

## Exercise and Endometriosis

Dealing with endometriosis can be tough, especially when you're in pain. However, there are ways to manage symptoms, and exercise is one of them. Even though it might seem counterintuitive to work out when you're experiencing pelvic pain and cramping, staying active can actually help alleviate these symptoms. It's essential to find activities that make you feel good, whether it's going for a walk with a friend or listening to your favorite podcast.

If you're unsure where to start, consider working with a physical therapist who specializes in pelvic pain. They can guide you in choosing exercises that are gentle on your body but still effective. Swimming, walking, Pilates, and yoga are good options because they don't put too much strain on your belly or pelvic muscles.

Breathing exercises can also be helpful in relaxing your body and mind. Lie on your back, place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly, and breathe in slowly through your nose. Notice your belly rise as you inhale and fall as you exhale through pursed lips. This type of exercise may not make you sweat, but it can make a difference in how you feel.

Here's how getting into fitness can help ease some of the symptoms of endometriosis:

1. **Improves Mood:** Exercising triggers the release of natural feel-good chemicals in your brain called endorphins. These can lift your mood and may help with the pain and mood swings associated with endometriosis. It's especially important because endometriosis can sometimes lead to depression and anxiety. Doing more intense workouts tends to have a stronger mood-boosting effect, which is generally good for your overall health.
2. **Relieves Pain:** Exercise can be part of a strategy to manage endometriosis pain. When you work out, it helps loosen up your muscles and ligaments, making it easier to move even when you're in pain. Plus, exercise can trigger the release of natural pain-relieving substances in your body. While some studies show exercise can help with endometriosis pain, others have mixed results, so more research is needed.
3. **Strengthens Pelvic Floor:** For some women with endometriosis, scar tissue or adhesions can develop, causing pain and stiffness. Working with a pelvic floor physical therapist can help develop a plan to strengthen the muscles around your bladder, vagina, and bowels. This specialized exercise program can significantly reduce pain and improve mobility.
4. **Benefits Whole Body:** Exercise has widespread benefits for your entire body. It improves blood circulation, delivers more nutrients and oxygen to your organs, and can even lower estrogen levels, which might help with endometriosis symptoms since estrogen can contribute to inflammation and pain.

**What Your Exercise Plan Should Look Like:** While there are specialized programs being developed for women with endometriosis, such as yoga and Pilates, not all exercises work for everyone. Some women may find relief with vigorous cardio, while others need gentler activities. It's essential to find what works best for you and won't worsen your symptoms. Talk to your doctor about creating a safe exercise plan tailored to your needs and preferences. Ultimately, the best exercise is the one you enjoy and will stick to.