

# Periods





# Language



- We take a broad and inclusive approach to the topic of women's health.
- We write health information for people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and identities. We use the terms 'women' and 'girls', but we acknowledge that these terms are not inclusive of all people who may use our content.
- We appreciate that not all women have periods and not all people who have periods are women.



# Presentation aims



By the end of this presentation, we hope you will:

- understand why we have periods
- know about different period products
- understand some of the reasons to see a doctor or nurse about your period
- be aware of some conditions that may impact your period.

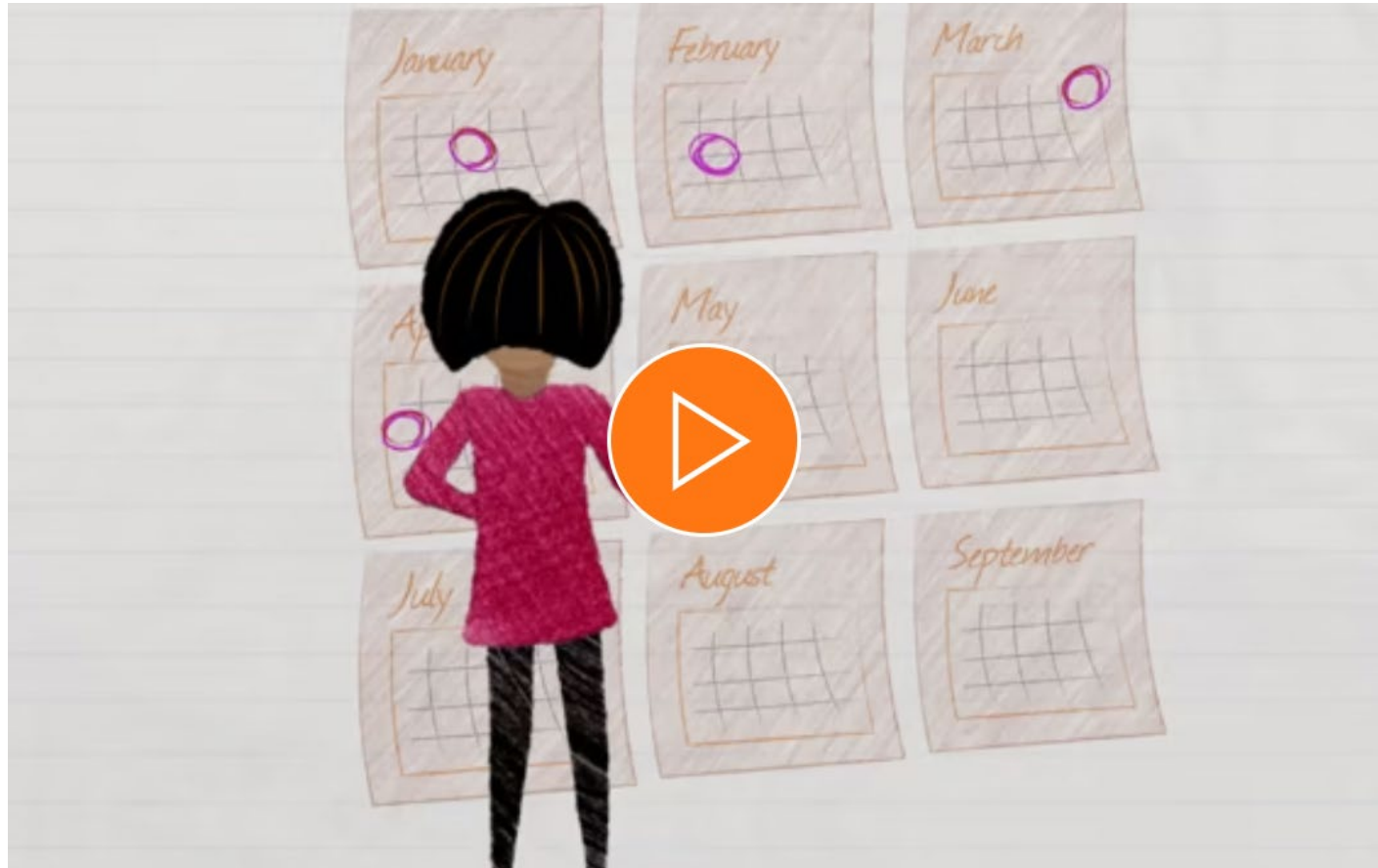


**Menstrual cycle – regular series of changes that happen in your body to prepare for possible pregnancy.**

**Period – bleed that happens if you do not become pregnant during the menstrual cycle.**



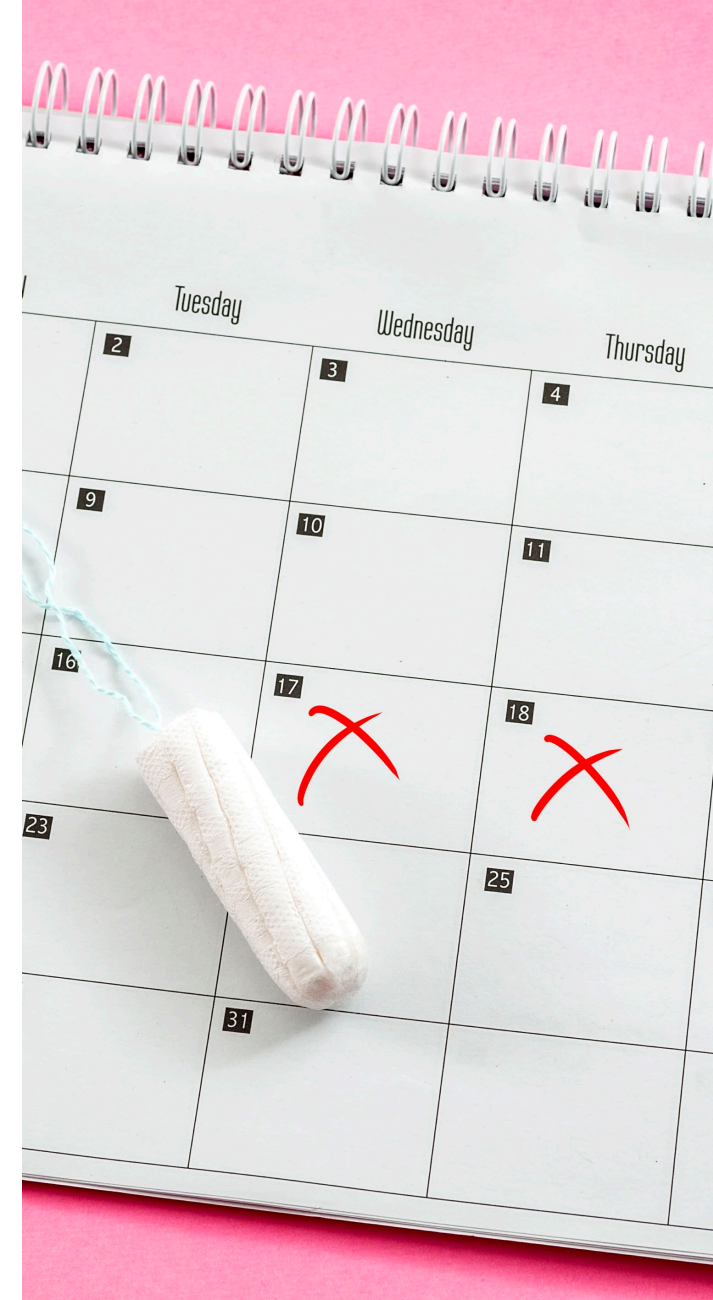
# All you need to know about periods





# Periods – what to expect

- Lasts for 4–8 days about once a month.
- Flow can change over the course of your period – about 1/3 cup total.
- Colour can range from bright red to dark brown.
- Can be irregular for first 1–2 years.





# Period pain is normal if it...

- only lasts for the first 1–2 days of the period
- can be managed with heat packs, ibuprofen (e.g. Nurofen) or gentle exercise
- does not interfere with daily activities.





# Symptoms before your period



- PMS – premenstrual syndrome.
- Emotional symptoms, such as irritability, anxiety, and difficulty concentrating.
- Physical symptoms, such as constipation or diarrhoea, swollen and tender breasts, and acne and pimples.



# Symptoms before your period

Some conditions may get worse around your period.

For example:

- menstrual migraine
- premenstrual asthma.





# Period products – pads

- Change every 3–4 hours.
- Come in a range of different sizes to suit your flow.
- Reusable pads are available.



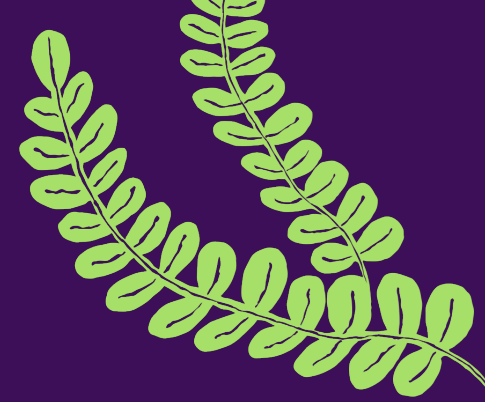


# Period products – tampons

- Wash your hands before using.
- Change 3–6 times daily, depending on your flow.
- Never leave a tampon in for more than 8 hours.







**Don't flush!**



# Period products – low environmental impact options

- Period underwear
  - washable
  - feels dry
  - use alone or for extra protection on heavy days.





# Period products – low environmental impact options

- Reusable pads
  - washable
  - chemical- and fragrance-free pure cotton pads available.
- Menstrual cup
  - can be worn up to 12 hours
  - lasts 5-10 years
  - takes practice!





# Tracking your cycle can help you to...

- understand your period better
- be prepared when your period is coming.

## Resources to help you track:

- Jean Hailes 'Pain and symptom diary'
- 'Clue' period tracker app
- 'Flo' period tracker app

**Pain & symptom diary**

You don't need to start on the first day of the month. Just whenever you are ready.

Fill out this diary to keep a record of your periods, especially to track pain and/or heavy bleeding. You might like to print out a few copies to fill out over 2-3 months. Take your diary along to your next appointment with your doctor to help you explain your pelvic pain and/or period symptoms.

Month:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Pelvic pain																															
Bleeding																															
Gut symptoms																															
Pain doing poo																															
Constipation																															
Nausea																															
Other symptoms																															
Pain medication																															

✓ **Tick** the days that you experienced any pelvic pain. You might like to use a red pen for really painful days.

✓ **Tick** the days that you experienced any bleeding. You might like to use a red pen for really heavy days.

✓ **Tick** the days that you experienced specific gut symptoms.

✓ **Write** in any other symptoms that you think might be important and **tick** the days you had them (eg body aches).

✓ **Write** in any pain medication and **tick** the days that you used it to help relieve your pelvic pain.

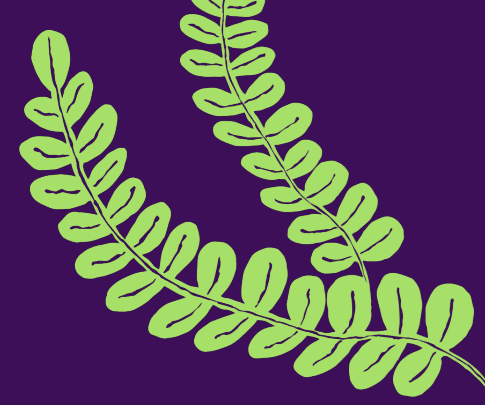
**VICTORIA** State Government

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# Tricky periods



# Tricky periods – irregular or absent



Causes of irregular or absent periods include:

- polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)
- pregnancy
- thyroid disease
- medication including contraceptives
- fast weight loss, or exercising too much
- perimenopause
- premature ovarian insufficiency (premature menopause)
- eating disorders.



# Tricky periods – irregular or absent

## PCOS

- A hormonal condition
- Symptoms include:
  - irregular periods
  - hair growth on face, stomach, back
  - acne or pimples
  - emotional problems
  - easy weight gain
  - difficulty getting pregnant.





# Tricky periods – heavy menstrual bleeding (HMB)





# Tricky periods – pain

Period pain is not normal if it...

- keeps you home from work or school
- doesn't go away with medication such as ibuprofen (e.g. Nurofen)
- interferes with your daily activities.

If your period pain is not normal,  
see a doctor or nurse!

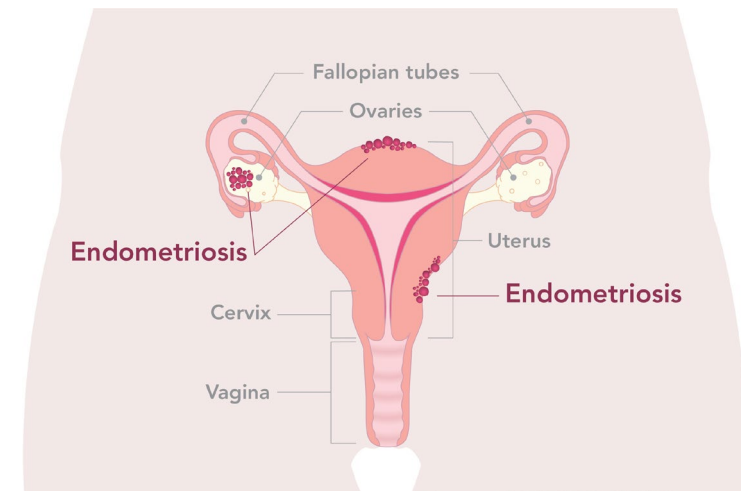




# Endometriosis

Can cause:

- painful periods
- bloating
- painful sex
- heavy bleeding
- constipation or diarrhoea
- tiredness
- mood changes
- reduced quality of life.





# Tricky periods – premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD)



- PMDD is severe PMS.
- Interferes with life, school/work, relationships in the 1-2 weeks before period.
- Symptoms include mood swings, depression, anxiety, breast tenderness, joint/muscle pain.

**If you have premenstrual symptoms that interfere with your daily life, talk to a doctor or nurse!**



# Talk to a doctor or nurse if you notice:

- changes in the pattern of your periods
- very heavy or increasingly heavy periods
- periods of more than 8 days
- periods that come fewer than 3 weeks apart
- periods that come more than 2–3 months apart
- bleeding between periods
- bleeding after sex
- premenstrual symptoms that interfere with your daily life.





**If you are worried about your period,  
speak to a doctor or nurse.**



# More information and resources on periods



- Jean Hailes for Women's Health  
[jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/periods](http://jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/periods)
- Better Health Channel  
[betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/menstrual-cycle](http://betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/menstrual-cycle)
- Health Direct  
[healthdirect.gov.au/menstruation](http://healthdirect.gov.au/menstruation)

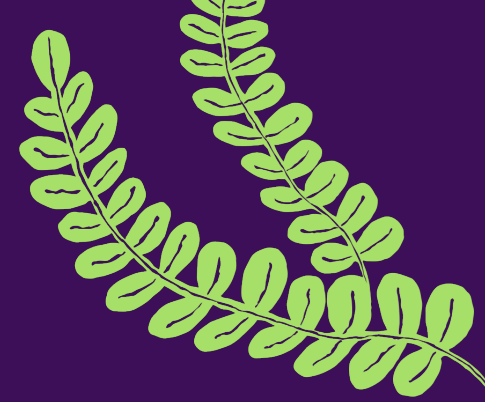


# Where to buy reusable period products



- Lunette – menstrual cups  
[lunette.com.au](http://lunette.com.au)
- Juju – menstrual cups, period underwear and reusable pads;  
instructional videos on menstrual cup folding and insertion  
[juju.com.au](http://juju.com.au)
- Modibodi – period underwear  
[modibodi.com](http://modibodi.com)





# Thank you

Go to [jeanhailes.org.au/subscribe](https://jeanhailes.org.au/subscribe) for updates on the latest in women's health





**For further information contact**

Jean Hailes for Women's Health  
PO Box 24098  
Melbourne VIC 3001

**Phone** 03 9453 8999

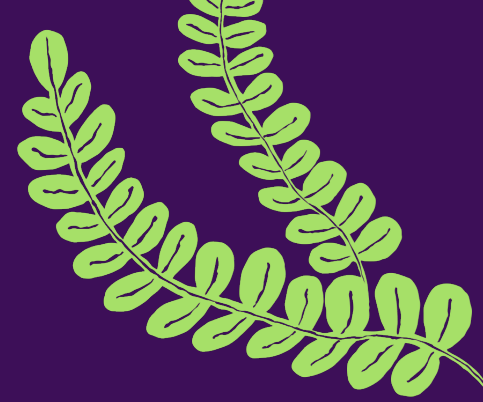
**Email** [education@jeanhailes.org.au](mailto:education@jeanhailes.org.au)

**Website** [jeanhailes.org.au](http://jeanhailes.org.au)

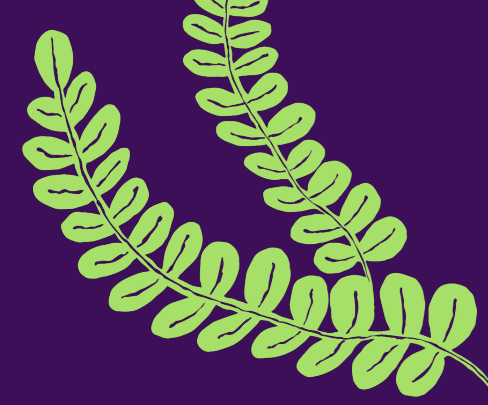
**Disclaimer.** This information does not replace medical advice. If a person is worried about their health, they should talk to their doctor or healthcare team.

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# **Optional slides:**

## **Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)**



# Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)

- Common hormonal condition.
- Affects 1 in 10 women of reproductive age.
- More common in women of Asian, North African and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.
- Affects up to 1 in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.





# PCOS can cause:

- period problems (usually irregular or absent)
- hair growth on face, stomach and back
- acne or pimples
- emotional problems
- weight gain
- difficulty getting pregnant.





# How do you know if you have PCOS?



To be diagnosed with PCOS, you need to have two of the following:

- irregular periods
- signs of high levels of androgens (male-type hormones), e.g. acne, excess face and body hair, or shown on a blood test
- ultrasound of ovaries showing 20 or more follicles on either ovary.



**Healthy lifestyle is  
number one treatment for PCOS.**



# Healthy eating

- Vegetables, legumes, beans
- Grain foods such as wholegrain breads, rice, polenta, couscous, oats
- Dairy products such as milk, yoghurt, cheese
- Fruit
- Lean meat, chicken, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts, seeds





# Physical activity – to maintain weight

## Adults:

- 150 min of moderate-intensity or 75 min of vigorous physical activity per week.
- Muscle-strengthening activities on two non-consecutive days per week.

## Adolescents:

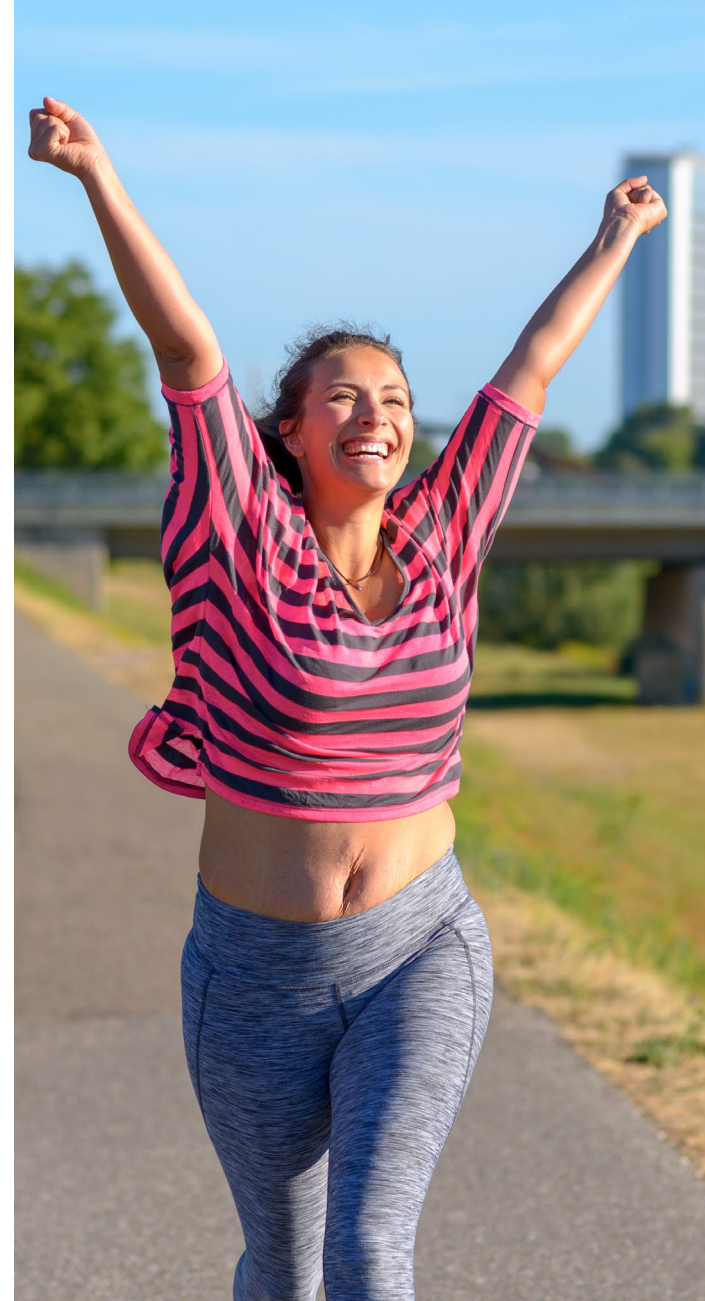
- 60 min of moderate-intensity to vigorous physical activity per day.
- Muscle- and bone-strengthening activities at least 3 times per week.





# Physical activity – to lose weight

- At least 250 min of moderate-intensity physical activity or 150 min of vigorous physical activity per week.
- Include muscle-strengthening activity on two non-consecutive days and 90 min of aerobic activity each week.





# Physical activity continued

Moderate-intensity physical activities:

- brisk walking, cycling, weight training, hiking, intensive housework.

Vigorous physical activities:

- jogging/running, fast swimming, fast cycling, netball, football, soccer, basketball.





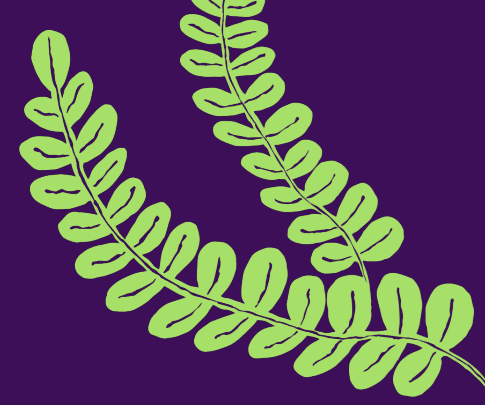
# More information and resources

Jean Hailes for Women's Health

[jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/pcos](http://jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/pcos)





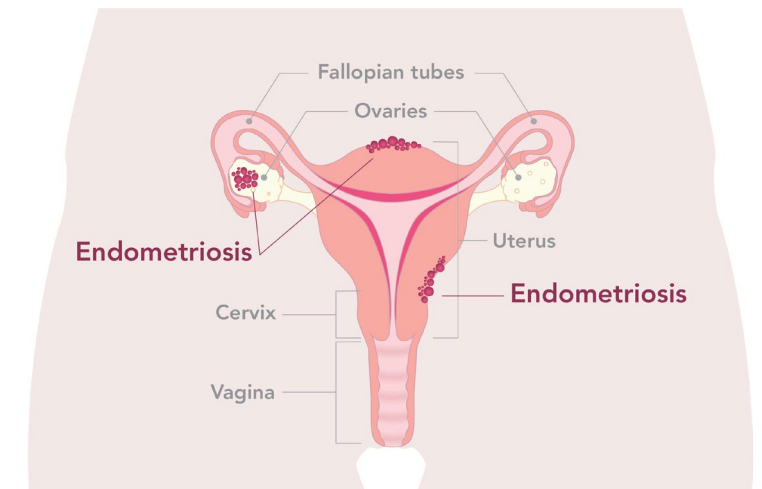


# Optional slides: Endometriosis



# Endometriosis

Endometriosis is a condition in which cells similar to those that line the uterus grow in other parts of the body, usually in the pelvis and reproductive organs.





## Endometriosis can cause:

- pain and bloating
- painful sex
- heavy bleeding
- constipation or diarrhoea
- tiredness
- mood changes
- reduced quality of life.





# How is endometriosis diagnosed?



To diagnose you with endometriosis, a doctor will usually:

- ask about your symptoms over time
- conduct a physical examination
- refer you for an ultrasound or surgery.

Surgery is the only way to **definitively** diagnose endometriosis.



# Managing endometriosis

- Pain-relief medication
- Hormone therapy
- Surgery
- Fertility treatment
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle for general health and wellbeing





# More information and resources

Jean Hailes for Women's Health

[jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/endometriosis](http://jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/endometriosis)

