

What you need to know. Period.

Endometriosis:
More than just a bad period 



* *What you need to know. Period.* is for everybody: for people who get a period, people who will eventually get a period, and even people who will never get a period. Together, we can have open and honest conversations about **menstruation**.

Words you need to know. Period.

Menstruation is often called a period because it's the period of time each month when a person with a uterus bleeds. The uterus is a triangle-shaped area inside the body (below the belly button). This is where a baby can grow during pregnancy. Most periods last anywhere from 3-8 days and happen once a month.

The way a period feels can be different for each person, because everybody is different. Most people will feel some discomfort or even pain before and during their period. This is pretty common. Because there's such a wide range of experiences and because period pain is often normalized, it can be tricky to know when to ask for help.

Some people will experience:

- Cramping in the area below the belly button
- Diarrhea, constipation, or nausea
- Sore breasts
- Feeling more sensitive emotionally
- Back pain
- Fatigue or tiredness
- Dizziness

Some physical symptoms are normal, but some could be signs of a more serious health condition, like **endometriosis**.

Period pain is **not** normal if...

- Taking an over-the-counter painkiller like Advil, Tylenol, or Midol doesn't help
- The pain regularly keeps you from going to school and doing your regular activities
- You regularly vomit, have diarrhea, or are constipated during or around your period
- You regularly bleed through a pad, tampon, or period underwear in less than 2 hours

If any of these are true for you, you may want to track your symptoms and speak to a trusted adult about making an appointment to see a doctor, nurse, or elder in your community.



What is endometriosis?

Endometriosis (en-doh-meetree-oh-sis), sometimes called endo, is a very common period-related condition. Endo affects at least 1 in 10 girls and women. It also affects transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse people, but we don't yet know exactly how many people in these groups are affected by endo. Symptoms can be very painful, difficult to manage, and can affect a person's quality of life by making it hard for them to go to school or work, to be social, active, and to enjoy their hobbies.

Endo is a life-altering condition. It's much worse and more serious than having a bad period.

What is endometriosis?

- Endometriosis (endo) is a **chronic condition** where tissue that's like the lining of the uterus (the endometrium) attaches to other parts of the body.
- Endometriosis is usually found in the pelvis (the area below the belly button). It can happen outside of the uterus in other parts of the body too.
- Like the process of a period, the endometriosis tissue can become inflamed (irritated) by hormones.
- Endometriosis can be very painful, and it can also create scarring inside the body, which may affect how a person's body functions.

Words you need to know. Period.

A **chronic condition** is a health problem that lasts longer than 6 months and may become worse over time.

Can I catch endometriosis?

Endometriosis can start around the time a person gets their first period. It isn't something you catch, like a cold, but it can run in the family. A menstruating person who has a close relative with endo is more likely to have it.



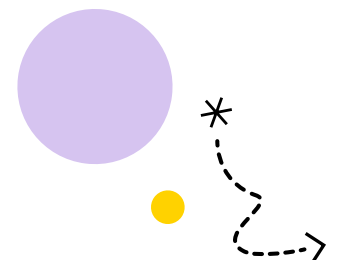
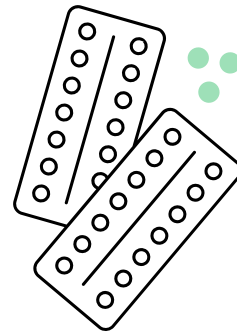
Delay to diagnosis

Many people with endo experience a delay to diagnosis. This means that when they first speak to a doctor about their symptoms, the doctor might not think that they have endo. Because many of us are told that period pain is normal, some people with extreme pain, like endo pain, might not recognize that what they're experiencing is not normal. They might not try to get medical help. Getting a diagnosis can lead to getting help.

Endometriosis pain & symptom management

While it can't be cured, there are ways to treat endo and manage pain. The sooner endo is diagnosed the better. Endo is typically treated with a combination of:

- **Minimally invasive surgery** - A less painful and easier to recover procedure. Surgeons use a camera and tiny instruments to look for and cut out endo.
- **Medications** - Including those that affect the body's hormones and control or stop the menstrual cycle, like hormonal contraception ("the birth control pill").
- **Other forms of care and lifestyle changes** - Including healthy eating, pelvic physiotherapy, yoga and meditation, acupuncture, and good mental health support.





Let's talk. Period.

Why is it important for everyone to learn about period-related health conditions like endo?

If you think something's wrong, ask for help

Some of the symptoms of endo can be embarrassing or difficult to talk about, but there's nothing to be ashamed of. Ask for help. You know your body best. If you're worried about your period pain, speak to a doctor, nurse, parent, or elder in your community. Endo can be treated, but not cured. The earlier the diagnosis the better.

Learn more about endometriosis and other period-related health conditions:

The Endometriosis Network Canada: endometriosisnetwork.com

