

How to stay active when you have endo

Staying motivated to do regular physical activity can be a challenge. When you have a chronic and painful health condition, it can be even harder.

In a recent Women's Health Week video, Triple J radio host Bridget Hustwaite talked about how she had to change her physical activity habits after a medical procedure and diagnosis took a toll on her health – and how she now finds the joy in moving more, for body and mind.

Bridget's story

Growing up, Bridget was an active child. "I did netball and rowing in high school, girls footy and badminton too" she says. "Netball kind of ruined my knees a little bit, so I had to give that up! Then I started getting into more-so gym classes and that kind of stuff."

In 2018 – after experiencing very painful periods for six years and seeing multiple doctors – Bridget was diagnosed with the chronic condition, endometriosis (also commonly called 'endo').

What is endometriosis?

Endometriosis is a condition that occurs when cells similar to those found in the lining of the uterus (womb) are found in other parts of the body. It most commonly occurs in the pelvis and can affect a woman's reproductive organs.

The symptoms of endo vary from woman to woman. But for many, a key symptom is pain; severe period pain, painful sex or pain when going to the toilet. [Read more about endometriosis.](#)

Reassessing her routine

Since her diagnosis, Bridget has become a passionate voice in spreading awareness of endometriosis, as an ambassador for Endometriosis Australia.

Her diagnosis – and the medical procedure for the diagnosis and treatment of endo, known as a [laparoscopy](#) – also made her reassess her exercise routine.

Bridget says her focus shifted to "finding an activity that was going to be a bit more gentle for my body." And the answer, for Bridget, was to head for the pool.

"I did adult beginners swimming lessons this year. I'm 28, but it's never too late!" she laughs.

Bridget found swimming to be “fun and really good for my body”, and also started looking more towards yoga, pilates and going on walks.

Self-kindness has also been key to her story.

“[Now I’m] doing things that are not as intense, but things that I enjoy and things that are good for my body at the moment.”

Staying motivated

Whether you have a chronic health condition such as endometriosis or not, Bridget’s advice for staying motivated to move more is to find something you enjoy doing, “something that might stimulate your mind and challenge yourself,” she says.

“Swimming has been a great thing for me, because I’ve pretty much had to learn it from scratch again, because it’s been so long since I’ve been in a pool.”

Finding someone to be your exercise buddy and being accountable to show up every week has also been an important motivator.

“Doing the swimming lessons, I was in a small class. It was just me and another sweet old lady who was also learning... I couldn’t flake out on a lesson because I’d be letting my instructor down, because there was just three of us in the pool.”

“And also because I was being direct debited and I’m not going to waste my money!” she laughs. “You gotta get your money’s worth!”

It doesn’t have to be intense

Bridget says it is important to realise that “physical activity doesn’t have to be hard-core intense, full-on stuff”.

She also says that as a motivator, it helps to keep the benefits of whatever you do front of mind. “It’s really about remembering how it makes you feel after you do it,” she says. “I know I always feel so much happier and more full of energy and proud.”

“And when you’re lying in bed thinking ‘I just cannot be bothered getting up and doing it’, I always try to think, ‘You know you’ll feel awesome once you do it, and you want to feel that again’.”

Her final words of advice are to set aside time for physical activity by making an appointment in your calendar. “Say to yourself ‘I’m going to make that 30 minutes and go for a walk or go for a cycle, because that’s me-time and I deserve that’.”

[Watch the full video](#) of Bridget – as well as founder of the all-women cycling group Wheel Women, Tina McCarthy – talking more about physical activity and staying motivated.

Learn more about [endometriosis](#) on the Jean Hailes website or visit the [Endometriosis Australia website](#).

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