



## Why Do I Have Painful Periods?

There are many reasons why you might be having painful periods. Some of the reasons are temporary and not related to anything serious. However, some period pain may be related to an underlying condition that may be more serious.

The most common reason for painful periods is that the chemicals released by the lining of the uterus make the uterus muscle contract and cause cramping pains. Some women release more chemicals than others and therefore have worse cramping pain. This type of period pain usually starts at the same time as the bleeding starts, is worse for the first day or two and then settles. It usually settles with some help from medications such as paracetamol or a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) such as Ponstan, Nurofen, Naprogesic/Naprosyn or similar that can be bought from the chemist. The non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs are the most effective in relieving this type of period pain. NSAIDs should always be taken with food and as instructed by your doctor or pharmacist. Period pain may also improve when using the oral contraceptive pill ('the pill' or OCP). The good thing about this type of pain is that it usually settles over the years as the uterus gets used to having periods.

For approximately 10% of teenagers and women however, these simple measures don't work and it is important to investigate further in case these women (and teenagers) have endometriosis, or "endo" for short. Endometriosis is more serious because it needs to be managed properly to reduce its impact on your life and because it can also affect fertility. It will also mean that you have a very uncomfortable time around your periods and some women will take time out of school or work on a regular basis. It is important that this diagnosis is made sooner rather than later. There are studies to show that women take about 10 years to get a diagnosis because they and/or their health practitioners don't recognise the symptoms early enough and get help.

It is also important that whatever the reason for your painful periods, you work out a way to reduce the pain and disruption to your life. There are a number of solutions that can be used in a combined approach and may be different for each woman depending on her preferences.



## **Further Information**

If you are concerned about your periods there is information you can read to help you work out what is 'normal' and ways of managing even normal or typical period pain and symptoms. However the range of typical periods varies greatly from one woman to another and these websites can help you work out when to seek further advice or assistance.

### **For information about:**

1. **Periods and period pain, PMS (Premenstrual syndrome):**

*Jean Hailes Foundation Website with comprehensive information about women's health*

<https://jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/periods>

2. **More generalised pelvic pain** (that may or may not include periods):

*Pelvic Pain Foundation of Australia*

<http://www.pelvicpain.org.au/about/pelvic-pain-foundation-australia/>

<http://www.pelvicpain.org.au/information/teens/>

3. **Endometriosis** (Scroll down Symptoms page for 5min video on what 'Endo' is)

*Global Forum for Endometriosis*

<http://endometriosis.org/endometriosis/symptoms/>

4. **General youth health**

<http://au.reachout.com> great website for overall health aimed at young people

### **To see a health professional:**

- **A General Practitioner (GP)**

<https://healthengine.com.au/find/gp/ACT/>

- **The Junction Youth Health Centre** (for young people aged 12-25yrs) Ph (02) 6232 2423

**Address:** Cnr Cooyong St and Scotts Crossing, Civic 2601 (next to the skatepark)

<http://www.anglicare.com.au/services.php/24/the-junction-youth-health-centre>

- **The Canberra Sexual Health Centre** (at The Canberra Hospital) ph: 6244 2184

<http://www.health.act.gov.au/our-services/sexual-health-sexual-assault>

- **Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT** Ph: 6247 3077 (Good website with info)

<http://www.shfpact.org.au/>