



# An Integrated Approach to Endometriosis

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# Causes of Endometriosis

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It is believed that Endometriosis is an auto immune disease..

“Auto-immune” is when the immune system mistakingly attacks itself, targeting cells, tissues and organs of a person’s own body.

Immune system studies show that women with symptomatic endometriosis have antibodies against their own tissue.

This is characteristic of most auto-immune diseases



# Agenda

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## 1. Immune System

Concentrating on:


- Diet
- Stress
- Thyroid

## 2. Published Endometriosis Research

## 3. Role of the Mind

## 4. Reflexology

- What does it do?
- Published Research

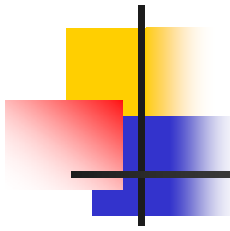


# What does the immune system do?

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It is the body's army, fighting off infections, disease as it engineers our healing process. Its main functions:

- to kill
- clean up (drains excess fluid, eliminates waste, toxins and dead and damaged cells)
- remember



# Symptoms of a weakened immune system

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These are wide ranging but often include:

- Fatigue
- Listlessness (lethargy)
- Repeated infections
- Allergic reactions
- Slow wound healing
- Infections that represent an overgrowth such as oral thrush, vaginal thrush, candida



# What affects our immune system?

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- Digestive health & poor diet
- Food allergies/intolerances
- Chemicals, pesticides and additives
- Stress
- Poor mental outlook
- High levels of toxins in the body including mercury fillings
- Low exercise levels
- Underactive thyroid
- Adrenal fatigue



# How can we help our immune systems

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## Digestive health and diet

- Well it is thought that 80% of our immune response is activated from our colon.
- There is a lot of dietary information available which can be very confusing.
- We need to go back to basics to understand what is required



# Thousands of years ago....

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Our diet consisted of things we could find

- Berries
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Fish
- with the occasional bit of meat if we managed to catch that mammoth!



# Modern lifestyle outstripping evolution

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Our diets have changed considerably since then, but evolution works more slowly and our bodies are still designed to have a diet consistent with our ancestors thousands of years ago.

We are just not designed for large volumes of meat and dairy.

So what can we do?



# Some food guidelines

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- Eat enough fibre
- Over half of your diet should be raw
- Organic, whole, fresh foods
- More water, although not at meal times
- Avoid: caffeine, alcohol, chocolate, soft drinks, fried foods, cow's milk, white flour and gluten, large quantities of meat.
- Never eat when stressed



# Fibre...why is it so important

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When the digestive tract is overburdened with food (especially low fibre foods) it became sluggish. Leads to constipation, fat absorption, cholesterol and bowel toxins. Toxic chemicals from the bowel pass into the blood and lymph which places an additional burden on the skin, kidneys and liver.

High fibre levels help to eliminate excess oestrogen. The liver is responsible for the breakdown of oestrogen, enzymes (chemicals which act as catalysts) use B vitamins to change it into a less harmful form. In this converted form, it can be bound to fibre and then excreted. Therefore, it is important to have sufficient levels of fibre and B vitamins in the body for this elimination to occur.

Recommended sources are unrefined whole grain cereals, nuts, seeds, berries, peas, beans, lentils and green vegetables.



# In rural East Africa

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- In the sixties, Dr. Denis Burkitt worked with rural tribes in East Africa; he discovered that heart disease, colon cancer, diverticulosis, appendicitis, haemorrhoids and constipation were almost non-existent in the native population whose diet consisted of high-fibre cereals while the same diseases were common in the British living the same area. The natives' bowel transit time was faster and their stools were 3 times larger.



## Raw foods.....

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Heat, air, contact with boiling water significantly reduce the vitamin and mineral content of food. For example, when boiling foods, 48% of iron is lost, 31% of calcium is lost, 46% of phosphorus and 45% of magnesium are wasted and vitamins B complex and C can be completely eliminated.



# Water .....

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Water makes up 83% of our blood, 74% of our brain and 22% of our bones. Fatigue is one of the key symptoms of dehydration. Drink at least 2L a day.

Liquids during a meal are believed to dilute the digestive enzyme concentration in the small intestine thereby reducing the effectiveness of digestion.



# Stress...why its impact is so damaging

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The body's nervous system has two parts:

- The sympathetic nervous system, which stimulates
- The parasympathetic nervous system which does the opposite

Going back to our ancestors again....this time chased by a mammoth.

Sympathetic nervous system -

- Heart rate, circulation increases-> more food, oxygen to muscles so we can run faster
- Closes down non-essential systems
  - Digestive
  - Reproductive
- Once we escaped... the parasympathetic systems took over.... Calming us down and returning us to a balanced state



# Modern day stress

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We no longer have mammoths down the high street but more insidious type of prolonged stress.

- Getting up on time, dealing with deadlines, managing everyones expectations of us. I believe that this has contributed to the explosion of digestive and reproductive problems seen in the last few decades.

Learning to relax is vital. It will allow the nervous system to regain a balance, to allow the digestive and reproductive processes to increase and work more efficiently.



# Proof of stress on our reproductive systems

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During the Second World War, Gestapo doctors subjected prisoners to barbaric levels of stress by firing blank gun cartridges at them. The male prisoners rapidly stopped producing sperm and the counts fell to zero.



# Good Nutrition and eliminate intolerant foods

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This is why I believe so many women with Endometriosis have been helped by nutritionists and why some of you have been told to eliminate wheat, dairy etc... since by removing food intolerances you are reducing the burden on the body's immune system



# Research undertaken with Endometriosis women

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Research study 1 –

Published in the Human Reproduction Journal - increasing the daily intake of fresh fruit and green vegetables seems to reduce symptoms of endometriosis (40% relative risk reduction) whilst the consumption of red meat and ham increases the risk (80% relative risk increase)

500 women clinically confirmed with endometriosis and 500 were the control group with no history of the disease. The researchers used interviews and structured questionnaires to compare the medical and reproductive history, lifestyle and diet.



# Research undertaken with Endometriosis women

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## Research Study 2 -

A group of rhesus monkeys exposed to dioxins developed spontaneous endometriosis. The pattern of disease found was in direct correlation with the amount of dioxin they had been given, research is indicating that these monkeys are still affected by the dioxins up to 10 years after the original exposure.

What can be done about this?

- Buy organic where possible to avoid the pesticides and chemicals used in foods. Use "friendly" cleaning products, avoid wrapping meat, dairy and foods in plastic/cling film.
- Avoid tampons since they are often bleached (dioxins)



# Research undertaken with Endometriosis women

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## Research Study 3 –

2 months of high-dose vitamin E and C therapy lead to a significant improvement in endometriosis pain and a reduction in inflammatory markers in a study of 59 women aged 19-41, with pelvic pain and a history of endometriosis and/or infertility.

In the vitamin group, 43% of the women reported an improvement in everyday pain, compared with none of the women in the placebo group. 37% of the vitamin group had decreased dysmenorrhoea (painful menstrual cramps), compared with 36% of the placebo group, and 24% of the vitamin group had decreased dyspareunia (pain during or after sexual intercourse) compared with none of the placebo group.



# What does the thyroid do?

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The thyroid gland is our thermostat, regulating the secretion of 2 hormones that control how quickly the body burns calories and uses energy. Too much, you have hyperthyroidism, too little hypothyroidism.

- Women in their 30's-50's seem to be most at risk.



# Hypothyroid link with excess oestrogen

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- According to Dr. Gordon Skinner and Dr. John Lee a serious flaw currently exists in the treatment of hypothyroidism.

You can have hypothyroidism yet have a normal thyroid function.

Excess oestrogen can block the action of the thyroid hormone, even when the thyroid is producing hormone normal levels. Therefore, the hormone is ineffective and symptoms of hypothyroidism appear.

In this case, laboratory tests may show normal thyroid hormone levels in a woman's system, because the thyroid gland itself is not malfunctioning.



# Symptoms of Hypothyroidism

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## Key Signs and Symptoms of Hypothyroidism

- Intolerance to the cold
- Weight gain
- Swollen tongue
- Brittle dry hair/skin/nails
- Cramp/pins and needles
- Menstrual problems
- Emotionally instable
- Nervousness/anxiety
- Persecution complex
- Personality changes
- Panic attacks
- Poor concentration
- Mentally sluggish



# Link between Thyroid and Infertility – Published Research

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- In a controlled study with 438 infertile couples, the results showed that female infertility was significantly associated with AITD without thyroid dysfunction, with the strongest association for women with endometriosis.
- In a follow up study of the infertile couples who benefited from Assisted Reproductive Techniques, the onset of gestation was not hampered by the presence of AITD, the final outcome of the induced pregnancies was significantly lower in women with AITD because of an increase in early pregnancy loss. These findings have been backed up with other studies:
- In the Journal of Medical Screening, the researchers reported that in a study of 9,000 pregnant women, those women with elevated TSH (thyroid stimulating hormone) levels had a 3.8 percent risk of late miscarriage, compared to only 0.9 percent miscarriage risk in women who were not hypothyroid. The study attributed six out of every 100 late miscarriages to an undiagnosed hypothyroid condition in the mother.
- The following studies over the last 15 years show a relationship between positive thyroid antibodies and increased miscarriage rates and over 5,600 people participated in the studies. Women who were treated with thyroid treatment before and during pregnancy showed a significant reduction in miscarriage. 81% of women had live births. (Finland)



# The role of the mind

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- The mind affects our immune system. White blood cells are influenced by the brain and nervous system.
- Studies have shown that women who suffer from Endometriosis feel a conflict between their emotional needs and what the world is demanding from them. Many women drive themselves relentlessly, unable to relax, slow down and listen to their inner most needs and desires.



# Emotions...

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The word emotion stems from the word “motion”.

They are our inner guides. Anger, fear, frustration, guilt are all things which tell us we are on the wrong road or just ignoring our own emotional needs/not addressing certain events that need to be addressed. If we change our outlook, see our emotions as guides telling us what we really want and need, this can often help the helplessness and powerless feelings and turn them into something positive.

Instead of feeling angry and frustrated about our emotional and irrational feelings try and use those feelings to your advantage. Take control of those feelings.



# A small exercise

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- To help you to see patterns of behaviour in your life.
- Take a sheet of paper and divide it into 2 parts.
- On the left side write a list of all the things which make you tired, frustrated, angry, stressed anything which drains you of energy. Don't feel embarrassed to write about people or things which you feel should make you happy. This list is for you only.
- On the right hand side, note all the things which make you smile, laugh, fill you up with good energy and positivity, it doesn't matter how small or insignificant these are.
- Examine your lists. Become aware of what these factors/things/people cause you to feel sad or happy, drained or energized.
- Each week try to slowly eliminate one thing from your "bad (draining) energy" list and do more of the things from your "good (energizing) energy". Keep doing this. Concentrate on doing the things that make you happy. I know it sounds so simple, but it is vital to protect yourself and your energy and do the things that feel right for you. As those energy suckers are eliminated this should improve your overall energy levels and general wellbeing.



# Reflexology

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Reflexology allows the body to de-stress and relax, stimulating the body's own healing systems to work more effectively and efficiently to help the body return back to its natural state of balance.

- Calms the nervous system, reducing stress, nervousness and anxiety
- Improves circulation resulting in better oxygen, nutrient and hormone supply to the cells in the body
- Detoxes, reducing the body's toxic load, improving organ and gland function
- Stimulates the lymphatic system, reducing bloating and excess fluid
- Reduces the perceptions of pain
- Improved emotional wellbeing



# Published Reflexology Research

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## Gynaecological Research

- 50 patients between 20-51 years old, diagnosed with gynaecological diseases including dysmenorrhea, hysteromyoma, pelvic inflammation, cyst and mass, endometriosis, menstrual disorder, infertility and chocolate cyst, were treated with foot reflexology either daily or every other day with a minimum of 10 sessions, up to 2 years.
- 42 (84%) of patients symptoms completely disappeared, there was normal menstruation.
- 8 (16%) of patients had symptoms that almost disappeared. (By Hui Song, Senior Doctor, Nanjing Obstetrical and Gynecological Hospital)



# Published Reflexology Research

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Dysmenstruation/(painful periods):

- 10 patients average age 21, had reflexology having been diagnosed with dysmenstruation (painful periods). 3 patients had already tried western or chinese therapies without success. The results showed that reflexology provided pain relief very quickly. (By Wu Zhixing, Department of Foot Reflexology, Hangzhou Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital)



# Published Reflexology Research

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Hypermenorrhea/(excessive uterine bleeding):

- 28 patients with hypermenorrhea (excessive uterine bleeding occurring at regular intervals) were treated with reflexology. The results were:
- 82% had significant benefits with relief from symptoms, with no reoccurrence during the observation
- 18% had some benefits, symptoms were relieved but as soon as the reflexology ceased, symptoms returned (By Wu Zhixing, Hangzhou Traditional Medical Hospital, Zhejiang, China)



# Published Reflexology Research – Stress in the Workplace

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28 members of staff at Worcester Hospitals received 40 mins of reflexology each week for 6 weeks. Their response to the reflexology was measured in terms of: pain, mobility, lethargy, psychological stress. The key results were:

- 74% had a significant reduction in pain
- 62.5% had a significant improvement in mobility
- 55% had a significant improvement in psychological stress
- 53% had a significant reduction in lethargy

The Odense Postal District, hired a reflexologist for 3 years. They have 1450 employees. A total of 235 employees received reflexology treatments. The results were as follows:

- The average sick days over 3 years fell from 11.4 days to 8.5 days, representing a 25% reduction, saving expenses of DKK 1m (£110k)
- 170 employees (72%) reported good effect
- 60 employees (26%) reported some effect
- 5 employees (2%) no effect

# Published Reflexology Research



A reflexologist and a counsellor worked with a total of 74 people (49 received reflexology and 25 received counselling).

- Physical improvements underpinned feelings of enhanced mental/emotional well-being for many participants. The researchers observed that the release of tension through being able to talk led to greater relaxation, was found to alleviate headaches and improve sleep.
- With the exception of 2 participants in the reflexology sample, there was a reported increase in relaxation levels and a decrease in anxiety levels.
- Many participants reported improved emotional status. Fear, worry and despair reported at the beginning of the study had changed into more positive and fulfilling emotions.
- The participants tended to make greater progress when reflexology and counselling were offered together, and the report recommended greater integration of the therapies.



# Further information

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More detailed information at:

- [www.levelfooting.com](http://www.levelfooting.com)