

Will endometriosis affect fertility?

In some cases, endometriosis can make it difficult to fall pregnant naturally because of changes in a woman's pelvic organs. It is important to understand that this may not be the case for everyone. While some women experience infertility or have difficulty getting pregnant, many women do not.

Early treatment, guidance and management from a medical professional will help you and your partner throughout this journey.

What does endometriosis mean for me?

It is important that you do not ignore your own needs and desires as endometriosis affects both individuals in a relationship.

Women with endometriosis find it helpful if their partner supports and understands the impact of the disease. It can take some time for both of you to process and understand the consequences of an endometriosis diagnosis.

Feelings of anger, despair, non-acceptance and helplessness are normal. Over time, you and your partner will find positive ways to manage the effects of endometriosis on your lives, together. If you need help, speak to your doctor, a relationship counsellor or sexologist. There are professionals that can help you.



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Endometriosis Association (Qld) Inc.

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ENDO METRIOSIS FOR PARTNERS



ENDOMETRIOSIS INFORMATION FOR PARTNERS

Endometriosis does not just affect the person who has it. This disease affects families and relationships. It is important that partners of women with endometriosis understand what is going on and how they can support their loved one/s.

What is endometriosis?

One in 10 women have endometriosis. It is a disease where tissue, similar to that which normally lines the uterus, grows in other parts of the body.

The correct way to define endometriosis is that 'endometriosis occurs when endometrium-like tissue is found outside the uterus' (endometriosis.org).

This tissue, regardless of where it is found, follows the menstrual cycle and bleeds. When this bleeding occurs in other parts of the body it causes inflammation, which leads to scar tissue, cysts and adhesions.

Scar tissue increases in size with subsequent menstrual cycles and can, in time, cover other organs and tissue with adhesions. This can then cause the immobilisation of organs, fusing of

organs (e.g. the uterus to the bowel) and damage to the fallopian tubes.

It is not a sexually transmitted disease nor is it life threatening or contagious; however, for many women it can be extremely painful and prevent them from living normal, functional lives.

What makes endometriosis equal parts challenging and frustrating is that everyone's experience is different—symptoms and pain levels vary greatly between women.

Endometriosis is also 'invisible' from the outside, can only be diagnosed through surgery and is often mistaken for other conditions that have similar symptoms. As a result, many women are left wondering what's going on and have a delayed diagnosis.

What causes endometriosis?

The exact cause is unknown but possible causes may include:

- ✓ implantation of endometrial cells by the back flow of menstrual blood
- ✓ transportation to body areas by the blood stream and the lymphatic system
- ✓ change in immunity levels
- ✓ possible heredity factors
- ✓ autoimmune system problems.

Only a gynaecologist can make an accurate diagnosis. Laparoscopic surgery is used to investigate and confirm endometriosis. This may be done after some initial investigations by your doctor.

How does endometriosis affect your partner?

For many women, every day life is not so simple and their illness forces them to make changes to their lifestyle. This is typically to manage one or more of a range of symptoms, including:

- ✓ heavy bleeding
- ✓ painful periods
- ✓ backache
- ✓ cramping
- ✓ lower abdominal aching
- ✓ pain during and after a bowel motion
- ✓ nausea and/or vomiting
- ✓ painful intercourse.

Intimacy and endometriosis

Unfortunately, endometriosis can impact intimacy in a relationship. Some women experience pain during or after sex, which can lead to reduced interest in sexual activity.

As her partner, it is easy to feel rejected, dissatisfied, uncomfortable or even guilty, which can lead to an issue within your relationship. If endometriosis is affecting intimacy in your relationship there are a number of things you can do:

- ✓ talk to your partner about how you are both feeling
- ✓ experiment with different sexual positions
- ✓ try other techniques or activities that don't involve intercourse.