

Talking to a doctor



Some things are not that easy to talk about. Many people find it difficult to tell a doctor about intimate physical symptoms, and the problems they may cause. In the short period of time actually spent in the doctor's office, it's not always easy to remember important information.

This is where your complete checklist of symptoms comes in handy. The **Symptoms Calendar** and the **Time-line** show the doctor at one glance the extent and pattern of your symptoms. Take all the completed charts with you to your initial appointment – we suggest that you first make a copy for your own files – and give them to the doctor.

Some doctors may prefer not to read your charts, and will ask you to recites your symptoms. When that happens, use the charts to prompt your memory. Remember: it's important that the doctor know about all of your symptoms, including some that may seem very intimate. Do not hold back information about your symptoms.

It's our experience that women who are well prepared for a consultation with their doctors are more likely to be taken seriously. Doctors tend to share information with these patients, and may diagnose them more quickly. Women with endometriosis – many of whom struggled a long time to get diagnosed – will tell you that the time spent documenting your symptoms on paper is time well-invested.

How to complete the Time-Line

The time-line identifies patterns in your symptom history that may lead to a diagnosis. Complete the chart with your history (see sample below), listing each item **in order by age**. The time-line should show:

- All major illnesses, surgeries, health problems at any age;
- Your age at first period;
- Your age when each symptom first occurred;
- Your age at use of birth control pills;
- Your age at use of pain medication, whether over-the-counter or prescription, as well as the amount used;
- Your age at any pregnancies or miscarriages.



Symptom	Onset and duration	When symptom occurs	Is it getting worse?	Location	Description
Painful periods	14 yrs. - present	1 st and 2 nd days	Yes	Low abdomen	Intense
Back pain w/ periods	17 yrs. – present	2-3 days before period and first day of flow	Yes	Low back	Dull ache
Pain with ovulation	22 yrs. – present	3 days in mid-cycle	Yes	Left side, low	Sharp stabbing
Nausea w/ periods	22 yrs. – present	1 day before & first day of flow	No	Stomach	Queasy miserable

Symptom Calendar

* Please read the following list before completing the symptom calendar. These are the most common symptoms of endometriosis *

1. Painful periods (in some women menstrual pain may begin one or more days before the flow).
2. Pelvic pain at other times of the month, especially ovulation (midcycle).
3. Painful bowel movements, especially at the time of your period.
4. Diarrhea, or constipation followed by diarrhea, or other intestinal upheaval with your period.
5. Pain during or after sexual intercourse.
6. Nausea and stomach upset with your period.
7. Dizziness or headache with your period.
8. Infertility (after a year of regular sex at midcycle, without a contraceptive).
9. Heavy periods.
10. Irregular periods.
11. Lower back pain, especially with your period.
12. Painful urination with your period, or the need to urinate frequently.
13. Fatigue, exhaustion, low energy.
14. Problems with *Candida albicans*, which can include frequent vaginal yeast infections, or thrush (infection of mouth or throat). Problems with candidiasis and related allergic syndromes, especially eczema, hay fever, and food/chemical sensitivities, are also common in women with endometriosis. Please see our book, *Endometriosis: The Complete Reference for Taking Charge of Your Health*, for further discussion.

Remember most women with endometriosis do not experience all these symptoms. The first five symptoms are the most common. Many women find that their symptoms change over time. If untreated, symptoms may worsen or new symptoms may develop.

Some women with endometriosis have other symptoms, often linked to the menstrual cycle. (If you have an unusual symptom that you suspect may be caused by endometriosis, call us. We may be able to help.)

