



FROM  
YOUR DOCTOR

# About endometriosis

As a woman with endometriosis, you may have a number of concerns: What is endometriosis? How is it treated? Will it hurt my chances of having a baby? Here are some answers to these and other common questions.

## What is endometriosis?

It's a disease in which tissue normally found only inside a woman's uterus grows in other places. This growth usually occurs on the outside of the reproductive organs or intestines. Endometriosis is rarely life-threatening, but it can cause problems such as abdominal pain, painful periods, pain during intercourse, and infertility. Experts believe that at least 5 million women in this country may have endometriosis.

It's important to remember that endometriosis is a real disease. The pain isn't all in your head. Many women with endometriosis feel angry, upset, or depressed about their disease.

### Endometriosis Association

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## How is endometriosis diagnosed?

The patient is usually referred to a specialist physician, who performs a safe, simple surgical procedure with a device called a laparoscope. The laparoscope is used to look inside the abdomen. If any endometriosis is present, the specialist can immediately remove as much of the abnormal tissue as possible.

## What comes after surgery?

Most patients take hormone therapy. Because endometriosis is very likely to come back within a few years after surgery, hormones are used to keep

it under control and reduce the pain. Hormone therapy is simple. Your doctor may prescribe a pill, a monthly injection, or a spray that you inhale through your nose. Some women have side effects, which may include hot flashes, depression, weight gain, or nausea. You don't have periods when you're taking hormone therapy.

You do have periods when you're receiving immune therapy, a newer treatment that involves taking a drop of medicine under the tongue each day. If you would like to learn more about this treatment, contact the Endometriosis Association (listed at the left). This organization can refer you to a center that offers immune therapy.

## Will I be able to get pregnant?

Probably. Although some women with endometriosis have a very hard time becoming pregnant because their reproductive organs are badly damaged, the chances are usually excellent. And you don't necessarily have to rush. Surgery and hormone therapy do a very good job of keeping endometriosis in check until you're ready to become pregnant. What's more, there are many fertility centers you can go to for help if you and your partner have trouble.

## What should I do if I feel angry or depressed?

Start by talking to your doctor, nurse, partner, or a friend. You might also find it comforting to talk with other women who have endometriosis. Contact the Endometriosis Association for information on nearby support groups, as well as for a variety of books, newsletters, pamphlets, and other useful reading materials. □