

# When Period Pain Isn't "Normal"

Chronic pain and symptoms associated with endometriosis are often overlooked, dismissed, or misdiagnosed, leaving many women to suffer for years before receiving a formal diagnosis.

## By Cate Reynolds

Menstrual cramps are, unfortunately, a common part of life for women of child-bearing age. While uncomfortable, normal period pain usually occurs only the first few days of your menstrual flow and can be alleviated with over the counter painkillers. Period pain should not be life-disrupting. Extremely painful, debilitating menstrual cramps that worsen over time could be a sign of endometriosis.

### WHAT IS ENDOMETRIOSIS?

Endometriosis, also referred to as "endo," is a condition in which tissue that is similar to the uterine lining, known as the endometrium, grows outside the uterus. The tissue can grow on or around other organs, leading to an inflammatory response that can cause scarring, severe pain, and infertility. The tissue responds to the changes in hormone levels during a menstrual cycle and when estrogen levels peak during the cycle, the tissue grows.. which is why endometriosis symptoms typically worsen over time.

### SYMPTOMS OF ENDOMETRIOSIS:

- Severe abdominal and lower back
- Abnormally painful periods
- Heavy periods
- Pain during sex
- Pain around groin, hips, and legs
- Painful bowel movements and urination
- Infertility
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Bloating



### ENDOMETRIOSIS DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT:

The only way to confirm endometriosis is through a minimally invasive procedure called laparoscopy in which a small incision is made in the patient's abdomen and a small camera is used to spot possible endometrial cell implants. Doctors then remove samples of the tissue to perform a biopsy to verify diagnosis.

While there is no cure for endometriosis, the most common treatment is pain management medications and hormone therapy to slow the growth of the endometrial cells. In some cases, surgical removal of scar tissue and endometrial cells may be necessary. However, this is not a permanent solution as it does not stop endometrial tissue from growing.

### THINK YOU MAY HAVE ENDO?

If you're experiencing symptoms of endometriosis, talk to your primary care physician or gynecologist. Whether or not endometriosis is to blame, the associated symptoms could be indicative of another issue, so it's vital to be evaluated in order to get to the root problem and receive proper treatment.

## ENDO FACTS:

**1 in 10**

Endometriosis affects approximately 1 in 10 women during their reproductive years

**75%**

Around 75% of those with endometriosis are misdiagnosed