



# ENDOMETRIOSIS TREATMENT OPTIONS HANDOUT

CanSage, 2025

## TREATING ENDOMETRIOSIS: OPTIONS AT A GLANCE

Getting treatment for endometriosis can be difficult if you're still waiting for a specialist. Family doctors may not always be familiar with every option. This handout gives you a clear overview of the main treatments so you can discuss them with your provider.

## HORMONE THERAPIES

Often the first-line treatment. Available as pills, injections, implants, or IUDs.

### Combination Birth Control (estrogen + progestin)

Examples: Yaz, Tri-Cyclen, NuvaRing, Evra patch

- **Benefits:** Lighter, shorter periods; less cramping; acne improvement; reliable contraception; may reduce ovarian/endometrial cancer risk.
- **Side Effects:** Nausea, breast tenderness, headaches, spotting or breakthrough bleeding.
- **Risks:** Small risk of blood clots (~0.1%), especially with smoking/age; rare risk of heart attack or stroke.

### Progestin-Only Therapies

Examples: Norlutate, Visanne/Dienogest, Depo-Provera (injection), Mirena (IUD), Camila (pill)

- **Benefits:** Good for patients who can't take estrogen; greatly reduces heavy bleeding and pain; long-lasting options.
- **Side Effects:** Irregular cycles, mood changes, weight gain, breast tenderness.
- **Risks:** Bone density loss (especially with Depo); may slightly increase breast cancer risk; fertility may take months to return after stopping.

## NON-HORMONE THERAPIES

### GnRH Agonists & Antagonists

Examples: Lupron, Zoladex, Synarel, Orilissa, Myfembree

- **Benefits:** Non-hormonal option for when other hormones are not tolerated or you prefer to avoid them. Reduces pain; improves outcomes with fertility treatments; may prevent recurrence after surgery.
- **Side Effects:** Hot flashes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, mood changes, headaches, low libido.
- **Risks:** Bone density loss within 6 months; sometimes requires "add-back" therapy with estrogen to offset effects.

### Alternative Medications

Examples: Danazol, Letrozole (Femara)

- **Benefits:** Can help when first-line therapies fail; effective for pelvic and rectovaginal pain; vaginal use reduces systemic side effects.
- **Side Effects:** Acne, weight gain, hair growth (Danazol); hot flashes, fatigue (Letrozole).
- **Risks:** Liver damage (Danazol); bone density loss (Letrozole); increased risk of low HDL cholesterol with long-term use.



# ENDOMETRIOSIS TREATMENT OPTIONS HANDOUT

CanSage, 2025

## PAIN MANAGEMENT

These medications may be used as a first step or in combination with other medications.

### NSAIDs

Examples: Aleve, Motrin, Ibuprofen

- **Benefits:** Easy to access; affordable; effective for pelvic and period pain.
- **Side Effects:** Stomach upset, nausea, heartburn, dizziness, high blood pressure.
- **Risks:** Increased chance of gastrointestinal bleeding with long-term use; higher cardiovascular risks (especially with ibuprofen/diclofenac); should be used with caution in kidney disease.

### Acetaminophen (Tylenol)

- **Benefits:** Safe and well-tolerated; effective for mild pain; can be combined with NSAIDs; less stomach irritation than NSAIDs.
- **Side Effects:** Stomach upset, rash, nausea, constipation (rare).
- **Risks:** Liver damage with overdose or when combined with alcohol; accidental overdose possible due to inclusion in many OTC products.

### TENS Machines

- **Benefits:** Non-drug option for pain relief; safe for home or work use.
- **Side Effects:** Mild skin irritation, tingling or buzzing sensations.
- **Risks:** Not suitable for patients with pacemakers, epilepsy, or reduced skin sensation.

## SURGICAL OPTIONS

Used to confirm diagnosis or treat lesions when other treatments fail.

### Laparoscopy

Small incisions that allow a see and treat approach to endometriosis.

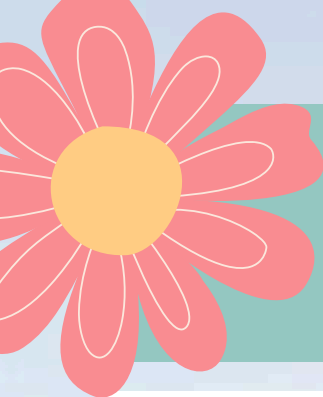
- **Benefits:** Allows for confirmation of diagnosis and immediate treatment through removal of lesions. Can improve pain, fertility, and quality of life. Quick recovery compared to major surgery.
- **Side Effects:** Temporary pain, bloating, fatigue after surgery.
- **Risks:** Infection, bleeding, injury to organs, no impact on pain.

### Hysterectomy

- **Benefits:** Stops periods permanently; up to 76% of patients report pain relief; may improve symptoms in bladder or bowel; eliminates heavy bleeding.
- **Side Effects:** Menopause symptoms if the ovaries are removed at the same time. Potentially longer recovery than laparoscopic excision alone.
- **Risks:** Infection, organ damage, severe bleeding, blood clots; adhesions are common; may not fully relieve pain.

## FERTILITY & ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES (ART)

May be required if endometriosis is associated with infertility. Options are available through Fertility Clinics to assist with ovulation induction using medications or in vitro fertilization to create embryos outside of the pelvis with transfer in the uterus at a later date. The role of surgery to optimize the best outcome may be considered by the Fertility Specialist, the surgeon and the patient.



# ENDOMETRIOSIS TREATMENT OPTIONS HANDOUT

CanSage, 2025

## FERTILITY & ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES (ART)

May be required if endometriosis is associated with infertility. Options are available through Fertility Clinics to assist with ovulation induction using medications or in vitro fertilization to create embryos outside of the pelvis with transfer in the uterus at a later date. The role of surgery to optimize the best outcome may be considered by the Fertility Specialist, the surgeon and the patient.



## TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR ENDOMETRIOSIS

Living with endometriosis is hard, but constant pain and uncertainty doesn't have to be your reality long-term. Hormone therapies, pain relievers, TENS machines, and fertility treatments can help you control your symptoms and achieve your goals so you can get back to living your life. Explore your options in this handout, or print it off and take it with you to your next appointment.

