

FAST FACTS: ENDOMETRIOSIS

WHAT IS IT

Each month, endometrial tissue normally builds up in the uterus. This tissue and blood are shed as your monthly period. Endometriosis occurs when this tissue grows outside the uterus.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Bumps, scars, or fluid-filled sacs called cysts.

CAUSE

No one knows exactly what causes endometriosis.

WHERE IT GROWS

It mainly grows in the abdomen, lower back, and pelvic areas: on or under the ovaries, on the bowels or bladder, behind the uterus, on the tissues that hold the uterus in place. When endometrial tissue is outside your uterus, this tissue is still shed monthly. But because this tissue is not where it is supposed to be, it can't leave a woman's body the way a woman's period normally does. These areas may hurt nearby tissues and can damage your organs.

SYMPTOMS

- Very painful cramps or periods
- Heavy periods
- Chronic pelvic pain
- Spotting or bleeding between periods
- Lower back pain
- Painful bowel movements or pain passing urine during your period
- Intestinal pain
- Pain during or after sex
- Inability to get pregnant
- Tiredness
- Stomach problems

TESTS

- Medical history
- Pelvic exam
- Physical exam
- Ultrasound — a test that creates a "picture" of the inside of your body
- Laparoscopy — surgery in which your doctor inserts a small tube with a light and a camera inside your abdomen to see if you have endometriosis

TREATMENT

- Lifestyle changes
- Pain medication
- Hormone therapy
- Surgery

Call the Allegan Pelvic Wellness Center to schedule an initial consultation at (269) 686-4355.

