



## March is National Endometriosis Awareness Month

Endometriosis is a reproductive disease that occurs when fragments of tissue that line the uterus remain inside the body, instead of exiting during normal menstruation. These tissue fragments implant themselves in areas of the body, and respond to normal hormonal commands. The result is internal bleeding, degeneration of blood and tissue shed from the growths, inflammation of the surrounding areas, and formation of painful adhesions and scar tissue.

### Facts

- Affects over 175 million females worldwide
- Most commonly found in the reproductive organs, but can be located in nearly every part of the body, including the brain, sciatic nerve, lungs, and skin
- There is no cure for Endometriosis. Even having a hysterectomy or removing the ovaries does not guarantee that the endometriosis areas and/or the symptoms of endometriosis will not come back.

### What are some of the symptoms?

Endometriosis symptoms can be varied and often resemble the symptoms of other conditions such as appendicitis, ovarian cysts, colon cancer, and diverticulitis. The following are some of the common signs:

- Debilitating period pain and/or intermittent pelvic or abdominal pain at any time during cycle
- Infertility, miscarriage, or ectopic (tubal) pregnancy
- Pain associated with sexual intercourse, if active
- Allergies which tend to worsen around time of period
- Family history of endometriosis

- Gastrointestinal upset and discomfort during cycle, sometimes misdiagnosed as “irritable bowel syndrome”
- Bladder pain or discomfort, particularly around period; may be diagnosed as a urinary tract infection or interstitial cystitis

### How is it diagnosed? What about treatment?

There are a number of tests for endometriosis, including imaging tests to produce a “picture” of the inside of the body. The only accurate way to diagnose the condition, however, is surgery. The most common type of surgery is called **laparoscopy**. It is imperative that all the diseased tissue is removed from all areas. Any Endometriosis left behind will continue to cause pain and symptoms. There are a number of treatments for both pain and infertility related to endometriosis. Treatments may include pain medication, hormone therapy, or surgical procedures. Some women may have less pain from endometriosis after pregnancy, but the reason for this is unclear. In most cases, the symptoms of endometriosis lessen after menopause because the growths gradually get smaller. For some women, however, this is not the case.

### When to contact a Medical Professional

Call for an appointment with your health care provider if:

- You have symptoms of endometriosis
- Back pain or other symptoms come back after endometriosis is treated

Consider getting screened for endometriosis if your mother or sister has been diagnosed with endometriosis, or if you are unable to become pregnant.