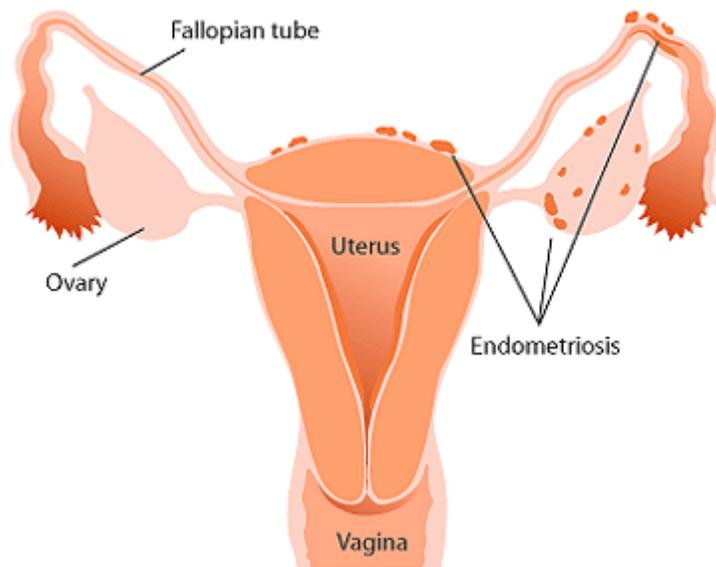


Women's Health - Endometriosis

ENDOMETRIOSIS - Everything You Always Want To Know About How To Manage and Treat Endometriosis



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Contents

Chapter I - Definition, Stages, Symptoms, Causes and Affects Of Endometriosis
Chapter II - Types Of Conventional Treatments, Side Effects, and Risks
Chapter III -How Oral Contraceptive Pills Affect Vitamins, and the Circulatory System In A Woman's Body
Chapter IV. How Progestogens Affect Vitamins and Minerals
Chapter V. How GnRH Affects Vitamins and Minerals
Chapter VI. How Prostaglandins Inhibitors Affect Minerals
Chapter VII Endometriosis - How Vitamins Help to Treat Endometriosis
Chapter VIII - How Minerals help to Treat Endometriosis
Chapter IX - Types of Traditional Treatments
Chapter X - How Homeopathy Helps to Treat Endometriosis
Chapter XI Endometriosis - How Herbs Help to Treat Endometriosis
Chapter XII Endometriosis - How Chinese Herbs Help to Treat Endometriosis
Chapter XIII - How Chemical Cell Salt Helps To Treat Endometriosis
Chapter XIV Endometriosis - How Essential Oils Help To Treat Endometriosis
Chapter XV Endometriosis - How Hydrotherapy Helps To Treat Endometriosis
Chapter XVI Endometriosis - List of Food Help For Treating Endometriosis
Chapter XVII - List of Flower Plants that Help To Treat Endometriosis
Chapter XVIII Endometriosis - Types of Hysterectomy
Chapter XIX Endometriosis - Before Surgery
Chapter XX Endometriosis - The Day Of Surgery
Chapter XXI Endometriosis - After Surgery
End

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Chapter I - Definition, Stages, Symptoms, Causes and Affects Of Endometriosis

I. Definition

During the final stage of the menstrual cycle, normally a layer of endometriosis lining on the inside of the uterus is expelled, known as menstruation period. Instead of flowing forward some of the endometriosis tissues flow backwards and start growing somewhere in the body, causing endometriosis. They also react to hormonal signals of the monthly menstrual cycle by building up tissue, breaking it and eliminating it through the menstrual period.

II. Stages

Endometriosis is estimated to affect:

- a) About 20% of reproductive age women with endometriosis present but without symptoms.
- b) About 55% of women who have developed a new onset of severe menstrual cramps.
- c) About 25% of women with sub-fertility (less fertile than a normal couple).

Since endometrios grow in somewhere other than in the uterus, when they break there is no way for the period blood to exit, causing blood to attach to the organs or lining of the abdomen, resulting in scars or adhesion as well as weakening the normal function of the organs.

For most of the time, the endometriosis tissues do not travel far. It is commonly found within the pelvic region, on the lining of peritoneum, in the ovaries, and on the surface of the uterus's outside wall, but they can be anywhere in the body such as fallopian tubes, the cervix, the vagina, and the vulva.

Endometriosis can vary in appearance. They may be clear or white, reddish, brown or blue black, and with cysts. They can be classified according to the stage of severity:

a) Minimal stage:

Top surface, few in numbers, commonly they are found in the inside wall of uterus, ligaments and ovary.

b) Mild stage:

Deeper implants, greater numbers are presented, commonly found in the same area as minimal stage.

c) Moderate stage:

Many implants, endometrial cysts present, affecting ovary function, causing scar tissues and adhesion is also present.

d) Severe stage:

Intensive peritoneal implants, large endometriomass present and dense adhesion.

Each woman experiences endometriosis differently. Some women may have extensive endometrial tissues in their body but feel little or no pain at all, while other women may only be in the early stage of endometriosis but have excessive pain.

III. Symptoms

1. Severe period pain

It normally happens with over-production of prostaglandins and leukotrient, causing the cervix to contract resulting in no escape for the menstrual period.

2. Difficult to get pregnant

If the cyst is presented in the ovary, it will response to hormone changes in the menstrual cycle, causing the cysts to get larger every month, blocking the normal function of ovaries, resulting in infertility

3. Pain during sex

If endometrosis occurs in the region that is stimulated during sex, it may cause excessive pain such as uterosacral ligament and cervic region.

4. Pain elevates to ward the end of period.

Endometriosis located somewhere other than in the uterus rupture during menstruation. Since the blood can not escape, it retents in the body, causing damage to the organs or any part of the body hosting the endometriosis, resulting in severe pain toward the end of the period.

5. Constipation

Constipation is caused by endometrial implants or adhesion, attaching to the organ of excretion. It makes it extremely painful to urinate and defecate.

6. Premenstrual symptoms

Premenstrual symptom is defined to have menstrual cramps before and during menstrual cycle. If the pain is more severe just before menstruation, than it may be caused by endometrial implants or adhesion in the sensitive areas.

7. Heavy period

Heavy period is either caused by menorrhagia or endometriosis. Any woman who has never experience heavy period before, the sudden change of heavy period may be caused by the rupturing of the endometrial lining embedded on the inner wall of the uterus.

8. Irritable bowel syndrome

Women with endometriosis in the bowel region frequently have abdominal and bowel symptoms, especially during the menstrual cycle. Bowel symptoms may be attributed to irritable bowel symptoms or caused by intestinal involvement from endometriosis.

9. Pain in one side of pelvic

Pain on one side of the pelvic during menstrual cycle may be caused by endometrial implants or adhesion to that side of the pelvic.

IV. Causes

The actual causes of endometriosis are still unknown, But researchers suggest the following:

1. Retrograde menstruation

The retrograde menstruation theory suggests that during menstruation the blood flows backward instead of outward, causing menstrual blood to go through the fallopian tubes to the pelvic and abdominal cavity, resulting in blood embedding on the outside of the uterus into other tissues and organs, causing endometriosis.

2. Weakening of immune system

Normally, the immune will destroy endometrial cells which are located outside the endometrium. If the immune system is weakened and no longer functions normally, it will allow the endometrial cells that shed to attach and grow elsewhere in the body.

3. Stress and emotion

During stress and emotion, the adrenal gland produces cortisol which effects the function of the body to cleanse toxins, resulting in stimulating the growth of endometriosis.

4. Embryonic theory

This theory suggests during the embryonic stage, some endometrial cells which normally grow in the womb instead develops in the abdomen.

5. Hormone imbalance

Endometriosis happens during reproductive years of women when estrogen and progesterone are most active. In each stage of the menstrual cycle, estrogen and progesterone must be balanced for women to conceive. Any imbalance of hormones during the menstrual cycle causes conversion of estrogen into bad estrogen and over-production of prostaglandins, causing the cervix to contract, resulting in no escaping of the menstrual period, leading to menstrual cramps and endometriosis. Nutritional deficiency is also one of the causes of hormone imbalance.

6. Hereditary

Endometriosis may be genetics passing through from generation to generation or it may result from genetic errors, causing some women to become more likely than others to develop the condition. Study shows that women are 5 times more likely to develop endometriosis if her sister has it. It is wise for these women to have children in their early reproductive years.

7. Toxic environment

Study shows that exposing our body to toxins found in pesticides and some harmful waste products may have something to do with hormonal and chemical influence, causing activation of endometriosis at the time of menstrual cycle resulting in proliferating of endo-tissues to the abnormal area in our body.

8. Xenoestrogen

Interaction of our body with certain chemicals causes a disruption of the body's hormones as resulting of over production of bad estrogen (xenoestrogen) that stimulates the growth of endometriosis.

9. Sex during menstruation.

Sexual intercourse during menstruation causes the endometriosis tissues to travel into the fallopian tubes then into the ovary, resulting in developing of ovarian endometriosis.

IV. Affects

A. Women's life

1. Difficulties at work

Women with endometriosis in certain regions of the body suffer from pain at least several days in a month just before and during menstruation, causing the loss of productive activity as well as reducing the chance of advancement. Co-workers who have to cover her work without understanding the symptoms of endometriosis will likely feel resentment resulting in emotional depression. Study shows that endometriosis causes 41% of women to give up or lose their jobs due to illness.

2. Difficulties in personal relationship

Women suffering from endometriosis may feel extensive pain during sexual intercourse. If the disease is not diagnosed, she may be accused of being frigid or neurotic, causing difficulty in personal relationship, leading to destruction of marriage as well as increasing the risk of depression and other diseases.

3. Infertility

In general, women with endometriosis find it harder to become pregnant than other women. Women with moderate to severe stage of endometriosis tend to have more difficulty conceiving than women with minimal to mild stage of endometriosis. If the woman is living in a culture where she is defined by her ability to produce children, it can lead to social stigma.

4. Interference in social life

Women with severe pain as a result of endometriosis may interference with social life, such as family events, social events, and traveling just before and during menstruation.

5. Emotional depression

Woman with endometriosis who can not control her symptoms may cause misunderstanding in the family and work place, leading to depression. With no support

from family and friends she may experience feelings of isolation as well.

6. Frustration

Not understanding endometriosis may cause feelings of confusion and embarrassment about the condition, leading to irritation.

B. Reproductive System

1. Infertility

Infertility is always difficult for women with endometriosis. In fact, depending on the stage of endometriosis and where endometriosis implants in the body, some women may not even get pregnant at all if they are on the last stage of endometriosis and the cysts is located in the fallopian tubes, ovaries, and uterus, causing inflammation and interfering with each stage of the menstrual cycle. In general, women with endometriosis find it harder to become pregnant than other women.

2. Miscarriage

Some physicians in the infertility field do feel there is an increase in the risk of miscarriage with endometriosis. Some feel there is no increase in the miscarriage rate. One of the studies looked at the miscarriage rates in patients prior to treatment of endometriosis and compared to the miscarriage rates in the same patients after treatment of endometriosis, in these studies patients had lower miscarriage rates after treatment. Women pregnant with endometriosis should be wise to seek help from specialists for treatment that not only nourishes the fetus but also controls the progression of endometriosis.

3. Ectopic pregnancy

An ectopic pregnancy is a complication of pregnancy in which the fertilized ovum is implanted in any tissue other than the uterine wall, caused by blockage of endometriosis of the fallopian tubes. In fact, the fetus produces enzymes that allow it to implant in varied types of tissues. An embryo implanted elsewhere other than the uterus can cause great tissue damage in its efforts to reach a sufficient supply of blood, sometime it is life threatening to the mother.

4. Dyspareunia

Dyspareunia is painful sexual intercourse. When the pain occurs, women may be distracted from feeling pleasure and excitement. Women with endometriosis suffer from dyspareunia if endometriosis is located in the major ligaments of the uterus. Endometriosis-related dyspareunia is usually positional and most intense upon deep penetration. It is also most intense prior to menstruation.

C. Abdominal and Pelvic Pain

1. Chronic pelvic pain

Normal chronic pelvic pain refers to any pain in your pelvic region (the area below your bellybutton and between your hips) lasting more than six months. In case of endometriosis at the final stage of the menstrual cycle period, endometrial tissue swells and bleeds, just like the lining of your uterus, causing pain and scar tissue, and adhesion

forming in your pelvic area, resulting in the tissue and organ near the endometriosis being covered. Any movement of these constricted organs can cause severe pain.

2. Locally pelvic pain

Some women experience local pelvic pain beginning or/and during menstrual cycle caused by pre-menstrual syndrome as a result of over-production of prostaglandins as increasing of the contraction within the uterus lining. In case of endometriosis, the pain continues throughout menstruation, caused by inflammation of rupturing of endometrial cysts that attach to the pelvic regions as a result of over-production of certain hormones which elevate the pain in that area.

3. Lower pelvic pain

Normally lower pelvic pain is caused by infection of the bladder or inflammation of the collecting system of one or both kidneys, or dysmenorrhea. In case of endometriosis, the pain continues and becomes severe just before and during menstruation caused by scars and adhesion attached to the organs in the lower pelvic regions, such as the kidneys, bladder, and/or ovary.

4. Severe abdominal cramps

Severe abdominal cramps before or during the menstrual cycle is likely caused by dysmenorrhea or premenstrual syndrome, if the pain is prolonged or just before, or during menstruation, then it may be caused by endometrial cells or rupturing of endometrial cysts resulting in over-production of prostaglandins in one area of the back, or travelling down the legs. If you experience back pain with continual dull abdominal pain just before and during menstruation, it may be caused by scar tissue or adhesion attached to the vertebra area.

Remember any severe pain **JUST BEFORE AND DURING** menstruation in any region may be a good indication of endometriosis.

D. Irregular menstruation

1. Variable amounts of bleeding either heavy or scanty

Variable amounts of bleeding either heavy or scanty is normal for menarche and perimenopause as the menstrual cycle is initiated and during a woman's forties until menopause, because of imbalance of estrogen and progesterone. In endometriosis, heavy and scanty bleeding is caused by over-production of certain hormones in the prostaglandins hormonal family that controls the aggregation or disaggregation of platelets.

2. Menstrual spotting

Menstrual spotting in the middle of the menstrual cycle may be caused by polyp growth in the uterus. Polyps within the uterus may prevent pregnancy or interfere with implantation of embryo as well as miscarriage. Polyps also cause heavy bleeding as a result of rupture of polyps in the uterus during menstruation. Luckily most polyps exit in uterus tends to be benign growth.

3. Prolong bleeding

Prolong bleeding may be caused by endometriosis cysts or fibroid located in the uterus wall as a result of imbalanced hormones of the prostaglandins family caused by excessive estrogen in the body.

4. Long menstrual cycle

An irregular menstrual pattern of long menstrual cycles may be an indication of ovulation problems and can be a major factor in infertility caused by endometriosis ovulation problems resulting in ovulation delay or immature eggs in the follicular phase. Sometimes, the follicle develops but the egg is not expelled from the ovary, caused by low levels of progesterone.

5. Blood clots

Irregular menstruation cause of imbalance hormone, blood clots usually happen during menstruation, if one of the hormones of the prostaglandins family that helps to regulate blood clots is over-produced. In this case over-production of such hormones causes more platelets clumping together and fails to dilate blood vessels, resulting in blood clots.

E. Digestive System

1. Constipation or difficult defecation

Defecation is the final act of digestion by which organisms eliminate waste materials from the digestive tract via the anus. Constipation is caused by endometriosis implants or adhesion which attach to organs of excretion, resulting in painful urination, as well as defecation.

2. Bloating

Bloating may have several causes, the most common being accumulation of liquids and intestinal gas. In endometriosis, bloating is caused by ovarian cysts, endometrial implants, or adhesion in the intestines that promote collection of fluid within an ovary, leading to swelling in the abdominal region and in the digestive system as resulting of lack of regular ovulation and excessive amounts of androgenic hormones.

3. Rectal bleeding

Constipation normally is the main cause of rectal bleeding. In endometriosis, endometrial implants or adhesion attach to the large intestine, resulting in rectal bleeding as waste passing through. It also causes rectal bleeding just before and during menstruation as endometrial bleeding.

4. Diarrhea

Sudden bouts of diarrhea may be caused by bacterial infection. In woman with endometriosis, deficiency of vitamin A and B are common, causing low level of enzymes that allows food to pass through the intestine undigested.

5. Fluid retention

Fluid retention may be caused by endometrial cysts located other than in the reproductive system. Endometrial lining bleeding during menstruation causes blood to have nowhere

to escape, leading to fluid retention in some parts of the body.

6. Sugar craving

Sugar craving is the symptom of premenstrual syndrome. Women with endometriosis also have a high level of abnormal tolerance curves because of low levels of progesterone, resulting in an over-production of adrenaline, causing sugar craving.

7. Loss of appetite

Woman with intestinal endometriosis may have loss of appetite at the time of the menstrual period or they may be present all month long and worsen at the time of the period.

F. Urination

1. Irregular urination

Normally irregular urination in adults is caused by pressure of a fetus on the bladder of a pregnant woman or losing muscle of the bladder.. In woman with endometriosis, it is caused by endometrial implants or adhesion in the bladder region, which increases the pressure to the urinary system, resulting in irregular urination.

2. Lower abdominal pain on urination

Lower abdominal pain may be caused by endometrial implants, adhesion or cysts in the pelvic region or over-production of prostaglandins that increase the tension of muscle spasm in the bowel and the uterus. Lower abdominal pain on urination is caused by over-production of prostaglandins which stimulate the contraction of the ovaries and uterus muscles or endometrial implants and adhesion in the lower abdominal area, leading to pressure and pain during urination.

3. Blood in urine

Blood in urine is a common cause of women with endometrial implants or cysts attached to the bladder area, as resulting of bleeding of the endometriosis. It worsens just before and during menstruation.

4. Kidney tenderness

Kidney tenderness may be caused by the weakened immune system of a woman with endometrial adhesion attached to the kidney, leading to abnormal function of the kidney in regulating the fluid in the body. It may be caused by cysts in the pelvic region that increase pressure of the bladder and urinary tract, resulting in mounting pressure to the kidney, causing kidney tenderness. It worsens at the beginning and during period.

G. Emotional state

1. Depression

Depression is an illness that not only effects women with endometriosis but also their family, work or school life, sleeping and eating habits, and general health. It is caused by lower levels of good estrogen and high levels of progesterone and the symptom get worse before and during menstruation. Being misunderstood by co-workers, family, and friends

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