

Managing your endometriosis at work

We understand it is not always easy to have a conversation with your employer about endometriosis and how it may impact on your work. As it is an invisible condition, employers may also find it hard to understand, but it can be a positive conversation. Professor Andrew Horne and Carol Pearson in their book *Endometriosis: The Experts' Guide to treat, manage, and live well with your symptoms* provide a list of hints and tips to help you prepare for your conversation or meeting with your employer.

Hints and tips for dealing with employers

- Do try and have an open dialogue about your symptoms with someone you trust at work.
- Do explain, in as factual way as possible, what you are experiencing and how this affects you on a day-to-day or month-to-month basis.
- Share information about the treatment you are undergoing and some of the basic facts about endometriosis, explaining that one woman can be affected very differently to another.
- Try and understand the challenges from your employer's perspective as well, as endometriosis is a complex disease and can be hard to understand. It's important to recognise that your employer will have their own pressures and that they have to plan resources to get work completed.
- Be open-minded about changing your working arrangements if they no longer work for you – flexible working can be really helpful, and often new opportunities arise. From April 2024, UK law gives all employees the right to request flexible working from their first day in a new job, which can support better work-life balance when managing a condition like endometriosis.
- Seek advice and support from unions or other organisations relevant to your line of work.
- Seek support from your wider support network – whether this is your partner, family, friends or through other women with endometriosis.
- Look at any benefits available to you that may help you, and seek support from organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau that might help advise on the paperwork for these.
- Talk to your GP, clinical nurse specialist or other health professionals about work concerns.
- Don't be hard on yourself about your own health challenges; try and focus on getting better rather than feeling guilty.
- Don't be defensive with your employer – it won't help.
- Don't assume or expect an employer to make a 'reasonable adjustment' automatically – this isn't always possible.

This excerpt was taken from: © *Endometriosis: The Experts' Guide to treat, manage, and live well with your symptoms* (2018) by Professor Andrew Horne and Carol Pearson
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