



Menstrual Health at Work

Adenomyosis at Work

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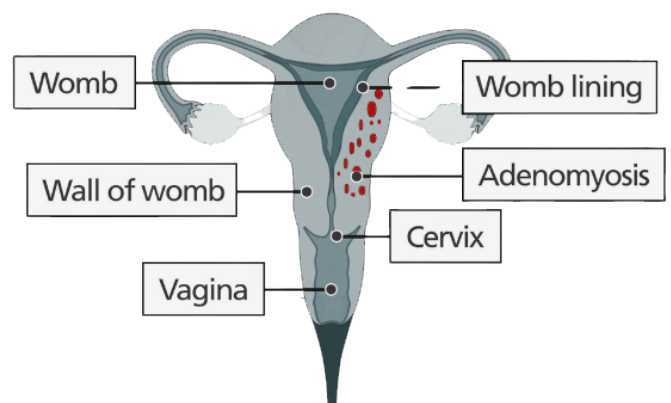
What is adenomyosis?

Adenomyosis (ah-deno-my-O-sis) occurs when the tissue that normally lines the uterus (endometrial tissue) grows into the muscular wall of the uterus (myometrium).

Types of adenomyosis

Focal

As the name indicates, focal adenomyosis is adenomyosis in one particular site of the uterus.



Adenomyoma

Adenomyoma is a form of focal adenomyosis, but it is more extensive.

Diffuse

Unlike the other two classifications, diffuse adenomyosis is spread throughout

The exact cause of adenomyosis is unknown.

There are several theories about what causes this condition. They include:

- ➔ invasive growth of endometrial cells into the uterine muscle — this may be due to an incision made in the uterus during surgery (like a caesarean delivery) or during normal uterine functioning.

- ➔ uterine inflammation that occurs after childbirth — this may break the usual boundaries of the cells that line the uterus.
 - ➔ extra tissues in the uterine wall, which are present before birth and grow during adulthood.
 - ➔ stem cells in the myometrium, or uterine muscle wall.
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Some people experience:

- Painful menstrual cramps (dysmenorrhea)
- Heavy menstrual bleeding (menorrhagia)
- Abnormal menstruation
- Pelvic pain with or without severe cramping
- Painful intercourse (dyspareunia)
- Enlarged uterus
- Bloating or fullness in your belly (adenomyosis belly)
- Pain during sexual intercourse
- Pain related to bowel movements

Workplace testimonial



“I’ve suffered years of being dismissed and being told my pain was normal and it was just in my head.

I lost out on opportunities to further my career and I still struggle with not being able to excel in my work as much as I would like to. What I have found is that adenomyosis and endometriosis are not really talked about or recognised enough as an illness that affects the body. there’s a lack of support in the workplace and from health care professionals.

The impact this illness has had on my work life is immense.

Before I knew I had adenomyosis and endometriosis, I would need to take time off work due to the pain and heavy bleeding, and my employers would think I am making it all up. On one occasion I had a female manager claim I was being too dramatic.

I work in HR and I’m in the charity sector, and my most recent experience has been extremely traumatic. I would have to take time off during my periods and peak pain/flare ups, instead of my workplace managing my absences they were putting immense pressure on me and increasing my workload.

A week later I found myself on a performance management plan after numerous absence review meetings. I felt discriminated against and it made my condition flare up more.

I made the decision to leave that employer, and now thankfully my new employer is more supportive. They support me by:

- Allowing me to work from home when I am on a period or having a flare up.
- Allowing me to take an absence from work if my period is unmanageable and those absences don't count towards triggers.
- Allowing me to go back to my hometown and work from there so I can be closer to family. This is particularly helpful when I'm not doing too well with my mental health due to the physical symptoms of adeno and endo.
- Allowing me to be open about my condition and I've even had the opportunity to write a newsletter about my illness for work to create awareness.
- My manager always checks in on me when I'm not feeling great.
- Managing my workload when I am not able to do work to full capacity.

It's important for managers within organisations to recognise the toll adenomyosis and endometriosis takes on a woman both mentally, emotionally and physically. There needs to be more open conversations about these conditions in a workplace setting so that women are supported with the right reasonable adjustments in order to do their jobs.

Employers should look into implementing a framework around how to manage endometriosis and adenomyosis in the workplace.

What can you do to support employees with adenomyosis?

Creating a positive working environment for those with adenomyosis will help employees thrive at work. **We have listed suggestions below which you can tailor to your workplace and help you support those with adenomyosis:**

Policies and support

- ➔ Are policies and procedures supportive of those with adenomyosis? Check your existing policies to ensure those with adenomyosis or other conditions with potentially cyclical symptoms are not disadvantaged.
- ➔ Facilitate conversations about individual needs and see what flexibility can be applied to help them thrive in their work.
- ➔ Encourage staff members to feel they have a safe space and colleagues who understand their experiences.
- ➔ Appropriate training for line managers to create a supportive environment. Including:
 - Effective training in menstrual health
 - Train managers to be confident having conversations about adenomyosis, so they are able to cascade awareness of the condition within the workplace.
- ➔ Chronic pain condition means managing symptoms.
- ➔ Health and wellbeing initiatives.
- ➔ Occupational therapists and HR guidance.

Raising awareness

- Raise awareness of adenomyosis at work to help staff feel supported. Do all managers know what adenomyosis is, and how this condition impacts their staff?
- It can be incredibly supportive, empowering and a real relief for an employee to say to their line manager or their supervisor, “I have adenomyosis,” and to hear back, “I know what that is; let’s have a conversation around how it impacts you and how we can support you.”
- More menstrual health information within the organisation.
- Menstrual health groups – advocate for women’s health at work.
- Collaborate with menstrual health experts and organisations.
- Take action in the workplace – take part in fundraising challenges, join employer schemes to show commitment to creating supportive workplaces.

Practical adjustments

Think about practical arrangements that could help someone with adenomyosis at work, for example:

- Easy access to toilets.
- Access to private spaces if experiencing pain.

- ➔ If you have a workforce that requires to wear uniform consider having options of:
 - Different sizing as those with adenomyosis may experience bloating
 - Darker colours for those who experience heavy menstrual bleeding.
- ➔ Consider flexibility around working hours, this would benefit those with adenomyosis and enable them to thrive at work.
- ➔ Re-assigning work or duties.



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