



Endometriosis

If you are living with severe menstrual pain each month, you might be one of the 2–10% of child bearing aged women affected.

What is it?

Endometriosis is the growth of cells and tissue that is normally found INSIDE your uterus on the OUTSIDE of the uterus. These cells and tissues migrate and attach to other organs and tissues in the abdomen. Inside the uterus, the tissue responds each month to female hormones by swelling and thickening, getting the uterus ready in case a pregnancy occurs. When this tissue is outside the uterus, the same hormones cause inflammation of the tissues where they are attached.

What causes Endometriosis?

The exact cause is unclear. Theories include genetics, environmental factors such as drugs or chemicals, or immune system issues such as infection or allergy.

Main Issues Surrounding Endometriosis:

- Pain! Many women suffer silently for years before seeking treatment thinking that severe pain is a normal part of menstruation. A common statement: "I just have really bad period cramps."
- Painful Intercourse
- Infertility- Endometriosis is the leading cause of infertility in childbearing aged women.
- Heavy menstrual bleeding.
- Growths- Depending on where they have attached, cysts can cause other issues. Scar tissue and adhesions are common; bladder or bowel obstructions have been reported.
- Increased risk of ovarian cancer

What are the treatments?

A confirmed diagnosis can only be made through a biopsy examination of the tissue. It can be treated medically or surgically depending on the severity of the symptoms.

- Medications used to shrink the tissue or alter the hormones
- Hormones to balance estrogen, progesterone, thyroid or other endocrine imbalances
- Surgery to remove scar tissue and problem tissues
- Hysterectomy

Questions to Ask Your Health Care Professional

1. If I am diagnosed with endometriosis, will it affect my ability to get pregnant?
2. If I have had difficulty getting pregnant, is there a chance that I have Endometriosis?
3. What medications are most effective?
4. When would you recommend surgery?
5. Are there alternative treatment options you could recommend?
6. How long will it take before I notice improvement once I start treatment?

Resources:

www.mayoclinic.org
www.womenshealth.gov
www.endometriosisassn.org

Call the Upstate Women's Health nurse line at 315-464-2756 for more information or to make an appointment

