

Endometriosis

The lining inside of the uterus is called the endometrium. Sometimes cells from it grow outside of the uterus in the abdomen or in some other areas of the body. This is called endometriosis. It can cause scar tissue to build up around your organs.

Women in their 20s, 30s, and 40s are most likely to notice problems. Teens and women past menopause can have them, too.

Signs and Symptoms

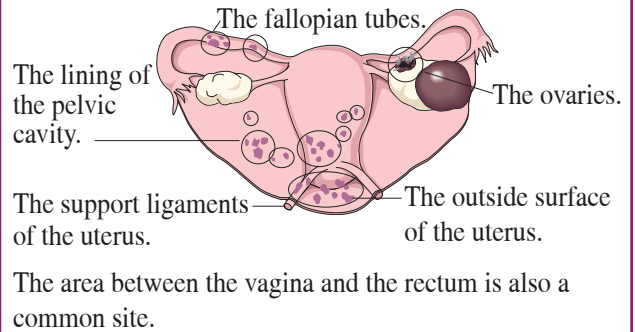
- Pain before and during menstrual periods. The pain is usually worse than normal menstrual cramps.
- Pain during or after sex.
- Pain when passing urine.
- Lower back pain. Painful bowel movements. Loose stools with menstrual periods.
- The pelvis feels sore or tender.
- Spotting of blood before a monthly period starts.
- Menstrual periods are longer or heavier than normal.
- Infertility.

Some females have no pain.

Causes

The exact cause is not known. It could be that some of the lining of the uterus moves backwards through the fallopian tubes into the abdominal cavity. It then attaches and grows in these places. It could also be due to problems with the immune system and/or hormones. The condition may also run in families.

Common Sites of Endometriosis



A gynecologist diagnoses endometriosis. He or she can examine the organs in the abdomen and pelvis to find out the extent of the problem. To do this, the doctor inserts a slim telescope through a very small opening made in the navel. This is done in an outpatient setting.

Treatment

Surgery Options

- One type uses a very small, lighted tube to remove or destroy areas of endometriosis. This reduces pain. It allows pregnancy to occur in some women.



Surgery may be needed to treat endometriosis in some women.

- Another type removes the ovaries. The fallopian tubes and uterus can also be removed. This gets rid of the pain. A woman can't get pregnant after this is done.

Endometriosis, continued

Medication Therapy Options

- Pain medicines. These include over-the-counter medicines, such as ibuprofen and naproxen sodium.
- Birth control pills. These are given in a certain way to stop ovulation and menstruation for a set amount of time. They are used for very mild cases.
- Anti-estrogens. These cause a woman's body to make less estrogen.
- Progestin. This destroys endometrial cells.
- Drugs called GnRH agonists. These stop the body from making estrogen. This causes a temporary "menopause."

Questions to Ask

Do you have a lot of pain at any of these times?

- During sex.
- With monthly menstrual periods and this has gotten worse over time.
- When you pass urine.

YES



NO

Do you have any of these problems?

- Spotting of blood before your period starts.
- Menstrual periods are heavier or last longer than normal.

YES



NO



See Self-Care / Prevention in next column

Self-Care / Prevention

Endometriosis needs medical treatment. What can you do?

- Do regular exercise.
- Eat a diet high in nutrients and low in fat, especially saturated fat. This is mostly found in hydrogenated vegetable oils (*trans* fats), animal sources of fat, and coconut and palm oils.

- Take an over-the-counter medicine for pain. Ask your doctor which one(s) he or she prefers you take.



Do exercises you enjoy and look forward to doing.

For Information, Contact:

Endometriosis Association (EA)
800.992.3636
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