

Strong period pain and excess weight in childhood increases risk of endometriosis

March 11 2010

Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR) scientists have identified a new link between strong period pain experienced in adolescence and early adulthood and the risk of endometriosis.

Researchers from QIMR's Gynaecological Cancer Laboratory have found having strong period pain often at an early age doubles a woman's risk of developing endometriosis.

The study also found that girls starting their menstrual cycle after 14 years old had a significantly decreased risk of endometriosis.

Researchers analysed information from more than 500 Australian women - making this one of the largest studies of its kind. Information about early menstrual characteristics in women with moderate to severe endometriosis was compared to data from women who had not been diagnosed with endometriosis.

"Although the relationship between menstrual characteristics and endometriosis has been studied extensively, most research has focused on the recent [menstrual cycle](#) characteristics of women with the disease. Our research is one of the first studies to look at the factors contributing to the development of endometriosis long before symptoms and diagnosis occur," said Dr Christina Nagle from QIMR.

In a related study last year, Dr Nagle and her team found that being overweight at 10 years of age also doubles the risk of developing

endometriosis in later life.

"Our research aims to better understand the signs and symptoms before the disease develops and to help identify women at higher risk. Early intervention will result in better health outcomes for women with this condition."

To date, there is no known cause or cure for [endometriosis](#), which affects 10% of women, causing [severe pain](#) and reduced fertility, in many cases. Disease symptoms can be managed through [pain medication](#), hormone treatment or surgery, or a combination of each.

More information: The article was published online on 21 December 2009 on the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* website. ([dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ajog.2009.10.857](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajog.2009.10.857))

Provided by Research Australia

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