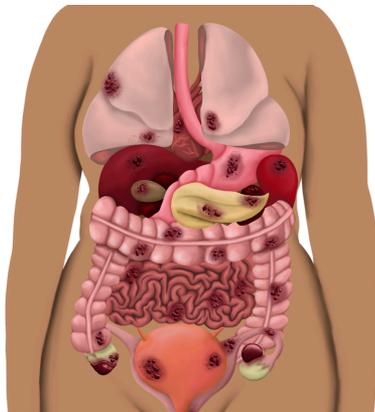


What is **Endometriosis?**



What is endometriosis?

Endometriosis (pronounced *en-do-mee-tree-oh-sis*) is a full-body, or ‘systemic’, disease where cells and tissue similar to the lining of the womb (uterus) grow in other parts of the body.



Endometriosis commonly affects areas in the pelvic area, such as the ovaries, fallopian tubes, pelvic lining, bladder, or bowel. Although less common, endometriosis has been found outside of the pelvis, such as on the diaphragm.

Unlike the womb lining (endometrium), endometriosis does not follow the menstrual cycle pattern by building up, bleeding, and shedding. Instead, endometriosis can form surface, or ‘superficial’, patches, or deeply invasive growths, known as ‘deep infiltrative endometriosis’.

What are the symptoms?

Endometriosis can cause a range of symptoms.

Common symptoms include:

- Pelvic pain
- Painful periods that stop your normal activities
- Heavy periods
- Bleeding between periods
- Pain during or after sex
- Low back pain
- Leg pain
- Infertility or difficulties conceiving
- Painful bowel movements or urination
- Digestive issues like bloating, diarrhoea, or constipation
- Extreme tiredness or lack of energy (fatigue)

It is important to remember that symptoms vary from person to person.

How endometriosis impacts the body

Musculoskeletal system



- Low back pain
- Leg pain
- Pelvic floor dysfunction

Systemic

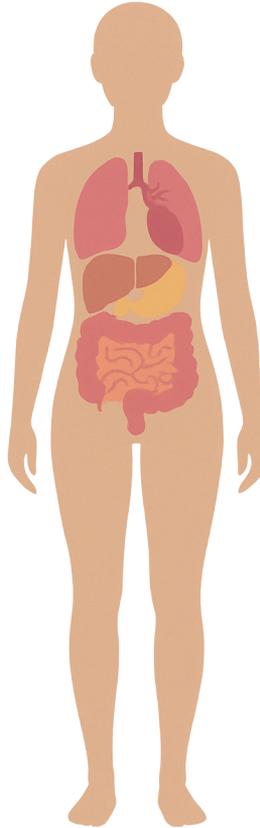


- Fatigue
- Chronic inflammation
- Altered immune activity

Urinary system



- Pain before, during, or after urination



Reproductive system



- Painful periods
- Heavy periods
- Bleeding between periods
- Pain during or after sex
- Irregular periods
- Infertility or difficulties conceiving

Digestive system



- Pain before, during, or after a bowel movement
- Bloating
- Diarrhoea
- Constipation

It is important to remember that symptoms vary from person to person.

What causes endometriosis?

The cause of endometriosis is **unknown** and there is **no cure**.

However, several theories to explain its cause exist, including:

- Family history (genetic predisposition)
- Immune system involvement
- Environmental factors

Who is affected?

Endometriosis affects an estimated 1 in 7-10 people assigned female at birth.



It typically gets diagnosed in reproductive years, however people of all ages can be affected by endometriosis.



How is endometriosis diagnosed?

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

The process usually begins with a visit to your GP, who will assess your symptoms, medical history, and family history.

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.

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

In some cases, your doctor may recommend more detailed imaging, such as an MRI or CT scan.

Sometimes endometriosis may not be seen during scans, but this does not always mean you do not have the condition.

¹Dismissed, ignored and belittled" The long road to endometriosis diagnosis in the UK, Endometriosis UK, 2024.

Your doctor may also recommend a laparoscopy. This is a type of keyhole surgery used both to diagnose and treat conditions like endometriosis.

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.

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](#).



Treatment of endometriosis

While there is no cure for endometriosis, there are different treatment options available.

Surgical treatment

Surgical treatment for endometriosis involves a laparoscopy, a type of keyhole surgery used to both diagnose and treat the condition.

During the surgery, the surgeon may remove endometriosis tissue. They may also separate organs that have become stuck together due to scar tissue (adhesions) and remove cysts (endometriomas) from the ovaries.

Surgery may sometimes be required to remove endometriosis from other areas, such as the bladder, bowel, or chest.

Sometimes, endometriosis can return after surgery, and you may need additional surgeries if your symptoms come back or if new adhesions form.

Pain management

As pain is a common symptom of endometriosis, effective pain management can help relieve these symptoms.

Deciding on the right pain management depends on many factors, and you will need to speak with your doctor to find what works for you.



Hormonal treatment

Hormonal treatments are commonly recommended to manage symptoms associated with endometriosis.

Deciding on the right hormonal treatment depends on many factors, and you will need to speak with your doctor to find what works for you.

Alternative treatment options

Non-surgical and non-medical treatment options can also help to reduce symptoms and improve your quality of life.

For example:

- Diet and nutrition
- Mental health support
- Physical exercise
- Sleep hygiene and rest

We recommend speaking to your doctor before implementing any alternative treatment options into your existing treatment plan.

Reminder

Each person's treatment journey is individual to them, and what works for one person may not work for you.

The approach that is best for you will depend on different factors, such as your age, medical history, the severity of your symptoms, whether you plan to have children, and the potential risks of side effects and complications.



Endometriosis and daily life

Symptoms of endometriosis, such as pain and fatigue, can impact many areas of life, including school, work, relationships, and emotional wellbeing.

Seeking medical help, joining support groups, and talking openly about the condition can help manage these challenges.

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](#).

Endometriosis South Coast is a registered charity in England and Wales (1186203). Registered office: The Hive Hub, 22 Edinburgh Road, Portsmouth, PO1 1DH