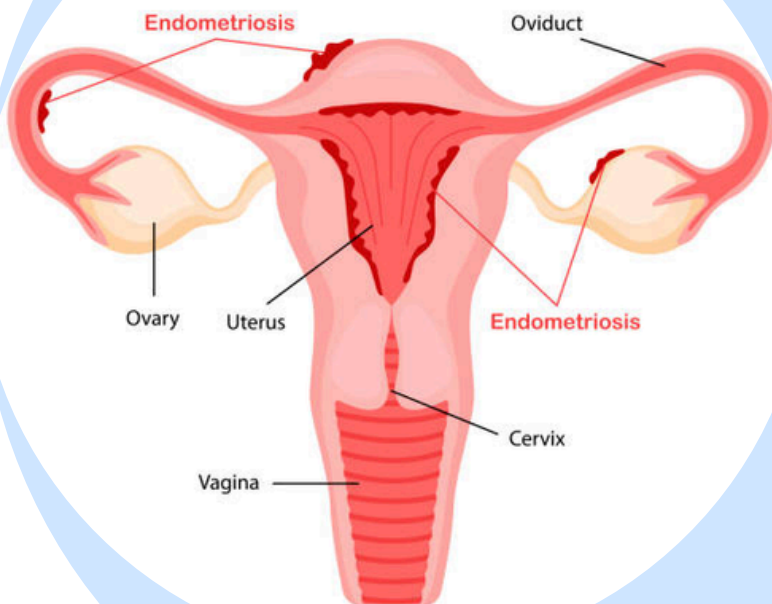
The National Maternity Hospital

Vita Gloriosa Vita ~ Life Glorious Life

Physiotherapy Department

Endometriosis Patient Information Booklet

Endometriosis



Endometriosis is not just bad period pain, pain can occur at anytime in the cycle

At present there is no cure for endometriosis but symptoms can be managed with a range of long-term treatments

Physiotherapy and other conservative treatments can be very effective in managing your pain symptoms

We can help you to find a management plan that works for you



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Endometriosis

What is it?

Causes

Endometriosis is a complex condition that usually affects people from the onset of menstruation right through to menopause. The cause of endometriosis remains unknown. Several theories have been suggested but none fully explain why endometriosis occurs. Endometriosis is a chronic gynaecologic disease characterised by the development and presence of endometrial tissue in anatomical positions and organs outside of the uterine cavity. The main clinical features of the disease are chronic pelvic pain and impaired fertility.

Symptoms

The classic symptoms of endometriosis include:

- Painful periods (dysmenorrhea)
- Pelvic Pain (that radiates down the legs or up the back)
- Pain with sex (dyspareunia)
- Bowel Problems (bloating, constipation, painful bowel movements)
- Fatigue
- Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)
- Abnormal Menstrual Bleeding
- Painful Urination
- Infertility

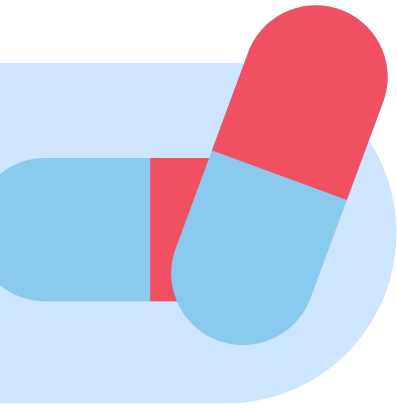


Diagnosis

A definitive diagnosis is only possible with a laparoscopy. A laparoscopy is a surgical technique performed under general anaesthesia in which a thin telescope is inserted into the umbilicus (belly button). This allows your doctor to examine the organs of the pelvis and abdomen. Features of possible endometriosis can be observed in some patients on MRI or ultrasound.

Management

Treatment options



Pharmacological

Medical treatments are most often used as a first-line treatment to alleviate symptoms. They are frequently used in combination with surgery. There are no known medications that will cure endometriosis but it is important to understand how medications work so you can make informed decisions. Medical treatments are either hormonal or non-hormonal. All medical treatments are temporary and are reversed once you stop taking the medicine.



Surgical

Surgery can be done to treat endometriosis and relieve pain by dividing adhesions, removing cysts and/or the endometriosis itself. Laparoscopy (key-hole) is the most common method of surgery for endometriosis since it reduces scarring, pain, and hospital stay while improving visualisation. The degree of the disease is often noted, and images can be taken to explain to you later. Currently, endometriosis is treated by surgeons using either laser ablation or excision.



Conservative

Physiotherapy can be very helpful alongside medical and surgical management of endometriosis by using treatments to reduce inflammation and pain therefore, significantly improving your quality of life. Pain from endometriosis can also be linked with musculoskeletal disorders and muscle imbalances that can be adding to your symptoms and this can be addressed with physiotherapy. We take a whole-body approach to managing pain and can help to guide you in establishing a self-management routine that is individual to your needs. Physiotherapy treatment can include manual therapy, muscle release techniques and individualised exercise prescription.

Treatments

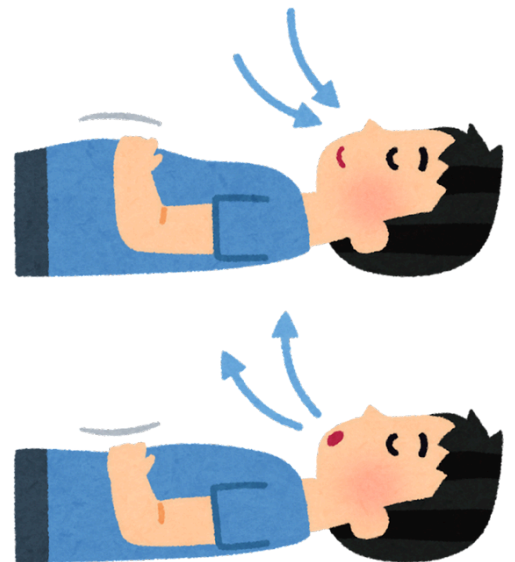
Try at home

Breathing

Learning deep breathing is the first step in learning relaxation skills. Being in pain can often lead us into unhelpful breathing habits which can in turn increase muscle tension especially in the abdominals and pelvic floor. This increased tension in the pelvic floor can contribute to common symptoms of endometriosis such as pelvic pain and pain with sex. However, with a bit of practice changing how you breathe can make a real difference to how you feel.

With deep breathing, you are aiming to breathe right down into the bottom of your lungs. The big band of muscle that is underneath the lungs, called the diaphragm, then relaxes down and this makes the belly expand. Imagine sending your breath into the back and sides of your ribs as your tummy relaxes out. Try to practice this for at least 15 minutes per day.

You can find some videos on diaphragm breathing to relax the pelvic floor here:  **YouTube**



Stretches

Gentle stretches can help to loosen and relax the muscles inside and outside the pelvis which can be contributing to pain.

Find a gentle stretching programme for the pelvis here:



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Treatments

Try at home

TENS

A TENS machine is a small battery-powered device with leads that are attached to sticky electrodes that you place on your skin. When turned on, it sends small, comfortable, electrical impulses through the skin. The feeling is like pins and needles or a tingly sensation. TENS works by causing your body to release natural painkillers called endorphins. Research has shown that people with endometriosis using a TENS machine at home for pain relief don't need to use as much medication. TENS can also help increase the length of time your pain is reduced. This can be very empowering, allowing you to be more in control of how you manage your symptoms. It can also improve your quality of life and allow you to do the things you enjoy without pain.

You can click on diagrams on right to browse some options for TENS units specific for endometriosis pain



tap.



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HEALTHCARE

Yoga

A study evaluated the effect of yoga on symptoms of endometriosis. The results indicated that participants found yoga to be beneficial in controlling pelvic pain and in overall pain management. The study also showed that women with endometriosis who had undergone the eight-week yoga course had better self-control and self-awareness with reduced use of pain and psychiatric medications. Free yoga resources can be found here:

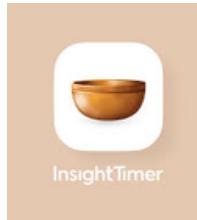


YOGA with
ADRIENE

Treatments

Try at home

Meditation



We know that living with endometriosis can be not only physically but also emotionally draining. The causes of psychological stress include coping with pain, fatigue, and the side effects of medication. Coping with some of these realities might become easier with a mindfulness practice.

Research has shown that mindfulness meditation can improve pain symptoms and depression symptoms, thereby improving quality of life.

Some useful apps for meditation are insight timer or the calm app which have some free content, you can also find many free meditations on youtube.



Apps

Click on image to download app



Frendo



Endometrix



Luna for Health

Useful websites: click on icon

<https://www.endometriosis.ie>

<http://www.endometriosis-uk.org>

<https://www.pelvicpain.org.au>

<http://www.endozone.com.au>

<https://www.healendo.com>



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