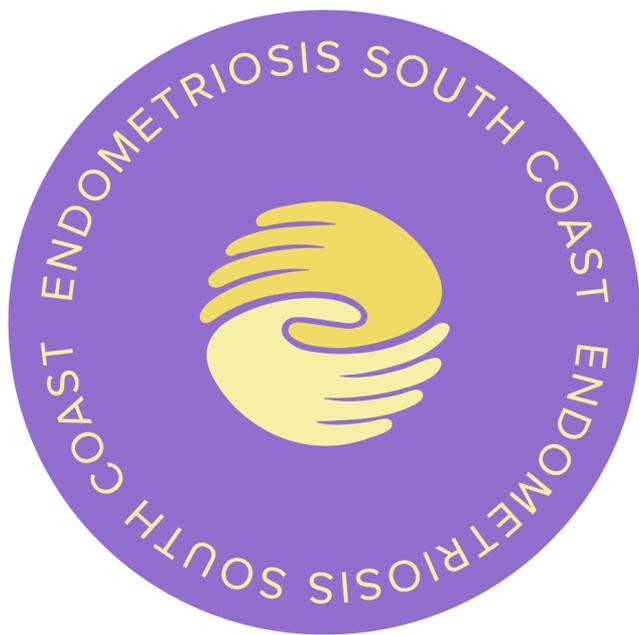


Endometriosis: How is it diagnosed?





In the UK, it takes an average of 8 years and 10 months to receive a diagnosis of endometriosis.¹

Speaking to your GP

If you think you have endometriosis and you're experiencing symptoms that interfere with your everyday life, it's important to talk to your GP as soon as possible.

When you visit your GP, they will assess your symptoms, medical history, and family history. The GP might refer you for blood tests, do a physical exam, or offer medicine to help manage your symptoms.

Some symptoms of endometriosis can overlap with other conditions such as adenomyosis, irritable bowel syndrome, and fibroids.

Keeping a symptom diary can help you track your symptoms over time and provide your GP with useful information.

Your GP cannot diagnose endometriosis, but they can refer you for additional tests to help understand the cause of your symptoms.

[1 Dismissed, ignored and belittled" The long road to endometriosis diagnosis in the UK, Endometriosis UK, 2024](#)

Tracking your symptoms

Endometriosis symptoms can overlap with other conditions and vary from person to person, so keeping a symptom diary can help track your symptoms over time.

Tracking the timing, severity, and nature of your symptoms can help provide a clearer picture for your GP or healthcare professional.

You might include:

- Dates of your menstrual cycle
- Type and location of pain
- Energy levels and fatigue
- Emotional wellbeing
- Other symptoms of endometriosis



Ultrasound

An ultrasound scan may be recommended to look for physical signs of endometriosis and rule out other possible causes for your symptoms.

What is an ultrasound scan?

An ultrasound scan uses high-frequency sound waves to see live images of the inside of the body. Ultrasound scans are not dangerous and have no known side effects.²

What happens during an ultrasound scan?

Usually, you will be offered an internal ultrasound scan. This is where an ultrasound probe is inserted into your vagina. This is known as a “transvaginal scan”.²

Some people can find internal ultrasounds painful. An external ultrasound scan might be offered instead if an internal ultrasound isn’t suitable.

During an external ultrasound, a probe is moved across your skin on the body part that is being scanned. You might be asked to take deep breaths or to move into different positions to get different images.²

An ultrasound scan can take between 15 and 30 minutes. The process will be explained to you before the scan begins.²

Remember

- Ultrasound scans can be useful for ruling out other conditions.
- You are in control of the scan and can ask the person performing it to stop at any point.
- Sometimes endometriosis may not be seen during an ultrasound scan, but this does not always mean you do not have the condition.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)

An MRI scan may be recommended to look for physical signs of deep infiltrating endometriosis.

What is an MRI scan?

An MRI scan uses magnets and radio waves to create detailed images of the inside of the body.³

MRI scans are usually safe, but some people may feel anxious in the scanner, experience discomfort from the loud noise, or have risks if they have metal implants, allergies to contrast dye, or are pregnant.³

What happens during an MRI scan?

Usually, you will change into a hospital gown and remove any metal items, and you may be given an injection of dye to help the pictures show more clearly.³

You will lie still on a table that moves into a large tube-shaped machine, which makes loud noises, but you will be given earplugs or headphones and can talk to the radiographer at any time.³

An MRI scan can take between 15 and 90 minutes. The process will be explained to you before the scan begins.³

Remember

If you feel worried about having an MRI scan or are afraid of small spaces, speak to your GP or healthcare professional.

- MRI scans can be useful for ruling out other conditions.
- You are in control of the scan and can ask the person performing it to stop at any point.
- Sometimes endometriosis may not be seen during an MRI scan, but this does not always mean you do not have the condition.

Computed Tomography (CT)

CT scans are not a first-line test for diagnosing endometriosis and are not commonly used to look for pelvic endometriosis.

However, they may be helpful in specific situations, such as detecting endometriosis outside of the pelvis, including thoracic endometriosis.⁴

What is CT scan?

A CT scan uses X-rays and a computer to create detailed images of inside the body.⁵

CT scans use a small amount of radiation to take pictures of your body, usually about the same as the natural radiation you get over a few months to a few years, and the machines are made to keep this as low as possible.⁵



⁴ Radionaedia: Thoracic Endometriosis 2025
⁵ CT Scan (or CAT scan): Nuffield Health 2026

What happens during a CT scan?

Usually, you will change into a hospital gown, and you may be given an injection of dye to help the pictures show more clearly.⁵

You will lie on a table that moves into a large ring-shaped machine. You may be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds while the scan is taken.⁵

Most CT scan appointments last about 30 minutes, even though the scan itself takes seconds.⁵

Remember

- CT scans can be useful for ruling out other conditions.
- You are in control of the scan and can ask the person performing it to stop at any point.
- Sometimes endometriosis may not be seen during a CT scan, but this does not always mean you do not have the condition.

Laparoscopy

You may be referred for a laparoscopy. This usually happens once you've had one or more scans.

What is a laparoscopy?

A laparoscopy is a type of keyhole surgery used both to diagnose and treat conditions like endometriosis.⁶

Laparoscopy is considered the 'gold standard' for diagnosing endometriosis because it allows the surgeon to take a biopsy. A biopsy involves removing a small sample of tissue for examination under a microscope.⁷

At Endometriosis South Coast, we recognise the importance of receiving a timely and accurate diagnosis, and it is important that the laparoscopy is performed by a specialist who is skilled in identifying endometriosis. This reduces the risk of a missed diagnosis.

In the UK, you can find a British Society for Gynaecological Endoscopy (BSGE) accredited Endometriosis Centre [here](#).

What happens during a laparoscopy?

You will be put to sleep for a laparoscopy (general anaesthetic), so you will not be awake or feel any pain.⁶

⁶ [Laparoscopy, Nuffield Health 2026](#)

⁷ [Biopsy, NHS 2025](#)



Small cuts are made near your belly button, and a camera is used to look inside your abdomen. Gas is used to create space so the surgeon can see clearly.⁶

The surgeon will check for endometriosis and may treat it during the same surgery, or they might plan a second surgery if needed.

We have more information about what surgery to treat endometriosis involves.

After the surgery, the gas is removed, and the cuts are closed with stitches that dissolve on their own.⁶

If you are having a diagnostic laparoscopy, you can usually go home the same day. Most people feel back to normal within 3-4 weeks.⁶

Remember

- Sometimes endometriosis may not be seen during a laparoscopy, but this does not always mean you do not have the condition.
- After the surgery, you might feel pain in your abdomen or shoulder.
- Some people may need to stay in the hospital overnight.
- There are some risks with a laparoscopy, including infection, minor bleeding, and bruising. Your healthcare professional will explain these risks to you in more detail before your laparoscopy.



You are in control of your diagnostic journey, and you might decide that you do not want to have any scans or surgery at the moment.

If you change your mind later, you can still choose to have scans or surgery in the future whenever you are ready, and you do not have to rush into any decisions.

We're here to support you



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[Facebook Support Group](#)



Help Us Keep Going

We're a volunteer-led organisation working to improve lives through education, advocacy, and community support.

If you'd like to support our work:

- Share this resource
- Donate or get involved
- Invite us to speak at your school, university, workplace, or event
- Follow us on social media

Every small action helps create a big change.

Legal & Accessibility Notes

This resource is for educational purposes and should not replace medical advice. If you're concerned about symptoms, please consult a healthcare professional.

Large print and accessible formats are available upon request — [just get in touch](#).

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