

Supporting your TEEN with endometriosis



Adolescence is a time of change as a child grows into an adult. Starting periods is one of these changes, and for some young people it can bring unexpected pain.

For some young people, this pain may be a sign of early endometriosis, a condition where tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus.

This fact sheet explains what endometriosis is, how you can support your teen and where to find help.

How can I tell if it is endometriosis pain?

Mild cramping or discomfort in the first day or two of a period is common. This usually eases with over-the-counter pain relief.

Endometriosis pain is often different. It can be stronger, last longer and affect the whole body. Pain may happen before, during or after periods, and can interfere with school, sport, sleep and daily life.

Symptoms of endometriosis usually begin soon after periods start. Sometimes it happens before periods start.

Common signs include:

- strong period pain that stops your teen from going to school or participating in sport or activities
- ongoing pelvic or stomach pain (not just during periods)
- pain when using the toilet or passing wind
- heavy bleeding or bleeding between periods
- bloating, nausea or bowel changes
- feeling very tired
- difficulty concentrating or sleeping because of pain.

You could suggest your teen uses the Period ImPact and Pain Assessment (PIPPA) tool. It can help them understand how their period pain compares to other people's experience.

Symptoms may change over time and can continue throughout a person's life.



Factors that may increase risk

The exact cause of endometriosis isn't known, but some factors may increase the risk:

- having a close family member with endometriosis
- starting periods at a younger age
- lower body weight
- shorter menstrual cycles.

It is important to see a doctor

Encourage your teen to see a general practitioner (GP) if their period pain:

- stops them from going to school, playing sport or going out
- doesn't improve with common first-line medical treatments
- happens at other times in the period cycle (not just during bleeding)
- their bleeding lasts longer than 14 days, including spotting.

Diagnosis can take years; early recognition and GP review may help reduce delays.

Recognising these symptoms early and seeing a doctor can help reduce delays in diagnosis and managing symptoms. It can also mean your teen gets the care and support they need.

If the condition is not improving, ask for a referral to a gynaecologist or visit an Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain Clinic

www.health.gov.au/our-work/endometriosis-and-pelvic-pain-clinics



Teens may feel uncomfortable with their doctor for many reasons - feeling dismissed, unheard, or unsure how to describe their symptoms. For trans or non-binary teens, using their preferred name and words for their body can also help them feel safe.

How you can help as a parent

Learn about endometriosis together

- Find out how endometriosis affects the body, how it can be managed, and how it can affect daily life. It also means you can feel more confident asking questions at appointments.
- Everyone's experience is different. Support should be tailored based on individual needs and preferences, and the management plan that they have received from their health professional.

Listen and believe

- Endometriosis is often misunderstood or dismissed. Many young people are told that period pain is "normal", but strong pain that disrupts life is not normal and shouldn't be ignored.
- Talking about periods or pelvic pain can feel uncomfortable. Let your teen know it's okay to talk about private things like periods and their health.
- Encourage your teen to share how they feel in their own words.
- Let them know that they're not a burden. They may worry that needing help at home, or being picked up from school or work is creating extra work for you.

Practical support

- Encourage them to write down when their periods happen, how strong the pain is, other symptoms (e.g. nausea or changes in their bowel habits), days they miss school or sport, and anything that make symptoms worse (e.g. stress or certain foods). They can use a notebook, their phone's note function or a free symptom app such as CHARLI, which is designed for people with endometriosis and pelvic pain. Tracking symptoms makes it easier to notice patterns and talk with doctors.
- Encourage your teen to use a pain scale. It can help them understand their pain more clearly to doctors and decide when to rest.

Looking ahead

Endometriosis is a long-term condition, but many people can find ways to manage it well. With your support, your teen can find strategies that work for them and live a full, rewarding life.



- Go to appointments with your teen if they want you there. You can take notes, ask questions and help advocate. Encourage them to plan what they want to say and what to do if concerns aren't covered. Ask for a second opinion or a referral to a gynaecologist if needed.
- Ask your GP about other helpful health professionals, such as a physiotherapist, dietitian or counsellor.
- Support them to keep attending school or university, seeing friends and joining social activities.
- If they're at school, speak with teachers about extra time, flexible attendance or other adjustments.
- Offer help with booking appointments, driving them, or managing admin tasks.

Emotional support

- Acknowledge their pain. Let your teen know you believe them. Pain is real and can affect mood, energy and confidence.
- Build a support team of health professionals (e.g. GPs, gynaecologists, physiotherapists, dietitians, counsellors) and supportive people (family, friends, teachers, school nurse).
- Connect with others who understand. Online or in-person support groups can help both you and your teen feel understood, share tips and find encouragement.

Tips for everyday care

- Offer different ways to feel comfortable, like using a heat pack, taking a warm bath or using a hot water bottle to help relax the muscles in the lower belly. A TENS machine might also help with pain.
- Encourage gentle movement such as short walks or swimming.
- Offer meals and snacks with lots of vegetables, fruit, whole grains and protein. Some people find that eating foods that help reduce inflammation, like colourful vegetables, fatty fish, and nuts, can help reduce symptoms. Talk to a dietitian for more information.
- Encourage a regular sleep routine. Going to bed and waking up at the same time, having a dark, quiet room, and avoiding screens before bed can reduce fatigue.
- Help your teen break tasks into smaller steps to balance activity and rest. They could pace themselves by doing a little at a time, taking breaks before they get too tired, and spreading tasks across the day or week.
- Pain is real and biological; strategies like pacing and mindfulness can help the nervous system cope with pain signals, they do not mean the pain is psychological.