

Natural pain relief in endometriosis

EASY TIPS AND RECIPES

From massage oil, to ginger tea, turmeric supplements and more

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About me

My name is Laura Carpenter and I am a herbal educator.

I love bringing 'lost herbal knowledge' back into the everyday,

I run courses at all levels, from the absolute beginners, right up to professional development for herbal practitioners.

You can find out more about me on my website. www.lauracarpenter.co.uk





Before we get started we need to take a moment to talk about safety

It is important to remember that just because herbal medicine is natural **does not mean that it is automatically safe**. Some people can have reactions to herbal medicines, and although this is rare it is important to bear in mind.

Are you taking any medication?

If you are taking any form of medication it is important to check that it is safe to take a particular herb with that medication before proceeding. Some herbs can directly interact with a drug and some can stop the drug working altogether.

Pregnancy

If you are pregnant or there is a chance you might be, you must only use herbal medicine with the supervision of a medical herbalist.

If you are unsure about a herbal medicine and how you might react to it, the safest thing to do is not take it and consult a medical herbalist for more information.

It is important to recognise when a condition is more serious, and to know your limits. If you become ill with something you'd normally go see the doctor about, it is important that you still go as normal.

Introduction

I wrote a blog about endometriosis a few years ago and I have written case reports for magazines but I always felt that it wasn't really showing the true story of endometriosis.

I reached the point where I really wanted to share what I had learnt, so that people feel they can make changes and hopefully work towards keeping their endometriosis in check.

When I sent out my questionnaire to find out the experiences of other people, I was shocked and upset by the responses. So many people in such pain, and many feeling like there isn't any support for them and they don't know which way to turn. I saw myself in their responses too, as I am an endometriosis warrior just as much as I am a health professional.



What is endometriosis?

If you're newly diagnosed here are some useful resources to get you started.

- **[Endometriosis UK](#)**
- **[NHS conditions - Endometriosis](#)**
- **[Endo Foundation USA](#)**



Pain

The biggest issue that the people I contacted had with endometriosis was the pain.

In endometriosis there can be many reasons for pain; uterine cramping, inflammation surrounding the bowel and bladder causing localised pain, endometrial tissue growth pain, endometrial tissue shedding pain, adhesion growth and surrounding inflammation pain.

These are just the main ones, there are many more, including vulvic pain, breast pain, migraines and headaches and so on.

For some people their pain is constant, for others it's a monthly or twice monthly occurrence.

Some people have only uterine cramping; others have every pain listed above and more.

Dealing with pain

Support

When you're dealing with pain, of any kind, whether it's unbearable or just annoying, it's important to be able to talk about it and get the support you need from friends and family.

Self-care

The term self-care is used quite a lot but what I mean by that is really 'taking care of yourself', this is going to mean different things for different people but often it's about giving yourself time, doing things that you enjoy, and having relaxation time.

Don't beat yourself up

Either mentally (or even physically), it's important to give yourself a break, on a really bad day your body may be stopping you doing the things you really want to do and this might make you frustrated or angry. These are normal things to feel and it's important to acknowledge them, although I know that can be hard. It's very difficult to say "I can only do these things today..."

This comes back to the support point, who do you have who can support you on bad days? Not everyone has someone who can pop in and do the ironing (although that would be lovely), support can be emotional. Even getting in touch with someone online and simply saying, "today is a bad day", can be helpful.



Dealing with pain

Distraction

This might sound strange but sometimes doing something else can put the pain to the back of your mind. This isn't always the case, but it's worth a try.

It's not a weakness to take medication

Often with my patients with endometriosis they are trying to be as healthy as possible and they see pharmaceutical drugs as a weakness.

It is not a weakness to seek pain relief, it's a perfectly natural response, and sometimes it's the only way.

Finding the right pharmaceutical drug for your pain and being mindful of the side effects is important though.

The most commonly prescribed pharmaceutical drugs for endometriosis are NSAIDs (Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), e.g. ibuprofen, aspirin, paracetamol and naproxen.

The aim of an NSAID is to reduce some of the inflammatory pathways in the body which can cause pain.



They can often provide short term relief from pain but it depends what type of pain you have. If your pain is a spasm, an NSAID isn't going to do a lot.

If your pain is daily, and you feel you need to take an NSAID every day, I recommend looking at this information about the long term uses of NSAIDs, and their side effects.

There are herbs that can help to mitigate some of the side effects of these drugs but unfortunately it's not something we can go into in this eBook.

Meditation

It's great to see more and more people finding relief from meditation. There is growing **research** in this area (you can read more about the research **here**).

This is a **free guided pain relief meditation** that I recommend. If you'd prefer an unguided meditation, here are **instructions for another pain relieving meditation**.



Pain relieving supplements

Magnesium supplement

There is starting to be research into the supplemental use of magnesium for pain relief, but as yet larger studies have not been conducted. Nutritionists, sport scientists and other alternative health professionals have been suggesting magnesium supplementation for pain relief with good results.

Magnesium can be taken as a daily supplement but unless you have a very poor diet and you are unable to change that or you have a problem with absorbing magnesium, you should really get magnesium from nuts and seeds and green leafy vegetables.

Magnesium supplementation can be used during pain, in a similar way that you would take an NSAID.

So how much do you need to take?

Most magnesium supplements are 400mg tablets (make sure you look for reputable brands, chelated, or magnesium citrate).

Do not exceed 8 (400mg) tablets per day.

Essential fatty acid supplements

Fish oil supplements, such as cod liver oil are anti-inflammatory, and contain essential fatty acids (EFAs). If you're vegan and would like a plant based alternative I recommend flaxseed oil capsules.



Massage

Massaging the back and abdomen can help to increase pelvic circulation and reduce muscle spasms.

Here's a recipe for my favourite endo massage oil.

Mugwort infused oil with cinnamon and frankincense

My favourite massage oil for endometrial pain and spasms in the abdomen and lower back is mugwort infused oil, with cinnamon and frankincense essential oils.

This blend increases circulation and helps to reduce pain; it's also warming and comforting.

If you don't have mugwort infused oil, you could just use a plain vegetable oil from the kitchen (or if you have almond oil or another pressed oil you like to use).

Cinnamon and frankincense essential oils are not particularly expensive and they are readily available online and in health food shops.

How much to use

In 30ml of a base oil, add 20 drops each of cinnamon and frankincense essential oils.



Remember this is for external use only, make sure you keep it away from pets, children and anyone else who might mistake it for salad dressing!

How to use it

You can apply the oil directly to your skin (using the recipe above), and it will be slightly irritating, that's the point. So don't worry if you see your skin going pink, and even a little bit blotchy, that's the irritating effects of the essential oil bringing blood flow to the area. (Obviously you need to discontinue it if you have an actual rash type reaction to it).

Apply around 10 drops to your abdomen and another 10 to your back at any one time (that's half a teaspoon).

You can then apply heat to the area which will increase the warming and circulatory effects of the essential oils.

Do not use in pregnancy.



Baths

Baths (and hot showers), can help to relax spasming muscles which often happens in people with endometriosis, especially during menstruation.

If you're looking for a relaxing herbal bath tea recipe you might like to try is.

Heat pads/Ice packs

Heat pads and ice packs are often used for muscle spasm pain, usually in the abdomen and lower back. The stick on heat pads can be useful to keep in your bag or at work to apply when needed. (Don't apply my massage oil to your abdomen or back when using the stick on pads as they won't stick).

Herbal bath

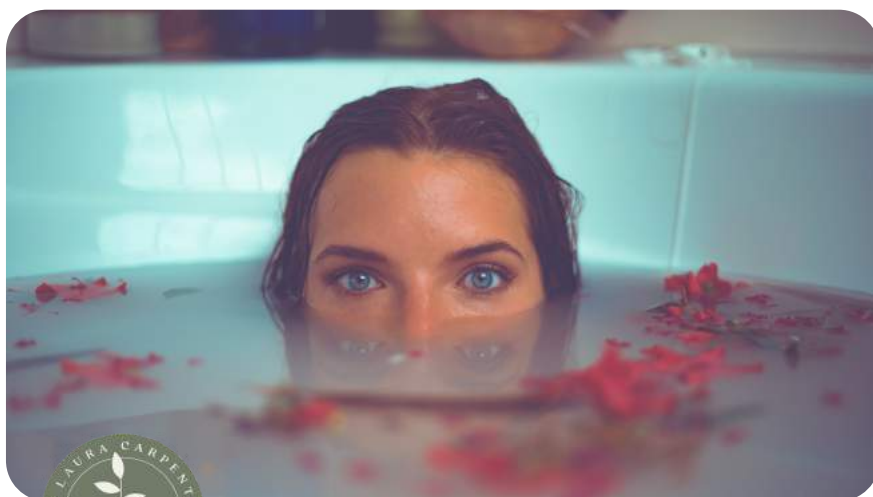
- Dried chamomile (3 tablespoons)
- Dried lavender (2 tablespoons)
- Dried rose petals (2 tablespoons)
- Oats (yes the kind you make porridge with) (4 tablespoons)

Fill an old sock with the oats and a herbs. Tie the old sock over the hot tap of the bath so that the water runs through it.

When the bath is full squeeze the excess water out of the sock (you should get a lovely foamy, creamy liquid come out).

To really get it going soak in boiling water first then add to the bath (be careful not to burn yourself!).

Suitable for everyone.



Nutrition

Does switching to organic foods help?

There are quite a few blogs and nutritionists out there recommending organic food to help reduce endometriosis. Personally I don't think there's any evidence to say non organic food causes endometriosis, but pesticides could cause undue inflammation in your body which could then affect your endometriosis, yes. And that is the same with pretty much any health condition that has inflammatory processes.

Should you be dairy and sugar free?

There's certainly evidence to show that both dairy products and sugar increase inflammation, and therefore in the same reasoning above, could have a knock on effect to endometriosis symptoms.

What about meat?

It is true that an unbalanced diet with a large amount of animal protein can increase inflammation. That said, a healthy balanced diet high in essential nutrients can combat the inflammation in many cases.



Diet is very individual, what works for one person doesn't work for another, and it's about finding the right one for you. You might find that you feel a lot 'better' on a vegan diet, and others may find that a paleo diet is the right fit for them.

Flaxseed vs Chia seed

These are also often written about as anti-inflammatory agents that could help in endometriosis (and really in any inflammatory condition). Both flaxseed and chia seeds contain vitamins, minerals and essential fatty acids which are great nutritional additions to your diet.

I would just ask you to be mindful of growing and harvesting practices, and where your seeds are coming from. Do you need to use chia seeds in the UK, that are intensively grown and then flown over from South America, when flaxseeds grow in the UK (organically too), and don't need to fly anywhere. (Obviously it depends where you're living!)



Exercise

Gentle exercise is a good way to ensure you maintain your energy levels, metabolism and circulation. It's important to find something that you enjoy and that you can do comfortably. I realise for some of you there isn't anything comfortable, but keep this in mind as something to work towards.



Yoga

Here are some yoga poses and sequences that are specific for increasing pelvic circulation and reducing pain.

- **Yoga for women with Adriene**
- **Yoga for during your period with SarahBethYoga**

These are just some of my favourites, but you can find lots of different sequences to try on YouTube.

You might also find the following activities fun and helpful:

- Tai chi
- Pilates
- Walking
- Swimming
- Dancing



Herbal medicine

For people who are taking medication (including any form of birth control, coil, or implant), the following herbs are suitable to take alongside your medication.

Before taking any other herbs it's important to check with a medical herbalist (UK/IE/AU/NZ) (clinical herbalist (US), naturopathic doctor (CA) and pharmacist (EU)) so that the herbs and pharmaceutical drugs do not interact together.

Ginger

You may have already read about ginger and its pain relieving properties, but ginger also has other properties, it's a natural anti-inflammatory, and it also increase circulation, which makes it a great first herb to try for your endometriosis pain.

1. It's not suitable for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

2. It's not suitable for people on blood thinning medication.

The research that was conducted on ginger in relation to dysmenorrhea (period pain), used a powdered ginger capsule, and you may find these available in health food shops.

There has also been research conducted on ginger in relation to endometrial cancer cells, and from analysing the results of that research and the mechanism of action of ginger I have concluded that it could have a similar action in regulating normal endometrial tissue growth.

Ginger can also be added to food in larger quantities and that will give some of its anti-inflammatory effects, but to get the maximum pain relieving qualities you need to take a decoction or a tincture of ginger, which you can easily make in your kitchen with ginger root from a supermarket.

Please see my [YouTube channel](#) for videos on how to make these remedies.

So how much do you need to take?

As we're all different that's difficult to answer so I will give you parameters instead and I will leave you to experiment to find the level that's right for you.

- Ginger capsules (400mg capsules) – 2 – 5 capsules per day
- Decoction (using fresh root) – 10g – 15g decocted – 1 – 2 cups per day
- Tincture (using fresh root) – 14 drops – 25 drops per day (taken after food)



Herbal medicine

Turmeric is another herb that has been written about a lot as a natural anti-inflammatory, and an alternative to NSAIDs. Its effect on regulating mood, blood flow, and now specifically on endometrial cells, makes it particularly useful to try for endometriosis.

As with ginger, adding it to food can pass on some of its anti-inflammatory benefits, but turmeric is actually pretty tricky for our bodies to absorb. If you look at the traditional way it's taken as a medicine in India you can find the answer to this problem, adding black pepper to turmeric increases its absorption by over 50%, and extracting it in milk also increases it's bioavailability (how well it's absorbed by the body). If you're dairy free, don't worry coconut oil or coconut milk will do the same thing.

1. It's not suitable for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

2. It's not suitable for people on blood thinning medication.



So how much do you need to take?

Originally the research pointed to curcumin being the anti-inflammatory part of turmeric and so a lot of supplements will show that they have extra curcumin added or even that the supplement itself is just curcumin and nothing else.

New research however has shown that using the whole of turmeric root (which is what would have been used traditionally), has a more therapeutic effect.

I would therefore recommend that you look for a turmeric supplement rather than a curcumin supplement.

As we're all different that's difficult to answer so I will give you parameters instead and I will leave you to experiment to find the level that's right for you.

- Turmeric capsules (preferably with black pepper added) (400mg capsules) – 2 – 6 capsules per day
- Traditional turmeric milk – 1 - 2 cups per day



Herbal medicine

Laura's golden milk recipe

(makes 1 cup)

- 1 mug of cow's milk (coconut or almond milk can be used as a non dairy alternative)
- 1 teaspoon of turmeric powder (or if using the fresh root, grate a 2cm long piece)
- 1/4 teaspoon of ground black pepper
- 2 crushed cardamom pods
- 1/2 teaspoon of ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon of ground cinnamon (or add a cinnamon stick)

Add all ingredients to a saucepan and gently bring to the simmer, strain through a sieve and drink. Add honey/substitute to taste.

Cinnamon tea to increase pelvic circulation

Cinnamon is a traditional medicine and is used by herbalists to increase pelvic circulation, so this makes it a great one for people with endometriosis. You can now buy cinnamon tea in most health food shops and supermarkets (in tea bag form).

Do not use in pregnancy or breast feeding.

How long will it take to work?

If you put into practice every piece of advice in this eBook, I would still recommend plotting your progress over a three cycle period.

You can make a note of changes in a diary, or if you prefer you can use a free app to track your endometriosis symptoms, there are lots out there, and my favourite is **Clue**.

Other natural alternatives that you might want to try

If you're looking for another alternative way to reduce endometriosis pain, you might find acupuncture helpful (as recommended by **Endometriosis UK**). Remember to find someone who's registered with a regulating body.

