

Do you have “killer cramps” every month?

Do you miss school, extracurricular activities or work every month around the time of your period?

Have you had multiple visits to the ER for pelvic pain without a clear diagnosis?

Does one of your relatives have “killer cramps” and struggle with the activities of daily living during her period?

If so, you may have endometriosis.



The Endometriosis Foundation of America (EFA) strives to fund research, raise disease awareness, educate the public and healthcare professionals, as well as advocate for patients. Our ENPOWR Project (Endometriosis: Promoting Outreach and Wide Recognition) is an education program that promotes early intervention for the disease in schools and community-based organizations. If you would like the ENPOWR Project to visit your school, please contact us!

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What is endometriosis?



What is Endometriosis?

Endometriosis is a disease that affects the female reproductive system of 1 in 10 girls in the US. Girls experience symptoms at different times, but they can begin as early as your first period. Those with mothers or close female relatives who have endometriosis are 5-7 times more likely to have it.

During a normal monthly period, the lining of the uterus (the endometrium) sheds. However, when a girl has endometriosis, tissue similar to this lining is found in areas it should not be, creating lesions. These lesions can be found on places like the intestines, ovaries, bladder, and rectum, and, during menstruation, they can cause extreme pain and cramping.

If left untreated, endometriosis tends to get worse over time, and unfortunately, it is often misdiagnosed because the symptoms can be so wide-ranging. In fact, in the US, it takes an average of 10 years to get a proper diagnosis! This means that most girls who experience symptoms in their teens will finish high school and college before getting diagnosed.



What does it feel like to have Endometriosis?

Endometriosis can feel different for different patients, but typically symptoms include:

- **Cramps that won't go away with Tylenol or Advil**
- **Long (more than a week) and heavy periods**
- **Pain during sexual activity**
- **Lower back and upper leg pain**
- **Headaches**
- **Nausea and/or vomiting during your period**
- **Diarrhea and/or constipation during your period**

Endometriosis can also impact a woman's fertility, especially if it is left untreated. This is something to discuss with your doctor when the time is right.

These symptoms can have serious negative consequences on your quality of life, but they do not have to. It is important to speak to someone if you are missing school, sports activities, or social engagements because of your period. Early treatment leads to a better life!

What do I do if I think I have Endometriosis?

If you think you may have endometriosis, it is important to get diagnosed as early as possible. Endometriosis is a highly treatable disease, and the earlier it is detected the better. Some symptoms may seem embarrassing to talk about, but there is help and there is no reason to feel ashamed.

There are many ways for you to get help:

- **Start by finding a doctor. You will need to talk to a gynecologist to help diagnose and treat endometriosis. Sometimes finding a female doctor can make the appointment easier, especially if it is your first time**
- **Track all symptoms you experience throughout the month on a calendar or in your phone and show them to your doctor at your appointment**
- **Be sure to explain how these symptoms affect your life and if you feel your doctor is not listening, see another who will. Never be afraid to get another opinion!**

Endometriosis is a difficult disease but with early diagnosis and early treatment, it can be effectively managed.

For more information visit www.endofound.org