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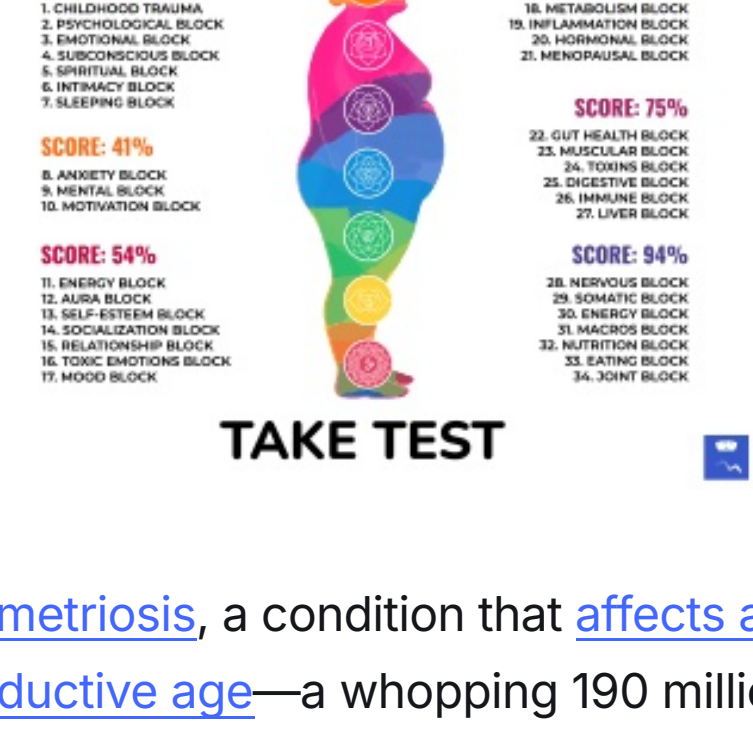
What Are Endometriosis Treatments?

Know your treatment options for endometriosis, a painful condition of the female reproductive system.

Jul 13, 2022 | By: Michelle Beauclair

Medical Reviewer: Andrea Eisenberg, M.D.

Pelvic pain on the daily. Chronic bloating, fatigue, and nausea. Check. Pain during bowel movements and urination, your period, and sexual intercourse. Do some or all of those symptoms describe what's become agonizingly "normal" in your female universe?



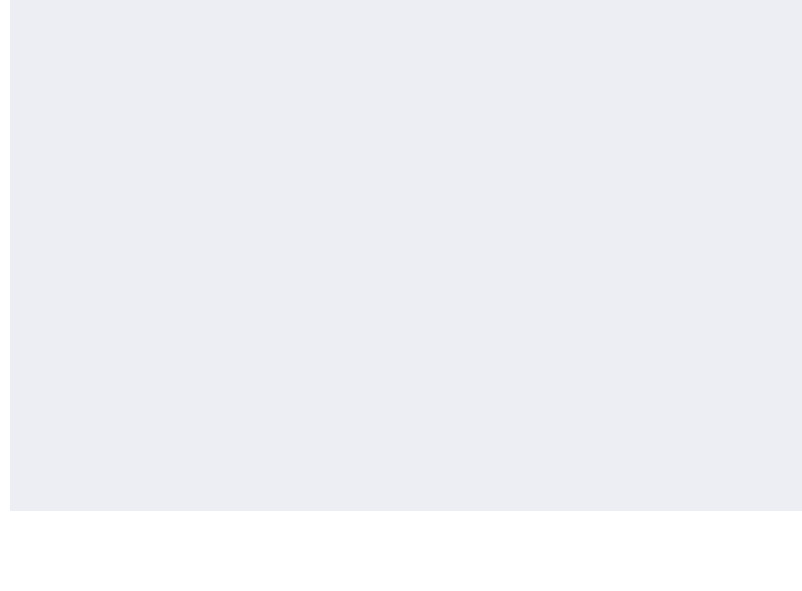
If so, you may have [endometriosis](#), a condition that [affects approximately 10% of women and girls of reproductive age](#)—a whopping 190 million globally.

Your endometrium is your uterine lining, which you shed every month (that you're not pregnant) during your period. Endometriosis occurs when endometrium-like tissue grows outside the uterus.

The good news is that diagnosis and endometriosis treatment is just an appointment away with your women's health care provider.

Research shows that endometriosis surgical diagnosis is [often delayed four to 11 years](#) from the first symptoms' onset. That's all the more reason for you to get examined immediately. Your condition may merit a second opinion if you've already seen a physician about your symptoms yet continue to struggle with unresolved pain that disrupts your normal daily functioning.

Treatment options abound, ranging from pain medications to hormone replacement therapy, minimally invasive surgery, and more. Let's review the available treatments and how they can help you take your life back.



Common Endometriosis Treatment Approaches

Endometriosis is typically treated with surgery, pain medication, or [hormone therapy](#). The treatment approach chosen by you and your doctor will factor in the severity of your condition and if you would like the option for pregnancy.

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"One of the first things I would tell someone who thinks she might have endometriosis is how important it is to come for care because there may not be anything very invasive that has to be done," recommends Greg Marchand, M.D., board certified physician in obstetrics and gynecology. "Even changing your method of birth control actually might help a lot with treating the endometriosis."

Usually physicians suggest conservative treatment options initially and only choose surgery should the conservative treatment fail.

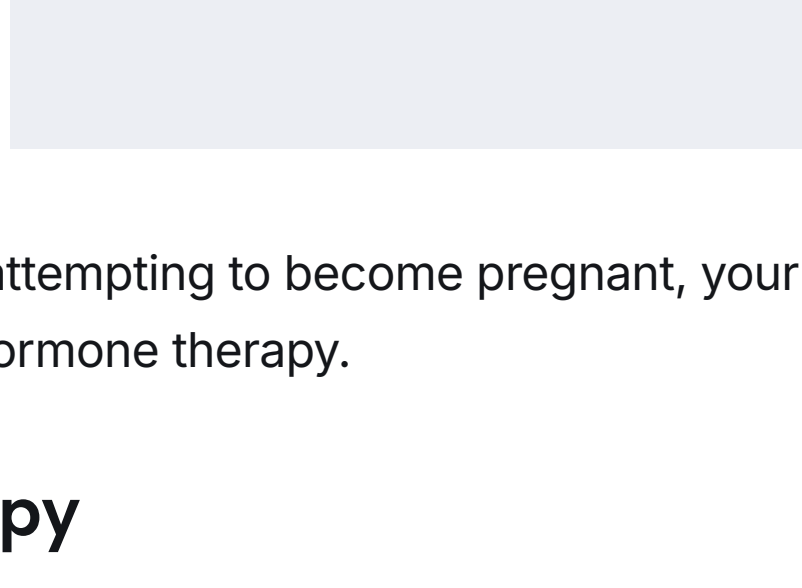
"There might be women that think that if they just go in the doctor is just going to try to sell them a surgery, and that's not always the case," says Dr. Marchand.



Learn more about both conservative and surgical treatment options for endometriosis. [iStock/PixelsEffect](#)

Pain Medication

Over-the-counter pain medications, often in the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug class (NSAIDs) like [naproxen](#) sodium (Aleve) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, and generics) are frequently recommended by physicians to resolve menstrual pain and cramping.

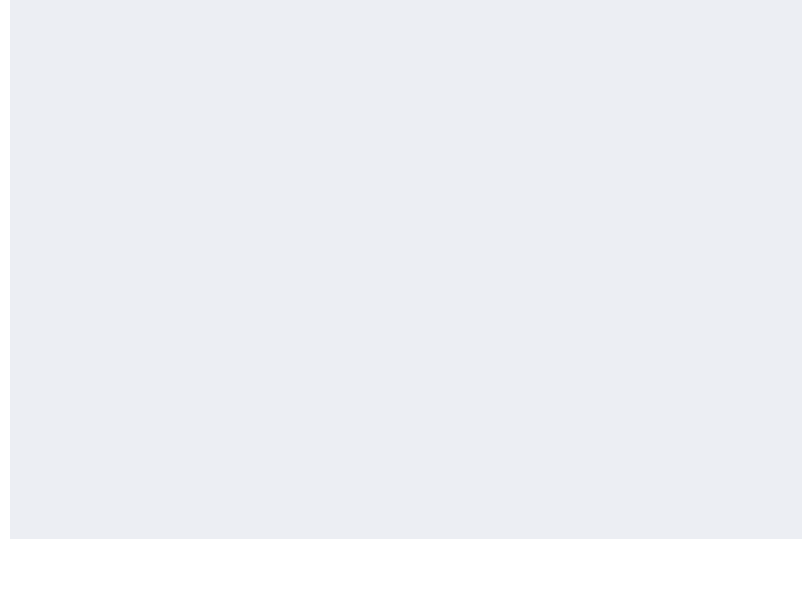


Hormone Therapy

Hormone therapy can be an efficient approach to eliminate or reduce pain associated with endometriosis. A menstrual cycle's fluctuating hormones can cause thickening, bleeding, and breakdown of endometrial implants. Supplemented hormones can prevent new endometrial tissue implants and slow down endometrial tissue growth.

Therapies include:

- **Progestin:** Progestin therapy can be beneficial in stopping menstrual periods and endometrial implant growth, which in turn may give relief for endometriosis symptoms. Therapy can encompass the progestin pill, contraceptive injection like Depo-Provera, intrauterine devices, and contraceptive implants.
- **Contraceptives:** Monthly endometrial tissue build up can also be managed with contraceptive approaches including vaginal rings, patches, and birth control pills. Shorter and lighter periods can result from the contraceptive therapy in addition to eliminating or reducing pain.
- **Aromatase inhibitors:** Aromatase inhibitors decrease the body's estrogen. This is an experimental treatment for endometriosis.
- **Gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) agonists:** This therapy works by preventing ovarian-stimulating hormone production, decreasing estrogen, and blocking menstruation. When the therapy is discontinued menstrual periods resume, as does the opportunity to achieve pregnancy. This treatment can decrease [bone density](#) immediately, but it usually recovers after the therapy is stopped. An add-back therapy can also be used with GnRH-a to minimize bone loss.



Surgery for Endometriosis

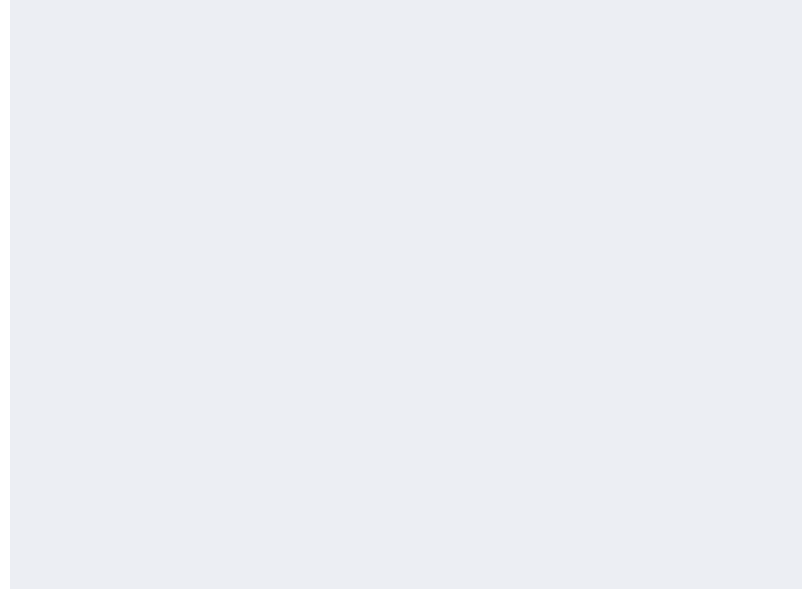
If you're attempting to become pregnant, surgical removal of the endometriosis implants while preserving your ovaries and uterus may enhance your chances. In the case of severe pain caused by endometriosis, surgery may help, though the pain may come back.

Most severe endometriosis cases can be treated with minimally invasive laparoscopic surgery, while a traditional open abdominal surgery is less common.

During laparoscopic surgery, a laparoscope—a thin, flexible camera—is inserted into a small incision by your navel. Via another adjacent incision, the surgeon inserts the instruments used to remove the endometrial tissue. After surgery, your doctor may prescribe hormone medication to reduce endometriosis recurrence long-term.

Dr. Marchand advocates that minimally invasive surgery like laparoscopy allows women to get back to their lives as soon as possible, minimizes post-surgical pain, and maximizes how quickly they can recover.

Surgical removal of the ovaries (oophorectomy) and uterus (hysterectomy) was previously thought of as the gold standard in endometriosis treatment, and for many women—those done with child bearing and want a definitive treatment—it's still the treatment of choice. Those willing to try more cutting-edge management can focus on complete and precise endometrial tissue removal.



Getting Help for Endometriosis

Chances are if you have undiagnosed endometriosis your "normal" days may be fraught with constant pain, infertility challenges, decreased quality of life, and significant interference with your work, [relationships](#), or day-to-day functioning. You may have even previously been seen by a health care professional numerous times seeking help, yet your debilitating symptoms and associated daily struggles remain.

Granted, diagnosing endometriosis can be challenging, and that's precisely why it's essential for you to advocate for your best interests and seek an alternate opinion. Your diagnosis and endometriosis treatment may be just a phone call and an appointment away with a trusted women's health care provider. Treatment can be life changing in the best of all possible ways.

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