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**Specialist in Gynaecology
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**Dr Gopalan Poovalingam's
special interests include:**

- Endometriosis
- Painful periods
- Uterine fibroids
- Ovarian cysts
- Urinary incontinence

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Understanding Endometriosis

Information for Patients

by Dr Gopalan Poovalingam

What is Endometriosis?

Endometriosis is a long-term condition where tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus. This can cause inflammation, pain, and scar tissue. Common areas affected include:

- Ovaries
- Fallopian tubes
- Pelvic lining

Who Can Be Affected?

Endometriosis usually affects women of reproductive age, and symptoms may begin during adolescence. It is often under-recognised and can take time to diagnose.

Common Symptoms

Symptoms vary from person to person. The most common include:

Frequently reported symptoms:

- Painful periods
- Pain during or after sex
- Pelvic pain
- Heavy menstrual bleeding
- Difficulty getting pregnant

Less common symptoms:

- Bowel issues (constipation, diarrhoea, pain)
- Fatigue
- Back pain
- Sleep problems
- Headaches
- Urinary symptom

What Causes It?

The exact cause is unknown. Possible contributing factors include:

- Genetics
- Hormonal imbalances
- Immune system issues



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How is It Examined?

A pelvic examination may show signs such as:

- Tenderness
- Reduced organ mobility
- Nodules or visible lesions

However, a normal exam does not rule out endometriosis.

Investigations

If symptoms suggest endometriosis, your doctor may recommend:

- Transvaginal ultrasound (first-line test)
- Pelvic MRI (if ultrasound isn't suitable)
- Transabdominal ultrasound (alternative option)
- Further assessment may be needed if symptoms persist.

Treatment Approaches

Treatment is tailored to each individual and may include:

- Pain relief medications
- Hormonal therapies (e.g., contraceptive pills, IUDs)
- Specialist care from a multidisciplinary team (e.g., gynaecologist, pain specialist, psychologist, physiotherapist)

When to See a Specialist

You may be referred to a gynaecologist if:

- Initial treatments aren't effective
- Imaging suggests endometriosis
- Symptoms are severe or ongoing
- You have concerns about fertility

Surgical Options

Surgery may be considered when other treatments are not effective.

Types of surgery include:

- Laparoscopy – a minimally invasive procedure
- Laparotomy – used in more severe cases
- Hysterectomy – may be considered in certain situations

Your doctor will discuss the most suitable options based on your needs.