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# Endometriosis

**Also called:** Endo

## What is endometriosis?

The uterus, or womb, is the place where a fetus grows during pregnancy. The uterus is lined with tissue (endometrium). Endometriosis is a disease in which tissue like the lining of the uterus grows in other places in your body. These patches of tissue are called "implants," "nodules," or "lesions." They are most often found:

- On or under the ovaries
- On the fallopian tubes, which carry eggs from the ovaries to the uterus
- Behind the uterus
- On the tissues that hold the uterus in place
- On the bowels or bladder

In rare cases, the tissue may grow on your lungs or in other parts of your body.

## What causes endometriosis?

Researchers don't know what causes endometriosis.

## Who is at risk for endometriosis?

Endometriosis can affect anyone who menstruates. Certain factors can raise or lower your risk of getting it.

You are at higher risk if:

- You have a mother, sister, or daughter with endometriosis
- Your period started before age 11
- Your monthly cycles are short (less than 27 days)
- Your menstrual cycles are heavy and last more than 7 days

You have a lower risk if:

- You have been pregnant before
- Your periods started late in adolescence
- You breastfeed your babies

## What are the symptoms of endometriosis?

The main symptoms of endometriosis are:

- Pelvic pain [<https://medlineplus.gov/pelvicpain.html>] , which often happens during your period
- Infertility [<https://medlineplus.gov/femaleinfertility.html>]

Other possible symptoms include:

- Painful menstrual cramps [<https://medlineplus.gov/periodpain.html>] , which may get worse over time
- Pain during or after sex
- Pain in the intestine or lower abdomen [<https://medlineplus.gov/abdominalpain.html>]
- Pain with bowel movements (pooping) or urination (peeing), usually during your period
- Heavy periods [<https://medlineplus.gov/menstruation.html>]
- Spotting or bleeding [<https://medlineplus.gov/vaginalbleeding.html>] between periods
- Digestive or gastrointestinal symptoms
- Fatigue or lack of energy

## How is endometriosis diagnosed?

Surgery is the only way to know for sure that you have endometriosis. First, however, your health care provider will ask about your symptoms and medical history. You will have a pelvic exam and may have some imaging tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/diagnosticimaging.html>] .

The most common surgery to diagnose endometriosis is a laparoscopy [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/laparoscopy/>] . This is a type of surgery that uses a laparoscope, a thin tube with a camera and light. The surgeon inserts the laparoscope through a small cut in the skin near your belly button. Your provider can make a diagnosis based on how the patches of endometriosis look. They may also do a biopsy [<https://medlineplus.gov/biopsy.html>] to get a tissue sample.

## What are the treatments for endometriosis?

There is no cure for endometriosis, but there are treatments for the symptoms. Your provider will work with you to decide which treatments would be best for you.

**Treatments for endometriosis pain** include:

- Pain relievers [<https://medlineplus.gov/painrelievers.html>] , including nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen and a prescription medicine specifically for endometriosis. Providers may sometimes prescribe opioids for severe pain.
- **Hormone therapy**, which stops the ovaries from making hormones. This may slow the growth of the endometrial tissue and may stop new areas from growing. Types of hormone therapy include:
  - Birth control pills [<https://medlineplus.gov/birthcontrol.html>] .
  - Progestin therapy.
  - Gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) medicines (GnRH agonists and antagonists). These medicines cause a temporary menopause [<https://medlineplus.gov/menopause.html>] . After you stop taking the medicines, your menstrual periods will start again, and pregnancy is possible.
- **Surgical treatments** for severe pain, including procedures to remove the endometriosis patches or cut some nerves in the pelvis. The surgery may be a laparoscopy or major surgery.

**Treatments for infertility caused by endometriosis** include:


- **Laparoscopy** to remove the endometriosis patches
- In vitro fertilization [<https://medlineplus.gov/assistedreproductivetechnology.html>]

*NIH: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development*



## Start Here

- Endometriosis [<https://womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/endometriosis>]  
(Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health)  
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/endometriosis>]
- Endometriosis [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/endometriosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20354656?p=1>]  
(Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/endometriosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20354656?p=1>]


# Symptoms

- What Are the Symptoms of Endometriosis? [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/endometri/conditioninfo/symptoms>]  (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)  
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/endometri/informacion/sintomas>]


# Diagnosis and Tests

- Abdominal exploration - series [[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100049\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100049_1.htm)] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [[https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp\\_presentations/100049\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100049_1.htm)]
- How Do Health Care Providers Diagnose Endometriosis? [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/endometri/conditioninfo/diagnose>]  (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)  
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/endometri/informacion/diagnostica>]
- Laparoscopy [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/laparoscopy/>]  (National Library of Medicine)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/laparoscopia/>]
- Pelvic laparoscopy - series [[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100131\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100131_1.htm)] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [[https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp\\_presentations/100131\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100131_1.htm)]



# Prevention and Risk Factors

- What Are the Risk Factors for Endometriosis? [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/endometri/conditioninfo/at-risk>]  (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)  
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/endometri/informacion/riesgo>]

# Treatments and Therapies

- What Are the Treatments for Endometriosis? [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/endometri/conditioninfo/treatment>]  (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)  
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/endometri/informacion/tratamientos>]



# Related Issues

- Endometriosis and Infertility: Can Surgery Help? [[https://www.reproductivefacts.org/globalassets/\\_rf/news-and-publications/bookletsfact-sheets/english-pdf/endometriosis\\_and\\_infertility\\_can\\_surgery\\_help-factsheet.pdf](https://www.reproductivefacts.org/globalassets/_rf/news-and-publications/bookletsfact-sheets/english-pdf/endometriosis_and_infertility_can_surgery_help-factsheet.pdf)] (American Society for Reproductive Medicine) - **PDF**
- Other Endometriosis FAQs [[https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/endometri/more\\_information/other-faqs](https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/endometri/more_information/other-faqs)]  (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)  
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/endometri/masinformacion/preguntas>]
- Period Problems: Fibroids, Endometriosis, and Other Issues [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2019/08/period-problems>]  (National Institutes of Health)  
Also in Spanish [<https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/problemas-menstruales>]

# Specifics

- Adenomyosis [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/adenomyosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20369138?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/adenomyosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20369138?p=1>]

# Clinical Trials



- ClinicalTrials.gov: Adenomyosis [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Adenomyosis%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Endometriosis [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Endometriosis%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

# Journal Articles


## References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Women with endometriosis: Experiences with pain management and views on optimal... [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40686285]
- Article: The effects of music therapy on pain and anxiety in young... [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40534482]
- Article: Changes in fatigue, health-related fitness, sleep quality, mental health, gastrointestinal complaints... [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40440865]
- Endometriosis -- see more articles [https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Endometriosis%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+AND+%28patient+education+handout%5Bpt%5D+OR+guideline%5Bpt%5D+OR+clinical+trial%5Bpt%5D%29++NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+]

# Reference Desk

- Endometriosis: Glossary of Terms [https://youngwomenshealth.org/guides/endometriosis-glossary/] *Easy-to-Read* (Boston Children's Hospital)
- Female Reproductive System [https://training.seer.cancer.gov/anatomy/reproductive/female/]  (National Cancer Institute)
- Reproductive System: Female Anatomy [https://visualsonline.cancer.gov/details.cfm?imageid=8262]  (National Cancer Institute)

# Find an Expert

- Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health [https://womenshealth.gov/] Also in Spanish [https://espanol.womenshealth.gov/]
- Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [https://www.nichd.nih.gov/]  Also in Spanish [https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/]
- How to Find Find an Ob-Gyn [https://www.acog.org/womens-health/find-an-ob-gyn] (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)

# Teenagers

- Endometriosis (For Teens) [https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/endometriosis.html] (Nemours Foundation) Also in Spanish [https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/endometriosis.html]
- Endometriosis: General Information [https://youngwomenshealth.org/guides/endometriosis-general-information/] (Boston Children's Hospital)

# Patient Handouts

- Endometriosis [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000915.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000915.htm]
- Living with endometriosis [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000714.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia) Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000714.htm]



## MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Abdominal exploration [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002928.htm>]

Abdominal exploration - series [[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100049\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100049_1.htm)]

Diagnostic laparoscopy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003918.htm>]

Endometriosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000915.htm>]

Living with endometriosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000714.htm>]

Pelvic laparoscopy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002916.htm>]

Pelvic laparoscopy - series [[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100131\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100131_1.htm)]

Pelvis MRI scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007355.htm>]

## Related Health Topics

Female Infertility [<https://medlineplus.gov/femaleinfertility.html>]

Menstruation [<https://medlineplus.gov/menstruation.html>]

Uterine Diseases [<https://medlineplus.gov/uterinediseases.html>]

## National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Endometriosis* is the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/Pages/index.aspx>]

## NIH MedlinePlus Magazine

Olivia Culpo Is Speaking Up for Others with Endometriosis [<https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/olivia-culpo-is-speaking-up-for-others-with-endometriosis>]

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