

If you have problems with your monthly cycle including pain, heavy or irregular bleeding, nausea and diarrhea; are suffering from infertility or painful sexual activity, you may have Endometriosis. Pain is nature's way of telling us something is wrong, and it's time to see the doctor.

HOW THE ERC CAN HELP

The ERC offers many supportive programs and educational materials on an international and local level, including:

Newsletter: We publish a monthly Newsletter containing articles on Endo, latest research developments on Endo, support group news, personal stories, treatment options, etc. Contributors who make a donation of \$15 (U.S.) or more have the option to receive the Newsletter for one year.

ERC ListServ: The ERC ListServ is an online mailing list that provides support and information for women with Endometriosis on a daily basis. The ListServ will allow you the opportunity to contact others who are dealing with the same or similar issues that you are concerning the disease. Please visit our website at www.endocenter.org to learn how you can join the ERC ListServ.

Additional Support Programs: Talking to someone really helps. To know you are not alone is equally helpful. If you would like to talk to someone and share experiences and treatment ideas, please contact us about our Support Programs such as our Endo Group Meetings, which are located online and throughout the country.

Physicians: The ERC does not recommend or endorse any specific doctors, but offers guidance in finding the appropriate doctor for treating your Endometriosis. Please obtain a copy of the ERC's "How to Find a Doctor" Fact Sheet for more information.

Educational Materials: We offer fact sheets, articles, booklets and informative materials on all aspects of the disease. If you have a specific, personalized question about the disease, please let us know, and we will do our best to research the answers for you.

Our programs are accessible both online and in the local communities, to ensure that all the support and information needs of women with Endometriosis and their families are being met.

Please note: Every effort is made to respond to all inquiries in a timely fashion. However, the ERC receives hundreds of emails, faxes, letters and phone calls each week. Allow significant time for our volunteers to get back to you. Thank you for your understanding.

There is never a charge to join the ERC.

The ERC's brochure, "Your Guide To Understanding Endometriosis," is printed in memory of our ERC Angels & Supporters, Helen Budka, Beverly Krick and Jerry Marvel.

Endometriosis Research Center

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**YOUR GUIDE TO
UNDERSTANDING**

ENDOMETRIOSIS

Over 5.5 million women in the United States alone suffer from a painful, chronic gynecological disease known as Endometriosis. Affecting more women than breast cancer, Endometriosis is a leading cause of female infertility and hysterectomy. The disease can have a debilitating impact on a woman's life and her relationships; in some cases rendering her unable to work, care for herself or her family, or go about her normal routine. Studies have even shown an elevated risk of certain cancers and autoimmune diseases in Endometriosis patients. Currently, there is no definitive cure for Endometriosis.

The Endometriosis Research Center (ERC) is a 501(c) 3 tax exempt, tax-deductible organization, which was founded to raise awareness, provide education and support, and offer women the opportunity to take an active role in research to ultimately find a cure for this disease.

The ERC provides education, encouragement and empowerment to ensure that no woman with Endometriosis ever has to feel alone again.

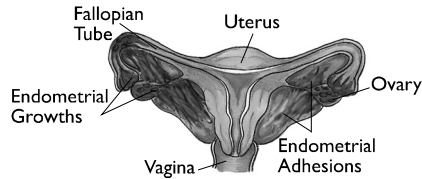
ERC *Endometriosis
Research Center*

GET THE FACTS

While there is no cure for Endometriosis, there are ways of treating the disease. The first step to successfully managing Endometriosis is to get informed.

ENDOMETRIOSIS, THE MISSED DISEASE: The average delay in diagnosis of the disease is a staggering 9 years. The disease is often confused for Pelvic Inflammatory Disease, bladder infections, Irritable Bowel Syndrome and a multitude of other conditions. It is important for patients and physicians to work closely together to detect, treat and effectively manage Endometriosis at the onset of symptoms.

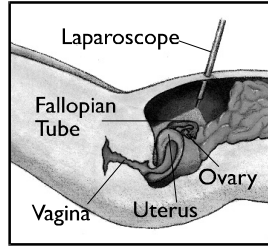
WHAT IS ENDOMETRIOSIS? Endometriosis is a disease in which the endometrium (the tissue that lines the inside of the uterus which builds up and is shed each month during menstruation) is found outside the uterus, in other areas of the body. These implants still respond to hormonal commands each month, and break down and bleed. However, unlike the lining of the uterus, the tissue has no way of leaving the body. The result is internal bleeding, degeneration of blood and tissue shed from the growths, inflammation of the surrounding areas, and formation of scar tissue. Endometriosis lesions can present themselves in almost any color, shape, size and location. The lesions can be virtually any color including black, red, white, clear and more, and they can be microscopic in size. Endometriosis implants can be spread throughout the entire pelvis including the reproductive organs, bowels, bladder, diaphragm and other areas in the body, and may not be visible without proper magnifying equipment and thorough examination. While uncommon, Endometriosis has even been found lodged in the skin and the brain. Symptoms include, but are not limited to: heavy bleeding and pain before, during or after menstruation (pain is not normal!), nausea, constipation, diarrhea, pain with intercourse, ectopic pregnancies, miscarriages, infertility, backache, bladder pain and premenstrual spotting.



WHAT CAUSES ENDOMETRIOSIS? Researchers have yet to agree on the defining cause of Endometriosis, though theories such as genetics and immunology are being researched. Some researchers believe it is a combination of many theories. In addition, investigations are underway to uncover the possible role environmental hazards such as dioxin may play in Endometriosis.

WHO GETS ENDOMETRIOSIS? The outdated, misinformed theory that “white career women who delay childbearing” are the prime candidates for Endometriosis could not be further from the truth. The disease knows no racial or socioeconomic barriers. It can affect any woman of reproductive age, from as early as a girl’s first menstrual period. Endometriosis is also commonly found in women who have undergone hysterectomies and post-menopausal women.

HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED? Endometriosis may be suspected based on your symptoms. However, the disease can only be definitively diagnosed via surgery; either a “keyhole surgery” known as a laparoscopy (“lap”) or the more invasive laparotomy. The Laparoscopy is usually done on an outpatient basis. During the Lap, the patient’s abdomen is distended with carbon dioxide gas to make the organs easier to view. A Laparoscope (a thin, tubal, lighted instrument) is then inserted into a small incision in the abdomen. The organs can be viewed and a diagnosis made. In many cases, disease presence can be removed at the time of diagnosis through excision, ablation, cautery or coagulation.



HOW IS IT TREATED? Studies have shown the most effective treatment for the disease is thorough eradication of all Endometriosis. Unfortunately, if all the disease is not removed, there is an extremely high rate of recurrence. Often, medical therapy is used in conjunction with surgery in order to suppress the disease on a long-term basis. This includes hormonal treatments, contraceptives, and immune and alternative therapies. Common hormonal drugs used to treat Endometriosis include: Lupron, Synarel, Zoladex, Danazol, Depo Provera and Oral Contraceptives. A patient may also wish to discuss pain management strategies with her physician. Pregnancy has provided temporary relief for some women with the disease, but the myth that “pregnancy will cure Endometriosis” is unfounded and symptoms are likely to return post-partum. Many individuals have positive experiences with alternative treatments, including acupuncture, diet and exercise regimens, herbs, ayurvedic medicine, relaxation/massage therapy and more.

Portions of this pamphlet are excerpted from the ERC’s “Endometriosis: Frequently Asked Questions” Fact Sheet. To obtain copies of the complete FAQ, additional educational materials, our Support Contact Network, a sample of our monthly Newsletter and latest research updates, or to request additional information about our materials and programs, please contact the Endometriosis Research Center at (800) 239-7280 or visit our website at <http://www.endocenter.org> We are here to help in anyway we can!

ERC VOLUNTEER / DONATION FORM

Name: _____ Phone: _____
 Address: _____ Email: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Please send more information on joining the ERC Angel Network. I am interested in joining the ERC Angel Network:
 I would like to learn more about volunteer opportunities. White Angel \$15/year
 I am interested in receiving the ERC Newsletter for one year*. Silver Angel \$30/year
 Please accept my tax-deductible donation of \$ _____. Gold Angel \$60/year
 Enclosed is a check. Bill my credit card. Millennium Angel \$120/year
 Enclosed is a Matching Gift form from my company.

Name on credit card: _____ Credit card #: _____
 Exp. Date: _____ Type of Card (please circle): MASTERCARD VISA

Please make checks payable to the **Endometriosis Research Center** and return this form to: 630 Ibis Drive / Delray Beach, FL 33444

* Contributors of \$15.00 (U.S) or more have the option to receive the newsletter. Canadian residents, please add \$5.00; International, please add \$10.00.