

Endometriosis – Fact Sheet

Endometriosis is a condition where uterine tissue (endometrium) is found outside the uterus. The tissue grows during the menstrual cycle, however when it grows outside the womb it becomes trapped and cannot leave the body during menstruation. Common areas uterine tissue is found is on uterosacral ligaments, ovaries, cervix, vagina, small and large intestine, abdominal cavity and bladder. This can result in significant pain that can almost be debilitating as the lesions are considered to be oestrogen dependent and proliferate, break down and bleed during the normal menstrual cycle which causes the inflammation and pain associated. As this process continues fibrosis, scarring and adhesions may develop. Depending on where the tissue grows outside the womb also poses a high risk of infertility. Risk factors associated with endometriosis include: age, retrograde menstruation, oestrogen dominance, family history, dysfunctioning immune system, exposure to dioxins found in female hygiene products and chemicals in tampons.

Signs and Symptoms

There are many signs and symptoms associated with endometriosis which can include:

- Cyclic pain and pelvic pain
- Pain prior to menses and after menses
- Heavy or long periods
- Infertility
- Urinary tract infections
- Digestive complaints
- Anaemia
- Depression
- Chronic fatigue
- Headaches
- Hypoglycaemia

Nutritional Recommendations

- Avoid exogenous oestrogen sources e.g. soy products.
- Reduce immune aggregating and pro-inflammatory foods such as; refined carbohydrates and sugars, caffeine, saturated fats and deep fried foods and alcohol.
- Eat lots of antioxidant rich foods such as; green leafy vegetables, rich coloured fruits and vegetables to decrease oxidative stress.
- Take a probiotic and eat other probiotic and prebiotic foods to boost microflora in the gastrointestinal track.
- Add healthy fat sources into your diet for their anti-inflammatory benefits.
- Eat cruciferous vegetables as they can help eliminate excess oestrogen from the body as well as detoxifying the liver.
- Eat high quality proteins as adequate iron is essential with endometriosis patients.
- Eat wholegrains as B vitamins are required for healthy detoxification by the liver.

Other Suggestions

- Use sanitary pads over tampons to reduce pain.
- Regular exercise to relieve stress and potentially lower oestrogen levels.
- Reduce exposure to environmental toxins/chemicals in foods, water, air and personal home care products (buy organic where possible).
- Refrain from sexual intercourse during menses.

There are a range of different herbs that can be effective in the management of endometriosis to help improve blood flow, reduce pain and cramping, aid liver detoxification, improve the hormonal imbalance and reduce bleeding.

Customised nutritional plans comprising of a specific food plan with the support of nutrient/herbal supplements can be very effective in the management of endometriosis. If you require support please visit www.good4younutrition.com.au