



Women's Health and Family Planning Clinic  
641-455-5431  
www.riverhillshealth.org

# REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH NEWS

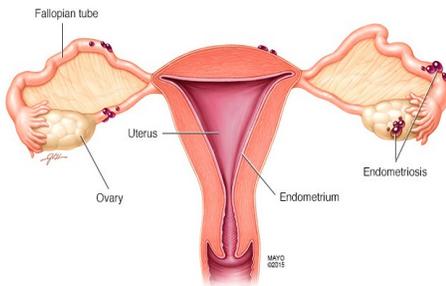
TITLE X FAMILY PLANNING NEWSLETTER

Volume 1.3 March, 2018

## March is Endometriosis Awareness Month



March is Endometriosis Awareness month, but what is Endometriosis? It is one of the most common causes of pelvic pain and infertility in women and affects over 200,000 women in the US every year. The endometrium is the medical term for the lining of the uterus that thickens in preparation for a fertilized ova (egg), then sloughs if an egg does not implant and is expelled during menses (your period).



Endometriosis occurs when endometrial tissue grows outside the uterine lining, most of the time on the ovaries. The tissue thickens and bleeds, just like the normal endometrium does during the menstrual cycle. Because this displaced tissue has no way to get out of the body, it gets trapped.

When the tissue grows on the ovaries, it can form cysts or form scar tissue or adhesions (abnormal bands of fibrous tissue), that cause pelvic tissues and organs to "stick" to each other. This can cause pain, sometimes severe, especially during your period.

Endometriosis can sometimes have similar symptoms to other conditions such as Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), Ovarian Cysts, Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), and IBS can sometimes accompany endometriosis which can complicate the diagnosis.

Many times women believe that painful periods are just a part of being a woman or that it's normal. It is NOT. Sometimes providers mistakenly think that teens and younger women don't have endometriosis (since it is most commonly diagnosed later as part of fertility evaluation). If you have signs or symptoms of endometriosis, it is important to discuss them with your healthcare provider so that you can be accurately diagnosed and treated.

Sometimes there can be a 7-year delay between onset of symptoms and diagnosis and treatment. The longer your symptoms are not treated, the more damage is done to your reproductive organs and the more likely you are to have fertility issues. Women who have endometriosis are often counseled to not put off having children. The cause of endometriosis is unknown.



### Common Signs and Symptoms

- ⚡ **Painful Periods-** (dysmenorrhea)- pelvic or abdominal pain, cramping or back pain
- ⚡ **Painful Sex-** (dyspareunia) -pain during or after sex. > 50% of women report this
- ⚡ **Pain-** with urination or bowel movements
- ⚡ **Excessive Bleeding-**(menorrhagia) or bleeding/spotting between periods (menometrorrhagia)
- ⚡ **Infertility-** many times endometriosis is diagnosed in women who seek treatment for infertility
- General Symptoms-** fatigue, diarrhea/constipation bloating, nausea especially during your period

It is important to keep a menstrual calendar. Note the beginning and end of each cycle and any symptoms such as bleeding/pain. This help you know the length/regularity of your cycles. Note the color, amount (how often you change your pad or tampon), and any unusual characteristics such as

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National Endometriosis Awareness Month

## KNOW YOUR STDs— Fast Facts



### Chlamydia

- ◆ Most Common Bacterial STI
- ◆ 70% of infected people have **NO** symptoms they occur 1-3 weeks after unprotected sex
- ◆ Can be cured with antibiotics but damage to your reproductive organs is permanent
- ◆ Left untreated—Can cause Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID) and/or infertility
- ◆ In pregnancy, PID can endanger both mother and baby
- ◆ Babies infected during delivery may develop eye infection or pneumonia
- ◆ Symptoms include pain/burning when urinating
- ◆ Men— may have discharge from penis or swollen testicles
- ◆ Women— may have vaginal discharge or abdominal or pelvic pain
- ◆ Can be avoided by not having sex (abstinence) or using safer sex practices such as correctly and consistently using male condoms, limiting the number of partners, avoiding drug or alcohol impairment
- ◆ Get tested /treated, (both partners) **every** time you have unprotected sex
- ◆ Follow post-treatment instructions to avoid sex for at least 7 days and to return for follow-up testing in 3 months.
- ◆ River Hills Family Planning Clinic can provide confidential testing/treatment at low or no cost.

## Risk Factors For Endometriosis

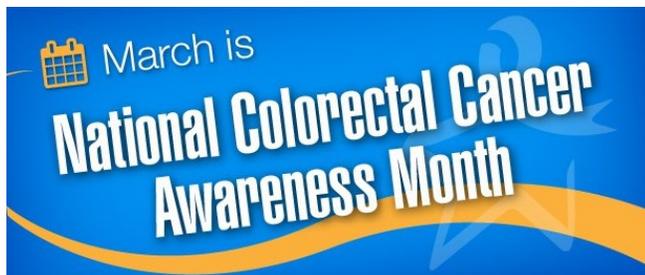


- ⇒ Never giving birth
- ⇒ Early Menarche (first period)
- ⇒ Late Menopause
- ⇒ Short menstrual cycle (< 27 days)
- ⇒ Higher levels of Estrogen
- ⇒ Low BMI (underweight)
- ⇒ Alcohol consumption
- ⇒ More than one female relative (mom, aunt, sisters, cousins) that have endometriosis
- ⇒ Any uterine abnormalities or conditions that prevent passage of menstrual blood out of your body

## March is Colorectal Cancer (CRC) Awareness Month

- CRC is a potentially life-threatening condition
- 4th most common cancer/2nd leading cause of cancer deaths.
- 5% of Americans will get CRC in their lifetime
- > 1 million people living with CR/56,000 die each year
- Often no symptoms
- Recommendations (average risk) start screening at age 50
- Higher risk- start screening earlier

Discuss risk factors with your PCP at your annual wellness exams and **GET TESTED.**



March 2,2018

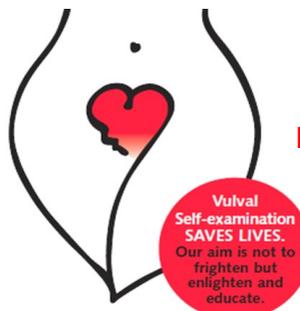
### Did You Know?

- ◆ Nearly 1/3 of all cancers can be prevented by living a healthy lifestyle
- ◆ Healthy Diet
- ◆ Exercise regularly
- ◆ Maintain healthy body weight /BMI
- ◆ Decrease /eliminate alcohol
- ◆ Stop smoking. Quitline Iowa 1-800-QUIT NOW or 1-800-784-8669
- ◆ Annual Exams and follow guidelines for screenings

*This publication was made possible by grant number 58817012 from the Office of Population Affairs and its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of the Office of Population Affairs.*

## Diagnosing Endometriosis

- ◆ **Symptoms**– describe in as much detail as possible– keep a menstrual calendar
- ◆ **Pelvic exam**– the provider manually feels (palpates) areas in your pelvis for abnormalities
- ◆ **Ultrasound**– a test that uses sound waves to create images of the inside of your body. A transducer is pressed against your abdomen (abdominal ultrasound) or inserted into your vagina (transvaginal ultrasound)
- ◆ **Laparoscopy**– procedure under general anesthesia. The surgeon makes a tiny cut near your navel and puts a slender scope (laparoscope) inside. S/he, looks for endometrial tissue outside the uterus, and takes samples of tissue (biopsy). Laparoscopy shows the location, extent and size of the tissue and helps determine the best treatment options.



**March Is Vulval Health Awareness**

Ongoing vulval disorders often affect intimate personal relationships – it is better to seek advice promptly.

## What Is the Vulva?

The vulva is a woman's external reproductive organs. There are common conditions that affect the Vulval skin such as infections, yeast, skin disorders (lichen sclerosis, precancerous cells and skin cancer including melanoma.

Some conditions that can affect the vulva are:

- \* **Cancer of the vulva**
- \* **Yeast/Candida**– overgrowth of yeast due to changes in vaginal fluids
- \* **Eczema/dermatitis/Psoriasis**
- \* **Herpes/ Genital Warts**
- \* **Lichens Planus, Sclerosis, Simplex**– group of skin conditions that may cause discharge, pain, bumps, burning or itching
- \* **Paget's Disease**– unusual skin cancer. Symptoms: redness, itching, soreness
- \* **Vulvodynia**– chronic pain around the opening of the vagina that makes sitting/sex uncomfortable
- \* **Vaginismus**– vaginal muscles spasm when something is entering it such as a tampon, penis or speculum

## Treatment Options

Treatment usually starts conservatively - medications or surgery

- ◆ **Pain Medication**
  - ◆ **Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDS)**- Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or Naproxen (Aleve )
- ◆ **Hormone Therapy**
  - ◆ **Hormonal Contraceptives** (pill, patch, ring) help hormone balance, reduce/eliminate menstrual pain
  - ◆ **Gonadotropin-releasing hormone (Gn-RH)**- blocks production of hormones, prevents periods. Used with low-dose estrogen & progestin
  - ◆ **Progestin Therapy**– IUD (Mirena), Implant (Nexplanon) or Injection (Depo-Provera), prevents periods and growth of tissue
- ◆ **Surgery**
  - ◆ **(Laparoscopy/Abdominal)**– removes as much endometrial tissue as possible while keeping reproductive organs
  - ◆ **Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART)** In vitro fertilization-helps you get pregnant
  - ◆ **Hysterectomy**-surgery to remove the uterus and cervix (total hysterectomy) and both ovaries (last resort).
  - ◆ **Long-term health risks** –Increased risk of heart (cardiovascular) diseases and metabolic conditions, (Diabetes) especially if you are over age 35

## Why Perform a Genital Self-Exam?

- Know what is normal for you
- Assist in early detection of conditions that need treatment
- Start when sexually active, or age 18
- Ask your provider to show you how to do a Genital Self-Exam

## How to Perform Genital Self-Exam

1. Find a private place
2. Get a mirror , hand-held or on a stand
3. Get comfortable and position, spread your labia and position the mirror so you can see,
4. Look for any changes in skin color, thickening, warts, lumps, skin tags, blisters, ulcers, sores, especially if they don't heal or they recur regularly
5. Note any symptoms,(itching, soreness, pain) that don't resolve.
6. Avoid common OTC treatments– call the clinic (641-455-5431) **FIRST**
7. Do this monthly with your Breast Self-Exam, or any time you develop symptoms
8. Ask your provider for information on reducing your risk of developing vulval conditions (avoiding harsh or scented soaps, douches, sprays, wearing cotton underwear, using water-based lubricants, etc.)

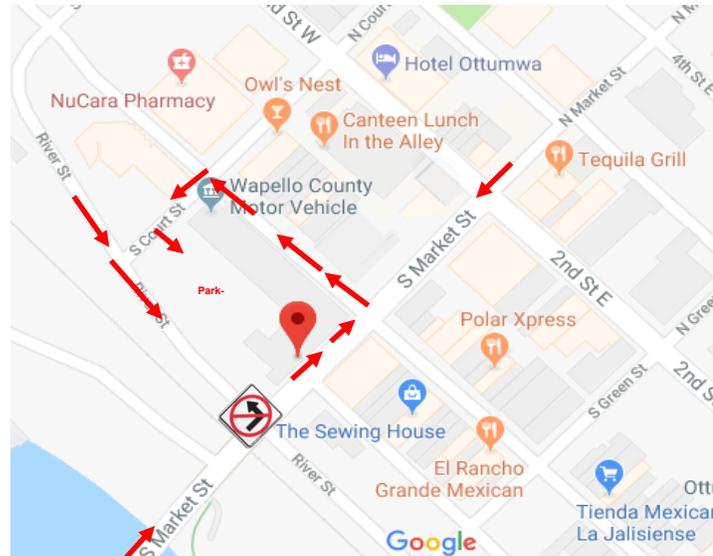
## Meet The Team



Pat Tucker, ARNP  
Nurse Practitioner

Hi! I'm Pat Tucker, nurse practitioner at River Hills Women's Health and Family Planning Clinic. I have been working in women's health for many years, and started at River Hills Community Health Center in 2007. I currently work five days a week at the Women's Health Family Planning Clinic at 201 S. Market Street in Ottumwa.

My husband and I have 5 children, 9 grandchildren and one great grandchild. When I'm not at work, I enjoy cooking, reading, gardening, riding our Harley with my husband (I have my motorcycle license, but like to ride with him on our bike), kayaking, church activities and making homemade strawberry freezer jam in the summer and rum cakes for gifts at Christmas.



Ottumwa Clinic– 201 S. Market St. If you drive across Market St. Bridge, you can NOT turn left onto River St. Drive past the clinic and turn left onto Main St., drive 1 block and turn left onto S. Court St. and enter the parking lot.

On February 6, River Hills Staff wore **Red** to show support for protecting access to quality healthcare for all Americans. 9 million patients, 50,000 jobs and almost 3,000 health care centers were at risk of losing funding. Community Health Center funding cuts wouldn't only hurt us– it would hurt our patients, our community, our economy and would drive up the cost of healthcare as more people turn to ERs for access to care. On February 13, River Hills Staff wore **Orange** to raise awareness of Teen Dating Violence Awareness.

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