

Understanding Endometriosis “An Elusive Condition”

Endometriosis is a persistent condition that can have a consequential effect on a woman's life. It develops when the tissue lining the insides of the uterus (endometrium) grows outside of the uterus, mainly on the ovaries, fallopian tubes, and the tissue lining the pelvis (peritoneum). This tissue then bleeds and breaks down the same way as the tissue inside the uterus, but outside of the uterus, there is no way to exit the body. This can lead to a range of symptoms, including painful periods (dysmenorrhea), pain during coupling, infertility, and digestive problems. It can happen to any woman of viable age but is most commonly observed in women between the ages of 25 and 35. The World Health Organization estimates that endometriosis affects 10 % (approx. 190 million) of women worldwide. As per a 2022 study published in the journal “Human Reproduction” India, China, the US, the UK, and Brazil are the top 5 countries with the highest number of cases.

Prevalence of endometriosis national and international statistics

A 2019 study published in "The Indian Journal of Medical Research" found that the occurrence of endometriosis in India is 18%. A similar study of 2021 published in the "Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology of India" found that endometriosis has increased in India by 22%. A more recent study published in 2022 in "Archives of Gynecology and Obstetrics" concluded that endometriosis persists in 26% of women in the reproductive age group.

Stats of endometriosis in MP

One in every 4 women in MP suffers from endometriosis which is evident as per the study published in 2021 in "The Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology of India" and in 2022 in the journal "Archives of Gynecology and Obstetrics" which found the prevalence of endometriosis to be 24% and 28% respectively.

Causes of endometriosis

The exact trigger of endometriosis is unknown, but there are numerous speculations. Experts believe that it is caused by the backward flow of menstrual blood (retrograde menstruation) blood flows into the pelvic cavity instead of out of the body through the fallopian tube. Alternative groups of experts believe that immune dysfunction, genetic or environmental agents cause it.

Symptoms of Endometriosis

The symptoms of endometriosis range from person to person, but the most common symptoms include:

- Painful bowel movements/urination during menstrual periods
- Painful periods (dysmenorrhea)
- Heavy menstrual periods
- Pain during intercourse (dyspareunia)
- Infertility
- Fatigue
- Bloating or nausea
- Pain in the lower abdomen or back

Diagnosis of Endometriosis:

Diagnosing endometriosis is the most challenging part as the symptoms are often similar to other conditions such as pelvic inflammatory disease or irritable bowel syndrome. There is no single test that can diagnose endometriosis. Physicians typically diagnose endometriosis based on the Patient's medical history, physical exam, and imaging tests (Ultrasound, MRI, Laparoscopy).

Treatment Options for Endometriosis

Endometriosis is incurable, but several treatments can elevate symptoms to certain levels. Therapy includes:

- Pain medication: often the first line of treatment; it includes non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and prescription pain relievers.
- Hormonal therapy: helps in suppressing the growth of endometrial tissue it includes birth control pills, progestin-only contraceptives, and gonadotropin-releasing hormone agonists
- Surgery: In severe cases, surgical options like laparoscopy and hysterectomy are available.
- Lifestyle changes: regular exercise, managing stress, a healthy diet, weight management, and proper sleep can help manage symptoms in the long term.

To conclude, endometriosis is a common, painful, and chronic condition that affects millions of women every year. Women by and large in India suffer in silence due to the social stigma attached to the diseases of reproductive organs and live miserable lives by accepting it as their fate. It is important to spread awareness and seek timely and proper treatment to improve the condition and quality of life.

