

What you need to know about endometriosis

Despite increased awareness of the condition over the past few years, people with endometriosis still feel their pain is routinely disbelieved and dismissed. We sat down with Maven OB-GYN Dr. Kathleen Green to talk about what endometriosis is, how to treat it, and how Maven can support you on this journey.

What is endometriosis?

Your period is made up of endometrial tissue, which is the lining of your uterus that thickens each month as it prepares for pregnancy. Endometriosis is a condition, affecting approximately 10% of women worldwide, where the endometrial tissue grows outside of the uterus. It can grow on the ovaries, fallopian tubes, pelvis, or other locations and can cause pain in the lower abdomen, pelvis, and lower back.

Causes of endometriosis

The cause of endometriosis isn't completely known, but experts believe some possible causes may include:

- **Retrograde menstruation:** This is when menstrual fluid flows backward into the fallopian tubes and pelvis.
- **Scar tissue from surgery:** Having a hysterectomy or C-section can increase the risk of endometriosis.
- **Cell transformation:** Hormones transforming other cells into endometrial-like cells that grow outside the uterus.
- **Cell movement:** It's possible that endometrial cells can move outside of the uterus to other parts of the body by way of blood vessels or tissue fluids.
- **Immune system disorders:** If a person has an immune system disorder, this may prevent the body from being able to destroy endometrial-like tissue

Endometriosis symptoms

These are the most common symptoms of endometriosis. You may have one or several of these symptoms:

- Painful periods
- Painful sex
- Painful urination or bowel movements
- Abnormal menstrual bleeding

Treatment and steps

How your doctor treats endometriosis depends on the severity. Your treatment options could include:

- **Short-term pain relief:** It can help to take warm baths, use a heating pad, and take ibuprofen.
- **Birth control:** Hormonal birth control can regulate hormone levels.
- **Medication:** Your doctor may prescribe hormone-blocking medications.
- **Surgery:** Your doctor will operate and remove endometrial tissue

