

ENDOMETRIOSIS



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Endometriosis is a common problem which affects young women in the reproductive age group. In this, the tissue which lines the womb (endometrium) is found growing in abnormal locations such as the ovaries or around the uterus.

Every time the patient has her menses, there is also bleeding outside this. As a result thick dark blood accumulates in the ovaries (endometriotic cyst) and there are blood spots all over the pelvis which cause the intestines tubes and ovaries to stick to each other.

Endometriosis can cause severe pain before or during periods, also heavy or abnormal bleeding. As it damages the uterus and ovaries, it often causes infertility (inability to conceive). The condition always worsens with time and in severe cases can result in total damage to all pelvic organs creating a frozen pelvis.

Diagnosis is made by history, examination and sonography. Sometimes a laparoscopy (Key hole surgery) may be required to diagnose and treat endometriosis at the same time.

Treatment is essentially surgical. Nowadays, 2-3 small incisions on the stomach wall are used to introduce a camera and operating instruments inside the pelvis and the endometriotic areas are removed and burnt using cauterization.

Despite surgical removal, there is a possibility of recurrence of endometriosis, and the patient may need multiple surgeries within a few years.

Hormonal treatment is used to create 'artificial menopause' as there are no periods, the endometriosis subsides. This can be done using continuous hormone tablets or once a month injections. However this form of treatment is temporary.

For young patients with endometriosis who want to have a baby, they require specialized treatment like IUI or IVF (Test tube baby). If the patient is older and has had repeated surgery, a hysterectomy with oophorectomy (removing uterus and ovary) is the final solution.

Patients question's

Q) I am 28 years, married since 5 years. I have regular, but heavy and very painful cycles. My sonography showed an ovarian chocolate cyst. I have been advised surgery but I am scared to undergo any operative procedure as I don't even have any children yet. What should I do? Jenny

Ans: Endometriosis is a condition in which blood may collect in the ovary (Where the eggs grow) during each menstrual period. As a result endometriosis keeps increasing with time and soon thick, dark blood forms a cyst in the ovary which looks like chocolate, hence the name 'Chocolate cyst'.

This causes pain during menses and also difficulty in conceiving. The only good effective and long term treatment is surgery. However, nowadays laparoscopic (Keyhole) surgery is done where there are only 2-3 small incisions on the stomach. The patient recovers fast and need not stay in hospital for only 1-2 days. Many new equipment such as lasers, harmonic scalpel etc have made this procedure better for the patient.

I am 40 years old, have already had two operations (1 laparoscopic and 1 open) for endometriosis in the past. Now my child is 12 years old and my endometriosis has become severe again. What are my options?

Ans: Unfortunately, endometriosis is often a recurrent problem. Despite surgery or medicines, it can come back. Severe endometriosis can cause extreme pain and cause the intestines etc to stick together and cause many complications. The once a month injection, can stop menstrual periods and give temporary relief, but the final solution is removal of the uterus and both ovaries. If you leave the ovaries behind, the endometriosis can come back again, so complete removal is the only solution. This surgery is also difficult in severe endometriosis.

For free consultation:
email: askthedoctor@rediffmail.com