

Endometriosis: What You Need to Know

What is Endometriosis?

- Endometriosis is an inflammatory disorder where tissue similar to the lining of the uterus (endometrium) grows in places outside of the uterine cavity and onto other organs.
- This tissue growth can cause a variety of symptoms, such as pain, inflammation, scar tissue, organ dysfunction, adhesions on other organs, severe menstrual pain, bowel and bladder dysfunction, pain with intercourse, pelvic floor dysfunction, and fertility problems, among others.
- Since endometriosis lesions mimic the endometrium (lining of the uterus), they can produce their own estrogen as well as respond to estrogen in the body. Due to this, people with endometriosis tend to have high estrogen levels or an estrogen dominance.
- Endometriosis occurs in approximately 1 in 10 females, though in rare cases, it can also occur in males.
- It takes an average of 10 years for most individuals to receive a diagnosis of endometriosis.
- There is still no consensus in research in regards to the origin of endometriosis, though recent findings suggest that lesions can be present in individuals before birth. There is continual research on seeking out a genetic link to endometriosis.

How is Endometriosis Diagnosed?

- The gold standard of diagnosing endometriosis involves a biopsy of the suspicious tissue during surgery and confirmation of the disorder by a pathologist.
- A minimally invasive surgery called laparoscopy is typically used to diagnose and treat endometriosis. Laparoscopy is a technique where a small camera is inserted into small incisions in the pelvis or abdomen.
- While some physicians might utilize ultrasounds or MRIs to try and see if endometriosis is present, these techniques, unfortunately, cannot always account for superficial endometriosis lesions, which are often missed on imaging.

Endometriosis Management

- Experts and researchers on endometriosis care suggest that laparoscopic excision of endometriosis lesions is one of the best ways to treat the disorder.
- With excision surgery, it removes the lesions at the root and can relieve many of the symptoms of endometriosis.
- It is important to note that a surgeon who specializes in endometriosis removal is preferred in order to ensure that lesions that are small or difficult to spot are completely removed.
- Outside of surgical treatment, other treatment options might include hormone medications or supplements as suggested by the surgeon or OB/GYN, a low inflammatory diet, mental health support, and pelvic health physical therapy.

How Does Endometriosis Impact the Pelvic Floor?

- Endometriosis and pelvic floor dysfunction often go hand-in-hand.
- Symptoms such as cramping or severe pelvic pain, pain with intercourse, difficulties emptying bladder or bowels, urinary frequency and urgency, pain with urination as well as constipation can all be a result of endometriosis and pelvic floor dysfunction.
- When there are endometriosis lesions or adhesions present, they can cause surrounding pelvic floor muscles to contract and guard due to the pain.
- As this occurs repeatedly over time, it can cause areas such as the pelvic floor muscles, vagina, rectum, abdomen, and back to have too much muscle tension.

How Can Pelvic Floor Therapy Help?

- Pelvic floor physical therapy can aid endometriosis symptoms in a variety of ways. First, it can help relieve tension in the pelvic floor muscles through internal pelvic floor release as well as via stretches.
- Other pelvic floor therapy techniques can include functional strengthening exercises for the core and hips to help support engagement in daily activities with less pain and symptoms.
- Use of modalities such as dry needling, e-stim, cupping, and scraping can also be useful tools to relieving pain associated with endometriosis.
- Some additional benefits include education on pain management strategies, bowel and bladder health, and healthy habit and routine building, among others.
- Finally, pelvic floor therapy can address the mental health impact of living with a chronic illness by teaching relaxation techniques, coping skills, and by providing a safe space for individuals living with endometriosis to share their stories and emotions.

Endometriosis Resources:

Below is a list of reputable online endometriosis resources and information:

- Nancy's Nook Endometriosis Education Facebook Group - Must be approved by the admins to be part of the group
- Endometriosis Specialist and Expert | iCareBetter - Includes a directory of physicians, surgeons, and pelvic floor therapists that specialize in treating endometriosis around the world: www.icarebetter.com
- Endometriosis, Foundation, Endometriosis Foundation Of America | EndoFound - Advocacy and research group; www.endofound.org
- Endometriosis Health Info & Community - Community group: www.endometriosis.net



Questions?

Call or text us to speak to a certified expert today!

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