

support. For example, Dong quai (care with heavy periods), Peony, Wild Yam, Corydalis, Cramp bark and St Mary's Thistle just to name a few. As a starting place, try teas like Chamomile, Red clover, Raspberry leaf and Passionflower for gentle pain relief and toning. Ginger tea is great if nausea is present, and also helps reduce those prostaglandins. Dandelion root is great for the liver, while the leaf helps reduce fluid retention.

Supplements

- add a supplement of EFA blends like Fish or Flaxseed oil ± Evening Primrose oil
- Magnesium can help with pain management - try Schuessler Tissue Salt 'Mag phos' or Blackmores Celloid 'PPMP' first as they're very safe; otherwise higher dose magnesium may be better prescribed by a Practitioner

Homeopathic remedies can also offer help although professional assistance is best to find the right remedy. As an example: If your pain is better for stretching out straight, try Dioscorea; Colocynthis is great when pain is better for warmth and curling up tight; Calc flur for heavy periods and bearing down pain; Borax for pain going into thighs and with nausea. These are just some examples, and there are many more depending on your own unique pattern.

If you want to do your own research, there's some great books out there. Some that I love are:

Ruth Trickey [Women, Hormones and the Menstrual Cycle](#)

Ruth Trickey & Kaz Cooke [Women's Trouble, Natural and Medical Solutions](#)

Kristianne Northrup [Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom](#)

Endometriosis

...help from natural medicine

Endometriosis is a condition where tissue normally found in the uterus somehow ends up outside the uterus. Because this tissue is hormonally responsive it is also affected by our monthly hormonal ups and downs; ie. It can bleed too. For some women this can cause mild to severe pain in a number of systems - the most common are heavy painful periods, pelvic and abdominal pain, pain on urination or bowel movements, and pain with sex. Unfortunately, complications can arise - cysts which may burst causing extreme pain, increased risk of infertility and ectopic pregnancy.

What causes endometriosis?

There are numerous theories about what causes endometriosis, but none fully explain why it causes problems in some women and not in others. From a naturopathic perspective, it is considered to indicate a subtle (or not!) hormonal imbalance where there is increased sensitivity to oestrogen, eg, causing heavy periods. There is also an increase in chemicals in the body that increase inflammation and pain. There may be an association with low thyroid function, early onset of periods and signs of immune system problems.

Strategies for pain relief...

Medically, options for pain relief range include analgesics like ibuprofen (Nurofen) to hormone treatment with progesterone, or surgery to remove tissue/growths occurring outside the uterus. For some women, the severity of pain requires major medical intervention.

The following **natural strategies** may be of benefit, even in the severest case, perhaps by simply reducing the need for drugs like Nurofen, and definitely because they may enhance quality of life and fertility.



Exercise is the first most useful place to start for any type of pain, especially because it improves circulation and promotes healthy bowel function (vital for helping the body remove oestrogen). For endometriosis in particular, exercise needs to be more than 2 hours per week and of moderate intensity. For example, walking needs to be fast and include

stairs or hills etc. Yoga and pilates can be great for stretching exercises which also help to tone the muscles in the pelvic area.

Dietary changes can lead to huge improvements in pain and can help the body gently rebalance hormonally.



Foods to increase include:

- deep sea fish, cold pressed oils (olive, flaxseed), raw nuts and seeds - all good sources of Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs) which are anti-inflammatory, pain relieving and immune enhancing
- phytoestrogen foods to gently balance hormones - legumes/beans, including whole soy products (tofu, tempeh), whole grains, sprouts (esp. alfalfa, mung, adzuki), ground flaxseeds

- liver friendly foods help hormonal processing and also help bowel function - raw nuts/seeds, garlic and onion, plus heaps of fresh fruit and vegetables! Dandelion root beverages instead of coffee can help the liver while reducing caffeine intake
- iodine-rich foods like seaweeds (eg. Nori rolls) and fish can help improve low thyroid function (talk to a practitioner for how to check your thyroid function)
- there's a higher incidence of food intolerances and allergies with endometriosis, so you may need help in finding this out. As a basic rule, more variety in your diet reduces the risk of intolerance/allergy - ie. Eating the same foods/food groups every day is NOT variety - toast for brekky and pasta for dinner is all wheat-based!

Foods to reduce include:

- watch out for take away, fried, packaged foods, too much red meat/chicken/pork/ham etc - all higher in saturated and processed fats which increase inflammation and pain
- those foods with high sugar content and added sugar - this includes obvious ones like cakes and biscuits etc, but also many 'low fat' foods - check ingredient lists for words ending in 'ose' or other sweeteners

Herbal teas can be safely self-prescribed, but when it comes to herbal medicines as liquids, you'll need to see a professional Naturopath/Herbalist. These medicines are made up for the individual according to her own unique set of symptoms - eg. to promote hormonal balance, for pain relief and anti-spasmodic effect, relaxing and toning the system, and for liver