



Workplace Menstrual Wellbeing

Endometriosis in the workplace

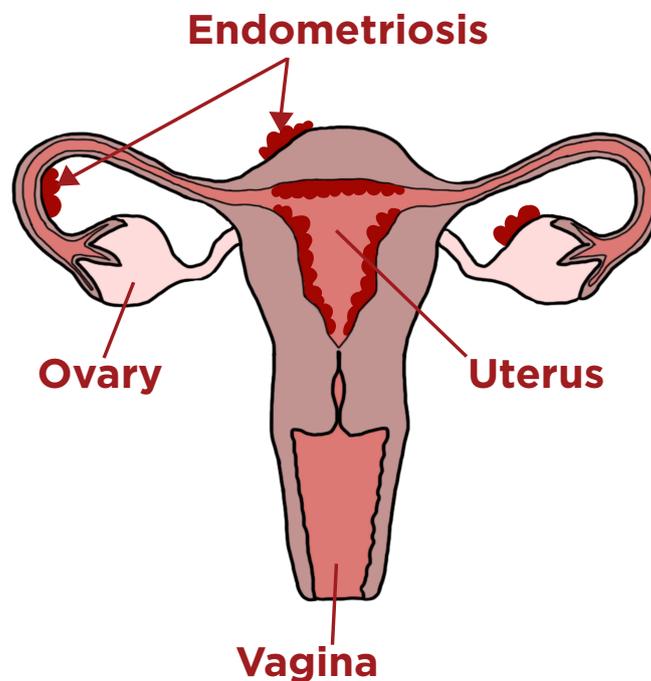
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What is Endometriosis?

Endometriosis occurs when cells similar to the ones in the lining of the womb (uterus) **are found elsewhere in the body**.

These cells can grow and change in response to hormones in the menstrual cycle, this can cause inflammation, pain and scar tissue.



Endometriosis is most commonly found on the lining of the pelvis (peritoneum) and may occur in the ovaries and involve other pelvic organs, like the bowel or bladder.

Less commonly, endometriosis can also be found outside the pelvis, such as in the chest.

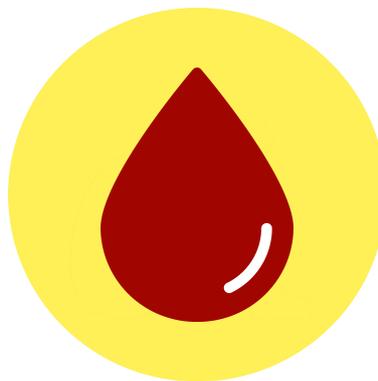
Symptoms are usually experienced from puberty to menopause, but the impact can be felt for life.

Symptoms

Symptoms can vary from person to person, but they can affect all aspects of life.

Some people may have symptoms that have a significant impact on their day-to-day life, while others may have no symptoms at all.

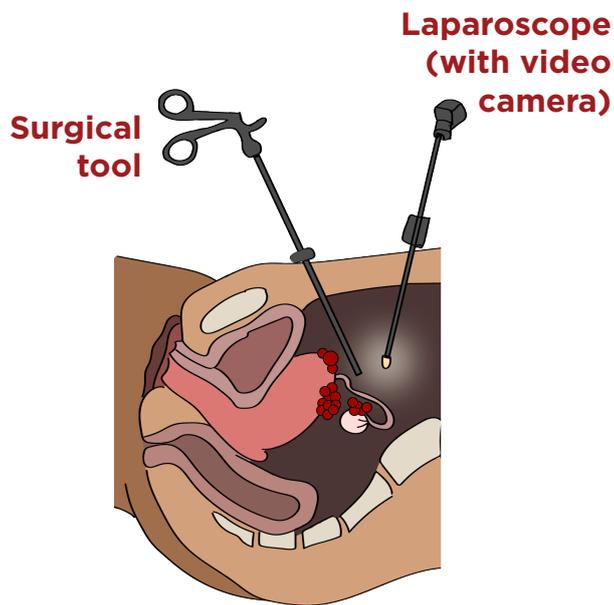
Each individual experience is different.



Common signs and symptoms include:

- **Pelvic pain**
- **Painful periods that interfere with everyday life**
- **Heavy menstrual bleeding**
- **Pain during or after sex**
- **Painful bowel movements/when having a poo**
- **Pain when urinating/peeing**
- **Difficulty getting pregnant** - up to 70% of those with endometriosis will be able to get pregnant naturally
- **Fatigue, with one or more of the above symptoms**

Diagnosis



Currently, the only definitive way to detect and diagnose endometriosis is through a laparoscopy.

A laparoscopy is a keyhole surgery where a trained surgeon conducts an operation to see if there is any presence of endometriosis.

Endometriosis does show up on *some* scans. However not all endometriosis does. So you can still have endometriosis, even if you have a negative scan result.



Treatment

Unfortunately there is no known cure for endometriosis. Treatments aim to improve symptoms and quality of life.

They can be grouped into the following options:

Surgery

Tissue can be removed surgically (where safe to do so). This can be done either by cutting the endometriosis away; burning the endometriosis away; or by ablation (using radiofrequency, heated balloon, or electrosurgery).

Hormone treatment

There are a range of treatments that work by reducing levels of oestrogen in the body, preventing endometriosis tissue from growing quickly and relieving symptoms.

Pain management

This can include prescribed pain medication, and use of a TENS machine or heat. There are also pain management pathways and treatments available via the NHS (including management emotions associated with long term pain).

As employers, it is important to be aware that every individual is different and treatment options will not work the same for everyone. Therefore it is **vital to understand the impact treatment options have on employees** and how you can support them.

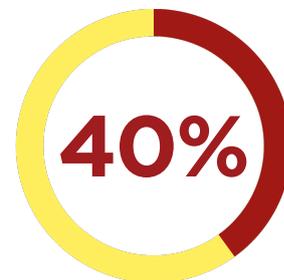
How does Endometriosis impact working life?

Endometriosis costs the UK economy £8.2 billion a year in treatment, loss of work and healthcare costs.

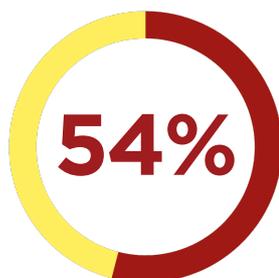
More must be done to ensure those with endometriosis are given the support they need to **thrive** in the workplace.



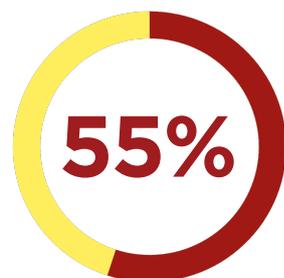
27%
say they've missed out on promotion because of their endometriosis.



40%
of women with endometriosis worry about losing their job.



54%
say that endometriosis has reduced their income.



55%
have had to have time off work often or very often.



87%
believe the condition has impacted their long-term financial situation.

Jenny* tells us how her experience with endometriosis has impacted her working life -

“

It took 14 long years to be diagnosed, starting with a doctor telling me at 16 that my pain was in my head and that I needed counselling.

Since being diagnosed with endometriosis on my bladder and adhesions across my pelvic area, I have had six surgeries and am currently awaiting another.

Endometriosis has fully impacted my life in all areas, including work. I felt forced out of a role because of my need for ‘reasonable adjustments’ and flare-ups resulting from endo, which was not looked kindly upon by management.

It is my hope that by sharing my story and with information like this pack we can collectively educate employers and employees for the better.

Just because we might have sick days, doesn't mean we're not worthy of the job.

”

What can workplaces do?

As an employer it is important you create a positive working environment for those with endometriosis.

We have a list of considerations for employers which will support those with endometriosis in the workplace:

Individualised policies

Are policies and procedures supportive of those with endometriosis? Check your existing policies to ensure those with endometriosis are not disadvantaged.

One thing we're really keen on is asking employers not to set blanket policies and instead offer an individual approach.

Raising awareness

We would love employers to raise awareness of this condition within the workplace. Do all managers know what endometriosis is, and the how this condition impacts their staff?

Train managers to be confident having conversations about endometriosis, but also be able to cascade awareness of the condition within the workplace.

It can be incredibly supportive, empowering and a real relief for an employee to say to their line manager or their supervisor, “I have endometriosis,” and to hear back, “I know what that is; let’s have a conversation around what you need and how we can support you.”

Be supportive

Encourage staff members who suffer from the condition to feel they have a safe space and colleagues who understand what they are suffering from.

Ask what they need

Staff who are affected will be the best people to tell you exactly what they need and how things can be improved.

Be practical

Ensure any necessary arrangements/changes that could help ease endometriosis symptoms whilst at work are explored.

Be flexible

If staff performance or attendance suddenly drops, check in to see if they have any underlying health issues, including endometriosis.

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Company number | 291285

Registered Charity in England and Wales | 1035810

Scottish Charity Registration number | SC051651

Funded through the VCSE Health and Wellbeing Fund, part of a partnership programme between Department of Health & Social Care, NHS England and UK Health Security Agency.

