

HEALTH SPOTLIGHT

Endometriosis

- CAN THE RIGHT NUTRITION

BE HELPFUL?

ENDOMETRIOSIS THE SYMPTOMS

- Painful periods
- Pain during sex
- Pain going to the toilet
- Bloating
- Fertility problems
- Constipation/diarrhoea

Nutritional Therapist Monique Parker lifts the lid on supporting the painful condition, the holistic way.

What can be done about endometriosis?

Typical treatment for endometriosis is pain management, and/or hormone treatment and if these fail, then surgery in the form of 'excision' is the next option. A specialised endometriosis surgeon will remove the endometriosis lesions.

Complementary medicine has been helpful for the support of endometriosis sufferers. Think nutritional therapy, acupuncture, massage or herbal medicine

According to Endometriosis UK, 10% of the women of reproductive age in the UK suffer from endometriosis, one of the most common gynaecological conditions.

Endometriosis is a highly complex disease where cells like the ones you find in the lining of the uterus are growing elsewhere in the

body, such as inside the pelvis, on the bowel or inside the muscle of the womb. These cells respond to hormones in the same way the cells in the uterus lining do, so at some point during the monthly cycle they grow, break down and bleed. But because the blood can't leave the body, it is causing pain, inflammation, swelling and it forms adhesions (scar tissue).

“Endometriosis is an inflammatory disease; hence it is vital to reduce inflammation as much as possible”

for pain relief.

Another way is to address things such as your hormones, inflammation and your immune system. Here's how:

Hormone balancing – the insight

As endometriosis is an oestrogen-dependent disorder, balancing hormones is very important. Endometriosis produces its own oestrogen. Controlling excess oestrogen can be achieved by making sure there is optimal gut health and good detoxication, so your body can get rid of excess oestrogen and toxins.

Aromatase is an enzyme that is involved in the

production of oestrogen. As inflammation stimulates aromatase, it is important to reduce any inflammation. Endometriosis tissue contains very high levels of aromatase.

Visceral adipose tissue is a hormonally active component of your total body fat. It is the fat that is wrapped around the organs in the abdomen. Visceral fat is active and releases pro-inflammatory chemicals and other toxic substances. These fat cells also contain aromatase, so more oestrogen can be produced. To make matters worse, these visceral fat cells can store environmental toxins. To reduce inflammation and excess oestrogen, avoiding being overweight is essential.

Chronic inflammation – the insight

Endometriosis is an inflammatory disease; hence it is vital to reduce inflammation as much as possible. Stress causes inflammation, so reducing stress is vitally important. Following an anti-inflammatory diet is key, which means cutting out processed and refined foods, sugar, gluten, dairy products, excess caffeine and alcohol and oxidised and trans fats.

Anti-inflammatory diet:

1 Good quality protein (lean, organic, preferably grass-fed meat, wild meat, game, and

Hormone balancing checklist

- Avoid processed foods
- Eat a wide variety of fibre-rich, plant-based foods
- Eat healthy fats such as ghee, coconut oil, organic butter, olive oil, nuts & seeds
- Eat fermented foods like natural yogurt
- Detox the body with foods like cruciferous vegetables (kale, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and cauliflower), cabbage, red peppers, garlic and onions, green leafy vegetables, turmeric, dill, rosemary, green tea, vitamin B and C rich foods
- Eat organic food where possible
- Reduce your use of plastics
- Use environmentally-friendly products including household cleaning products, make-up, skincare and body products plus organic tampons
- Try to avoid products with the chemicals Sodium Lauryl/Laureth Sulphate, Phthalates (watch out for any names ending in phthalate, sometimes shortened to DBP, DEHP, BBP and BzBP), Parabens, Formaldehyde, Petrolatum (i.e. baby oil is 100% mineral oil - a by-product of petroleum)
- Inhibit aromatase with foods like flaxseeds, sesame seeds, dark chocolate and legumes

You can contact Monique Parker mBANT mCNHC at www.nutritionforyou.co.uk



Endometriosis - in numbers

- 10% of women in the world suffer from endometriosis
- There are around 1.6million endometriosis patients in the UK
- In the UK, diagnosis takes on average 7.5years
- Around 30% of cases are severe
- Between 30-50% of women with endometriosis have fertility problems

“As endometriosis is considered a disease of immune dysregulation, boosting the immune system could be beneficial”

wild-caught, fresh fish such as salmon, trout or sardines)

2 Complex carbohydrates (vegetables, fibre-rich fruit, legumes, pulses)

3 A 'rainbow' of different coloured vegetables and fruit daily

4 Generous helpings of cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts

etc.) and dark green leafy vegetables (kale, spinach, watercress, rocket etc.

5 Herbs & spices (turmeric, ginger, cloves, cinnamon, rosemary, oregano, sage, thyme)

6 Healthy oils & fats (coconut oil, olive oil, ghee, avocado, nuts and seeds, oily fish)

7 Essential Fatty Acids (oily fish, nuts and seeds, eggs)

8 Dairy alternatives such as almond, hazelnut, hemp, coconut or oat milk and yogurt

9 Fermented foods like sauerkraut, kimchi and miso

10 Green tea

11 Shiitake mushrooms

12 Bone broth made with organic bones

Boosting the immune system – the insight

Various studies have shown changes in the immune system can play a role in the survival and growth of displaced menstrual tissues in women with endometriosis. As endometriosis is considered a disease of immune dysregulation, boosting the immune system could be beneficial.

To function optimally, the immune system needs a nutrient-dense diet, optimal gut health, adequate sleep (6-8hrs), relaxation and regular exercise (be careful, though, as excessive exercise can have the opposite effect). **TH**



A patient's story

Sally had suffered very heavy and painful periods since she was a teenager. She wasn't diagnosed with endometriosis until she was in her thirties and trying for a baby. After miscarriages, failed IVF treatments, Ibuprofen-dependence, and many years of 'monthly misery', Sally had a full hysterectomy when she was 47 years old.

“The GP and the nurses told me I was going to feel like a whole new woman, but what they forgot to mention was that I would go into menopause overnight after the operation. It was great not to have periods anymore, but for a long time after the operation, I struggled to come to terms with suddenly being 'old'. I felt depressed and a failure as a woman. I wish I had known about complementary medicine at the time of the decision to remove my uterus and ovaries. I would definitely have tried to manage my endometriosis in a different way.”

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