



The Silent Epidemic

Endometriosis Ballarat

When the Federal Government announced it was allocating \$2.5 million for endometriosis research, many people were bewildered. What was endometriosis and why was money being allocated for the research of a condition most people hadn't heard of?

The reason was simple: endometriosis is condition which affects 10 percent of Australian women. Despite being surprisingly common, it is poorly understood even by medical professionals. It is called the "silent epidemic" because it may take 7-10 years for woman to be diagnosed – despite suffering sometimes debilitating symptoms.

What is Endometriosis?

Endometriosis is when the tissue that normally lines the uterus – the endometrium – grows outside the uterus. This tissue continues to act as it would in the uterus: thickening, breaking down and then bleeding during the menstrual cycle. However, the blood is "trapped" in the new location which can cause cysts or inflammation leading to scars and adhesions.

Most commonly, endometriosis effects a woman's reproductive organs (the ovaries and fallopian tubes), the pelvic area and area between the uterus and anus. However, endometriosis can spread anywhere in the body and has been found on the diaphragm, rib cage, lungs, in joints and the brain.

How do you know if you have Endometriosis?

The most common symptoms of endometriosis are:

- ❖ Pain – which can be severe – on or around period time
- ❖ Pain – which can be severe – on or around ovulation
- ❖ Pain during or after sex

- ❖ Pain with bowel motions or during urination
- ❖ Pain in pelvic area, lower back or legs
- ❖ Heavy or irregular periods
- ❖ Urgent urination when the bladder is full or frequent urination
- ❖ Fatigue
- ❖ Other symptoms around period time such as diarrhoea, constipation, bloating and nausea

Is Endometriosis serious?

Any condition where chronic pain is interfering with your life is serious – it can lead to depression, anxiety and a host of other pain related conditions. In addition, a chronic condition linked with inflammation can have health implications such as heart disease.

The main complication of endometriosis is infertility. About a third of women with the condition have difficulty falling pregnant.

Endometriosis may also increase the risk of some cancers, such as ovarian cancer.

What can you do for Endometriosis?

Physical activity and exercise - Gentle exercise can help the pain symptoms. Exercise is known to reduce certain hormones including oestrogen, one of the primary menstruation hormones. About 20-30 minutes of exercise most days of the week is recommended or build up to this if you haven't exercised recently.

Sleep – A good nights sleep is important – 8-9 hours most nights. Sleep deprivation can affect the hormone system which may cause endometriosis symptoms to become worse.

Heat - Heat can cause better blood flow through painful areas bringing in new nutrients and flushing out the debris of inflammation. A wheat bag, hot water bottle or a warm bath may all be helpful.

Stress Management and Relaxation – Stress can cause endometriosis symptoms to become worse due to effect of stress hormones and the tightening of muscles on areas that are already inflamed. Relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises, meditation, quiet contemplation or listening to soothing music can all help reduce stress.

Acupuncture – There is no known research into the effect of acupuncture on endometriosis and current research into the benefit of acupuncture on period pain been

inconclusive. Despite this, many women have found acupuncture to be of assistance in reducing the pain they experience with endometriosis.

Looking for help in managing your Endometriosis?

At Phoenix Centre for Acupuncture and Holistic Health, I use a combination of acupuncture, Chinese medicine, cupping, diet, exercise, relaxation and life style advice to help you manage your endometriosis. Each session is tailored to your specific needs and, where necessary, I work with other health practitioners to ensure you get the best outcome possible.

Contact Phoenix Centre for Acupuncture and Holistic Health to find out more or to make an appointment (Telephone: 0487153507).

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