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| Sims Fertility Clinic | | Form No. | PT-INFO-043 |
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Endometriosis Patient Information Sheet

What is Endometriosis?

Endometriosis is a medical condition which commonly affects woman during their reproductive years. Endometriosis occurs when endometrial cells which are normally found only inside the womb, are found outside the uterine cavity. This tissue can develop into spots or patches called implants or cysts which can cause discomfort and infertility.

Common locations for endometriosis include the ovaries, fallopian tubes, the ligaments supporting the uterus, the outer uterine surface, or elsewhere in the abdomen. Implants of endometriosis (outside the womb) respond to the same female hormone variations as the normal endometrial tissue that is inside the uterus. However, unlike the lining of the uterus, endometrial tissue located outside the uterus is trapped and does not have a way to leave the body. This can cause inflammation near the implants, and if nerve tissue is affected, pelvic pain may result. Long term inflammation of the fallopian tubes can sometimes cause sufficient scarring to result in tubal blockage.

What are the symptoms of Endometriosis?

Typical symptoms of endometriosis include severe pain before or during a menstrual cycle (during or after sexual intercourse) and infertility. Some women with endometriosis have no symptoms despite having a large area of tissue affected by endometriosis. However, other woman with only a very small area affected by the condition can still suffer severe pain. Pain may also be encountered:

- During Ovulation
- When passing Urine
- Before/during/after menstruation
- In the bowel during menstruation
- In the lower back

Other systems may include:

- Nausea/Vomiting
- Diarrhoea or constipation
- Abdominal bloating
- Fatigue

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A diagnosis of endometriosis cannot be made by blood tests or sonograms. Also, symptoms alone are not conclusive proof of endometriosis, because some women have no symptoms and there may be other reasons for pelvic pain besides endometriosis.

How can I confirm that have Endometriosis?

Surgery (*i.e.*, laparoscopy) is the only definitive way to diagnose endometriosis. The reason surgery is important in the evaluation of pelvic pain is that laparoscopy allows direct visualization and, ideally, biopsy of areas suspected of being endometriosis. Laparoscopy is carried out by inserting a small telescope through an incision close to the naval.

During a laparoscopy, the surgeon can also determine if the tubes are open. This is where liquid is flushed through the neck of the womb. This flushing with liquid is similar to a Saline Infusion Hysterosonography which is carried out on all female patients pre-IVF at Sims.

For woman in their reproductive years, endometriosis can be managed quite simply, by providing pain relief to inhibit the progression of the condition & relieve infertility if it is an issue. Many women who have endometriosis can conceive without any difficulty. However, some women do have difficulty getting pregnant. IVF is an appropriate treatment for infertility associated with endometriosis where other methods have failed.