

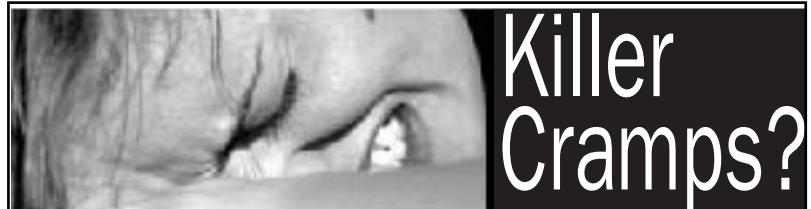
# Taking Control Of Endometriosis

(NAPS)—“It affected every aspect of my life from work, to family and friends. It put a strain on everything. When you’re bedridden and in terrible pain a few weeks out of the month, it definitely affects you,” said Renee Shakour. Renee is one of an estimated 5.5 million women and girls in the U.S. and Canada with a common and debilitating disease that is often poorly understood and diagnosed—endometriosis.

Endometriosis is a serious and painful disease that can dramatically disrupt daily life. It strikes women and girls from all walks of life—regardless of socioeconomic class, race or age. The painful symptoms of endometriosis interfere with the ability to work and maintain healthy, productive relationships with loved ones. In fact, according to the Endometriosis Association (EA), 79 percent of women with endometriosis said they were unable to carry on normal work or school while experiencing symptoms of the disease, and another 25 percent were incapacitated for two to six days every month.

Yet, often the greatest challenge for those who have endometriosis is getting a proper diagnosis. Studies show that on average it will take nine years from the onset of symptoms, and visits to multiple doctors, for women and girls to be correctly diagnosed with endometriosis.

Endometriosis is a hormonal and immunological disease. The name endometriosis comes from the word “endometrium,” which is the tissue that lines the inside of the uterus and builds up and sheds each month in the menstrual cycle. In endometriosis, tissue like the endometrium is found outside the uterus, in other areas of the body such as the ovaries, bowel, bladder, and abdominal lining. These growths can cause disabling pain, infertility, scar tissue and other problems.



**More than "cramps," ongoing pelvic pain is the leading sign of endometriosis, a common, serious, medical illness. Are you at risk?**

**For at least six months have you had:**

- |  | YES                      | NO                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Pelvic pain? The pain may have a monthly pattern, for example being worst during your period and/or mid-cycle. Some have constant pain. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Fatigue, exhaustion, low energy?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Diarrhea, painful bowel movements, or other stomach upset at the time of your period?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Stomach bloating and swelling?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Heavy or irregular periods?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

10 points if you said "yes" to question #1. 5 points for each "yes" to questions #2-5.  
Total: \_\_\_\_\_

**10 points or more:** You clearly have risk factors for endometriosis. Contact the Endometriosis Association for names of physician volunteers participating in the Endometriosis Screening Program. If you said yes to any question, regardless of your score, you should tell your doctor about your symptoms.

Contact the Endometriosis Association

**1-800-992-3636**

[www.EndometriosisAssn.org](http://www.EndometriosisAssn.org)



The most common symptom of endometriosis is pelvic pain that may have a monthly pattern, may or may not be constant, and may interfere with your ability to perform activities of daily living. Fatigue, exhaustion, or low energy; pain during or after sex; lower backache during your period; painful bowel movements, diarrhea, or other stomach upset at the time of your period; stomach bloating and swelling; and heavy or irregular periods are also common symptoms.

According to Dr. Marc Laufer, an endometriosis expert at Children's Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, women should not assume that their symptoms are a normal part

of womanhood. “Women need to know that they don’t have to suffer. If you are having discomfort with your period and it’s at all interfering with your daily activities, seek attention from a health care provider.”

To help girls and women better understand and take charge of endometriosis, free screenings are provided through a network of physicians across the country in collaboration with the EA.

To locate a volunteer physician participating in the screening program, contact the Endometriosis Association at (800) 992-3636. The self-test shown above is available through the EA and on the Internet at [www.EndometriosisAssn.org](http://www.EndometriosisAssn.org).

**Note to Editors:** March is Endometriosis Awareness Month.