

MANAGING PERIOD PAIN AND SYMPTOMS WITH YOUR DOCTOR



When should you see the doctor?

You should see a doctor about your period pain and symptoms if you have:

- Taken the Period Impact and Pain Assessment (PIPPA) and got a score of four or five
- Tried self-managing your pain and symptoms and it has not worked
- Concerns that you wish to discuss.

This handout can help you talk to your doctor about managing your symptoms. You should take it to your appointment as a checklist for things to talk about with them.



Red flags for endometriosis

Endometriosis is a disease where the tissue that is similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside it, usually in the pelvis. It can be very painful and could affect your fertility.

These are symptoms that might indicate that you have endometriosis. Many of them are also symptoms for other health conditions.

They do not mean that you definitely have endometriosis, only that your doctor should be aware if you have some of these symptoms and see if first line treatments may help.

- Moderate to severe period pain
- Mid-cycle/ovulation pain
- Pain starting before period
- Sharp bowel pain before or when opening your bowels with a bowel movement (dyschezia)
- Premenstrual spotting not related to taking the pill or hormone therapy
- Bladder pain (worse with full bladder)
- Painful sexual intercourse (dyspareunia) (Note that lots of conditions can cause painful sex)
- Sharp rectal pain ('knife like', shoots upwards)
- Pain relief e.g. Nurofen or Panadol is ineffective
- School or work absence or difficulty completing schoolwork due to period or pelvic pain
- Family history of endometriosis
- Multiple PMS/menstrual symptoms.



Things to review with your doctor

You should talk with your doctor about:

- **Any painkillers** you are taking and what helps manage pain
- Other methods you have tried to relieve your symptoms (e.g. exercise, healthy eating, hot packs, relaxation, deep breathing)
- **Any hormone therapy** that you are taking (e.g. contraceptive pill, contraceptive implant, Mirena intra-uterine device). If you are not taking any hormonal contraception, you can talk to your doctor about whether this might help you.

Further investigations to consider

There are a number of other tests your doctor can do to see what might be causing problems.

You should talk to your doctor about these and if they think any will help to understand your symptoms.

- A routine **pelvic ultrasound** scan to check for obvious pelvic conditions
- Advanced gynaecology ultrasound scan for endometriosis
- **Sexual health screen** if you are sexually active
- **Blood tests** to check for anemia (low iron), bleeding issues and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS).

Other concerns to address

The symptoms of endometriosis can also be caused by other conditions. It is important to check for other conditions so that you can get the right treatment.

Other conditions that you should talk to your doctor about include:

- Problems with your pelvic floor such as **tight pelvic muscles** or muscle spasm (very common)
- Excessively **heavy bleeding** with periods
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Inflamed vagina and vulva (vulvovaginitis)
- **Anxiety, depression** or other psychological disorders
- **Gut problems** such as flora imbalance or food intolerances
- Urological conditions such as urinary tract infections or painful bladder syndrome.

Some of these conditions may need treatment from a variety of different health professionals.

This might include psychologists, dietitians and specialist pelvic pain physiotherapists.

✓ It worked

Your pain and symptoms are adequately managed. Continue your current actions in consultation with your doctor

✗ It didn't work

More help is needed to manage your pain and symptoms. Talk with your doctor about whether a referral to a specialised period pain, pelvic pain and endometriosis service is appropriate.