

ASK ESIG - JULY 2017

QUESTION:

I have read the ASK ESIG files on pain following surgery

(<http://www.nzendo.org.nz/media/65425/ask-esig-january-2017.pdf>) but seriously, with a history of endometriosis and adenomyosis, what can I do to ease the ongoing pain?

Psychological tools for managing your pelvic pain

HANNAH BLAKELY

Clinical Psychologist

A team approach to pain management is the most effective in response to this question. A Clinical Psychologist may be useful to approach management of chronic pelvic pain in the context of ongoing management of pelvic pain. For example, many women experience persistent pelvic pain when the assumed source or reason for pain is surgically removed or medically managed. Often women express their distress, frustration and anxiety that pain remains feeling 'over it' and describe how it may negatively impact on their daily functioning. It may impact on mood, (low mood/depression and/or anxiety tolerance of pain, concentration and attention, physical activity, relationships sexual intimacy).

A common question is 'how do I cope with living with this pain'. There are a number of effective management approaches including gaining the skills to tolerate and "turn the intensity of pain down", finding out more about the psychological process of pain and how pain operates and learning about the meaning of pain to you. People perceive their pain differently. Some might think of it as harmful, unpredictable and uncontrollable. So, the way we perceive pain can affect our response to it.

Some strategies that may help living with chronic pelvic pain are increasing components of self-compassion, managing worrying and distressing thoughts through mindfulness and shifting our focus of attention. Learning about behavioural strategies and physical movement is also helpful to reduce the fear of pain and getting into the habit of avoidance.

Self-compassion involves three elements: self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness. Self-kindness entails being warm and understanding towards ourselves when we suffer, fail or feel we cannot cope, rather than engaging in beliefs about pain and 'beating ourselves up' with self-criticism. Self-criticism often impacts on negative mood and emotional states. Apps such as 'smiling mind' and 'headspace' provide mindfulness exercises and introductory information.

Leanne Wait has some great advice about pelvic physiotherapy which is another TOOL for managing pelvic pain and compliments Hannah's recommendations. At Insideout Physiotherapy in Hawkes Bay, she works with women who have endometriosis, adenomyosis, persistent pelvic pain and pre and post-surgical pelvic pain <http://www.nzendo.org.nz/media/65357/ask-esig-pelvic-physiotherapy.pdf>