

Understanding endometriosis

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About 10 percent of women worldwide suffer from endometriosis, a painful and debilitating disease with inadequate treatments. Currently, doctors don't know what causes the condition, which occurs when endometrial tissue escapes the uterus and forms lesions on other organs. But scientists are working hard to better understand the disease and develop new diagnostic tests and medicines, according to an article in *Chemical & Engineering News* (C&EN), the weekly newsmagazine of the American Chemical Society.

Because symptoms vary widely and can be mistaken for other conditions, the average woman with endometriosis waits 8 to 10 years for diagnosis, writes Assistant Editor Tien Nguyen. Symptoms include pain, heavy menstruation, nausea, bloating and constipation—often so bad that they cause women to miss school or work. Laparoscopic surgery is required for definitive diagnosis, but even then most treatment options provide little-to-no relief or cause miserable side effects.

To develop more effective therapies, researchers are trying to better understand this enigmatic [disease](#). For example, some are investigating the possibility that women with endometriosis have a malfunctioning immune system that allows misplaced tissue to grow outside of the uterus. Other researchers are searching for panels of biomarkers that could be used in [diagnosis](#) and to develop better treatments. However, the lack of good animal models for endometriosis hampers drug development. Because mice don't menstruate or develop endometriosis naturally, some scientists are studying the disease in baboons or engineering proprietary mouse models. Pharmaceutical companies have

several [endometriosis](#) drugs in the pipeline that are now being tested in clinical trials.

More information: "The long road to relief from endometriosis," cen.acs.org/pharmaceuticals/drugs/endometriosis/96/i43

Provided by American Chemical Society

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