

Endometriosis Fact Sheet

This information package is not a substitute for a medical opinion. It is designed as an educational reference to allow you to make more informed decisions in consultation with your doctor. Much of what is conveyed during a consultation can be forgotten, this package is here to help remind you of various points that may have been discussed in your consultation and the suggestion of your tailor-made care plan.

WHAT IS ENDOMETRIOSIS?

Endometriosis is a common condition that affects about one in 9 women and those who identify as gender diverse. It is a condition where tissue similar to the lining of endometrium, which normally lines the uterus, is found in abnormal sites around the body. Most often though, endometriosis is found in the pelvis. These deposits can cause a number of symptoms such as pelvic pain and infertility. It is possible that you can have endometriosis and not have either of these symptoms. The degree of symptoms does not always indicate the damage the disease is causing.

HOW IS THE DIAGNOSIS MADE?

The only way that the diagnosis of endometriosis can be made is to undergo a laparoscopy and have a biopsy (tissue sample) taken. A laparoscopy is a surgical procedure, performed under a general anaesthetic where a thin telescope is placed into the umbilicus (belly button). This allows your doctor to see inside your abdomen and assess the organs of the pelvis and abdomen. A laparoscopy can magnify the tissues and even small amounts of disease can be seen. Tissue that is thought to contain endometriosis is removed at the time of the laparoscopy and sent to the pathologist to be viewed under a microscope to confirm the diagnosis. For further information on laparoscopy, please visit our website or consult your health practitioner.

Sometimes the diagnosis is suggested without having a laparoscopy. This may be due to the fact that your doctor can feel tissues in your pelvis that are affected by endometriosis, can see an endometriosis cyst affecting your ovary or other pelvic organ or very occasionally see the endometriosis if it has grown through the vagina. Remember that the only way to be 100% certain of the diagnosis is to have a laparoscopy and/or biopsy.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR ENDOMETRIOSIS?

There are three kinds of treatments for endometriosis:

1. Medical treatments (medications)
2. Surgical treatments (involving an operation)
3. Allied treatments (physiotherapy, psychology, alternate medicine, etc)

You should discuss the differences in the treatments with your doctor before starting a treatment. There are advantages and disadvantages to all the types of treatments and you may need to have several treatments of different types before finding the right combination for you.

WHAT IS THE BEST TREATMENT FOR ENDOMETRIOSIS?

There is no 'best treatment', since treatments will work differently for everyone. You should be aware of the different kinds of treatments, and their possible effects, side effects and/or complications. A combination of treatments can be used to assist in the relief of symptoms associated with endometriosis. Currently, there is no cure.