

# What is endometriosis, and how is it treated?

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(HealthDay)—There's no cure for endometriosis, but women have several treatment options for the painful condition, an expert says.

With endometriosis, tissue that normally lines the inside of the uterus grows outside of it, where it can reach the [fallopian tubes](#), ovaries, bowel, bladder, diaphragm and, more rarely, other parts of the body. It can reduce fertility.

Symptoms can include chronic pain in the pelvis, lower back or [lower abdomen](#); painful or heavy periods; pain during or after sex; and painful urination or bowel movements, according to Dr. Kristin Riley. She is interim chief of minimally invasive gynecologic surgery at Penn State Health Women's Health in Hershey, Penn.

The condition can also cause fatigue, [irritable bowel syndrome](#) and abdominal adhesions, in which pelvic tissue or organs stick together.

Surgery or medications can help relieve endometriosis symptoms.

"The good news is that there are a lot of new medicines being developed specifically for endometriosis," Riley said in a Penn State news release.

Doctors may prescribe anti-inflammatories to reduce inflammation and hormone therapies to help reduce period pain. Another option is minimally invasive surgery to remove endometriosis tissue. Some patients require removal of their uterus (hysterectomy).

"Treating endometriosis is not one-size-fits-all," Riley said. "We work with each patient to determine best possible approaches for their unique needs."

A range of specialists may get involved, including a psychologist because the [chronic pain](#) caused by endometriosis can affect a woman's [mental health](#).

Riley noted that women with endometriosis may have periods of

remission.

"It's hard to predict who will experience those pain-free intervals, and how long they will last," she said. "It's really important to manage the condition and be ready for the flare-ups."

While [endometriosis](#) is a chronic condition, it can be managed effectively, and "women don't need to suffer in silence," Riley emphasized.

**More information:** The U.S. Office on Women's Health has more on [endometriosis](#).

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