

All About Endometriosis



What is endometriosis?

The tissue that lines the uterus is called the endometrium. Normally, if a woman doesn't get pregnant, this tissue is shed each month during her period. In endometriosis, tissue that looks and acts like endometrial tissue implants outside the uterus. Each month, this misplaced tissue responds to the hormonal changes of the menstrual cycle. It builds up, breaks down and bleeds. But the blood has nowhere to go. This causes surrounding tissue to become inflamed or swollen. It can also cause scar tissue, chronic pain and heavy periods.

What are the symptoms of endometriosis?

Each woman may experience symptoms differently, but these are the most common symptoms:

- Pain and cramps that may be felt in the belly or lower back during your period
- Pain during sex
- Abnormal or heavy menstrual flow
- Infertility
- Fatigue
- Painful urination during your periods
- Painful bowel movements during your periods
- Other digestive problems, such as diarrhea, constipation or nausea

Does endometriosis affect fertility?

Endometriosis is a main cause of infertility in women. No one knows exactly how, but some possible reasons include:

- Patches of endometriosis block off or change the shape of the pelvis and reproductive organs. This can make it harder for the sperm to find the egg.
- The immune system, which normally helps defend the body against disease, attacks the embryo.
- The endometrium (the layer of the uterine lining where implantation happens) does not develop as it should.

If you have endometriosis and are having trouble getting pregnant, talk to your doctor. They can recommend treatments, such as surgery to remove the endometrial growths.

How is endometriosis treated?

Your healthcare provider will consider your age, overall health symptoms and other factors when advising what treatment is best for you. Whether or not you hope to become pregnant will also play a role in your choices. Treatment options include medicine, surgery or both.



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