

# Basics of Endometriosis



## What is Endometriosis?

Endometriosis is a chronic condition where tissue similar to the lining of the uterus (endometrium) grows outside the womb. This causes pain, inflammation, and sometimes infertility.

## Prevalence of Endometriosis:

- Affects 1 in 10 women worldwide (about 190 million globally).
- Often begins in reproductive years, but symptoms may persist after menopause.

## Symptoms of Endometriosis:

- Severe period pain (dysmenorrhea).
- Pelvic pain outside of menstruation.
- Painful intercourse (dyspareunia).
- Fatigue and brain fog.
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (bloating, diarrhea, constipation – known as endo belly).
- Infertility (up to 50% of women with infertility may have endometriosis).

## Causes & Theories for Endometriosis:

- Retrograde menstruation: menstrual blood flows back through the fallopian tubes into the pelvis.
- Immune dysfunction: the body cannot clear misplaced tissue.
- Genetics: higher risk if a close relative has it.
- Hormonal factors: estrogen-driven condition.
- Average delay: 7–10 years.
- Misdiagnosed as IBS, ovarian cysts, or fibromyalgia.
- Imaging: ultrasound, MRI (helpful but not conclusive).
- Gold standard: laparoscopy (minimally invasive surgery).

## Diagnosis of Endometriosis:

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## Types of Endometriosis:

- Superficial peritoneal lesions (outer layer of pelvis/abdomen).
- Deep infiltrating endometriosis (penetrates organs like bowel, bladder).
- Ovarian endometriomas (“chocolate cysts”).

## Treatment of Endometriosis:

- Medications: NSAIDs, hormonal therapy (birth control, progestins, GnRH agonists).
- Surgery: laparoscopic excision, sometimes hysterectomy (not a cure).
- Lifestyle approaches: diet, exercise, stress reduction, pelvic physiotherapy.

## Impact of Endometriosis:

- Physical: chronic pain, fatigue, infertility.
- Mental health: anxiety, depression, social isolation.
- Relationships: intimacy issues, strain on partners/marriages.
- Work/education: absenteeism, reduced productivity, job insecurity.

## Comorbidities of Endometriosis:

- Adenomyosis (endometrial tissue within the uterine muscle).
- PCOS (Polycystic Ovary Syndrome).
- Fibromyalgia (chronic pain).
- Chronic fatigue syndrome.

## Fertility and Endometriosis:

- Leading cause of female infertility.
- Increases risk of miscarriage.
- IVF success rates lower but possible.

## Lifestyle & Diet with Endometriosis:

- Anti-inflammatory diet may reduce flare-ups.
- Foods to avoid: processed sugar, gluten, caffeine, alcohol.
- Helpful: omega-3, leafy greens, turmeric.

## Awareness & Advocacy for Endometriosis:

- Endometriosis Awareness Month: March.
- Lack of funding and research compared to prevalence.
- Celebrities raising awareness: Padma Lakshmi, Lena Dunham, Daisy Ridley.

## Research & Future of Endometriosis:

- No cure currently.
- Ongoing research into genetics, immunology, and targeted therapies.
- Advocacy pushing for earlier diagnosis and better treatments.