A Lifestyle Medicine Approach to Endometriosis



Endometriosis is a common condition that affects roughly 10% of women and girls of reproductive age throughout the world - that's approximately 1.5 million in the UK alone. Caused by tissue similar to that of the uterus's lining growing outside of the uterus, it can cause heavy periods, painful menstrual cramps and pain during sex.

Its symptoms may be eased by making some simple lifestyle changes as detailed below.

Make healthy food choices



The best foods to eat to help manage the symptoms of endometriosis are anti-inflammatory and rich in antioxidants.[1] This includes fish high in healthy fats, such as salmon, sardines and mackerel, as these contain omega-3 fatty acids that can calm inflammation.

Iron-rich foods like spinach and kale are antioxidants, contain magnesium as well as iron, and vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower and brussels sprouts support healthy estrogen metabolism.

Allow yourself to rest

A meta-analysis reported that those living with endometriosis experience significantly poorer sleep quality than those without. This can be due to ongoing pain, inflammation and over-fatigue.[2]

Heat therapy, such as using a heating pad or hot water bottle, may help. Keep your bedroom cool and dark, and consider practicing deep breathing or gentle yoga stretches before bed to help your body enter rest mode.

Reduce alcohol consumption



Moderate alcohol consumption has been associated with a higher risk of endometriosis.[3] Alcohol is known to trigger inflammation and increase estrogen, which is the primary hormone that feeds endometriosis. Reducing alcohol intake, therefore, can help ease yours symptoms.

References:

1. What to Eat if You Have Endometriosis. Healthline.
2. Paul J, Harley KG. Is endometriosis associated with poor sleep quality? A meta-analysis. Womens Health (Lond). 2026 Jan-Dec
3. Li Piani L et al. A systematic review and meta-analysis on alcohol consumption and risk of endometriosis: an update from 2012. Sci Rep. 2022 Nov.

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Exercise can improve pain



Physical activity, such as walking, jogging, and swimming can help improve the pain experienced by those living with endometriosis.[4] This, in turn, can impact on your emotional well-being, which we'll touch on later.

Introducing or increasing exercise can also help lower estrogen and reduce inflammation. As a note of caution, avoid high impact activities and stop immediately if you feel any discomfort or pain.

Manage stress



Practising mind-body therapies, such as yoga, mindfulness and relaxation training have been shown to reduce an array of symptoms in people living with endometriosis.[5]

These gentle activities can be introduced to your daily routine and may help with pain, stress, anxiety, depression and fatigue.

Often, these activities can be done in a social setting, which can also be a way to support and be supported by others living with the condition.

Prevention is better than cure

A healthy lifestyle is key to keeping your body and mind well and active, and can help you reduce the symptoms of endometriosis before they become a problem. Speak to your GP and find out more about Lifestyle Medicine by visiting http://bslm.org.uk

References:

4. Xie M, Qing X, Huang H, Zhang L, Tu Q, Guo H, Zhang J. The effectiveness and safety of physical activity and exercise on women with endometriosis: A systematic review and meta-analysis. PLoS One. 2025 Feb 13
5. Evans S, Fernandez S, Olive L, Payne LA, Mikocka-Walus A. Psychological and mind-body interventions for endometriosis: A systematic review. J Psychosom Res. 2019 Sep

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