

ENDOMETRIOSIS & EXERCISE

What is Endometriosis?

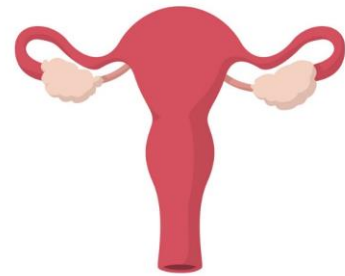
Endometriosis is characterized by growth of endometrial-like tissue outside of the uterus. It most commonly affects the ovaries, fallopian tubes, tissue lining the pelvis, bladder and bowel. In rare cases, it can also affect the diaphragm, pleura of the lungs, pericardium in the heart, liver, kidneys and lower limbs.

If not managed appropriately, Endometriosis results in an inflammatory response by the body, adhesions, fibrosis, scarring, anatomical distortion, mild to severe pain and sometimes infertility.

What Causes Endometriosis?

The exact process of Endometriosis is unknown, however there are a number of theories that include;

- Cell transformation
- Endometrial cell transport via the lymphatic system
- Retrograde menstruation of endometrial cells and tissues
- Immune dysfunction



Signs and Symptoms

- Chronic pelvic pain \geq 6 months
- Dysmenorrhea (painful periods)
- Deep pelvic pain
- Lower abdominal pain with or without back or loin pain
- Nausea, bloating, feeling full early
- Painful bowel movements or urination
- Occasional burning or hypersensitive-type pain
- Pain with intercourse
- Excessively heavy menstrual periods
- Bleeding between periods
- Infertility
- Fatigue

Risk Factors

- Obstruction of menstrual flow
- Early menarche (periods)
- Late menopause
- Obesity
- Genetics- family history
- Short menstrual cycles
- Heavy menstrual periods that last longer than 7 days
- Low birth weight
- Exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals
- Physical inactivity from a young age

Treatment

- Medical- NSAIDs +/- hormonal therapy
- Surgery- laparoscopy, hysterectomy
- Multidisciplinary approach now being more recognized- this ensures optimal physical and mental health, and improved quality of life, reduces the risk of developing comorbidities + empowers the patient to take control of their health through education
- Includes use of Accredited Allied Health Professionals, e.g. dietitians, physiotherapists, exercise physiologists, counsellors and psychologists



Exercise

- Current gap in literature and need for more research in this field
- Growing evidence for the benefits of regular exercise in the management and care of endometriosis patients
- Regular exercise of a moderate intensity has been shown to have profound physiological effects on the body of endometriosis patients, as well as significant positive physical and mental health effects

To optimize the effects and safety of regular exercise for endometriosis patients, it is essential that exercise prescription comes from qualified, accredited health professionals (i.e. physiotherapists or exercise physiologists) who are trained in the management and appropriate exercise prescription for people with chronic health conditions including endometriosis.