

# How your sex life may influence endometriosis

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Researchers are a step closer to understanding the risk factors associated with endometriosis thanks to a new University of Adelaide study.

Dr Jonathan McGuane, from the University's Robinson Research Institute, says they discovered, for the first time, an association between contact with seminal fluid and the development of [endometriosis](#).

"In laboratory studies, our research found that seminal fluid (a major component of semen) enhances the survival and growth of endometriosis lesions," says Dr McGuane, co-lead author on the paper.

Associate Professor Louise Hull, also with the University's Robinson Research Institute, says a lot remains unknown about what causes, and how to effectively prevent and treat, endometriosis; however, more is now known about what aggravates the condition.

"Endometriosis, when tissue that normally grows inside a women's uterus grows outside the uterus, affects one in ten reproductive-aged women. The condition's symptoms vary but include painful periods, pelvic pain and women with endometriosis may have difficulty conceiving," says Associate Professor Hull.

"This is an important finding and raises the possibility that exposure of the endometrium (the inner lining of the uterus) to seminal fluid may contribute to the progression of the disease in women," she says.

Associate Professor Hull says a lot more research is needed to uncover what this means for the relationship between endometriosis and sexual activity.

"The next stage of the research will look at what this means for women with and without

endometriosis," says Associate Professor Hull.

"We now need to apply these laboratory findings to real life and determine whether the exposure of [seminal fluid](#) that occurs naturally during intercourse puts women at increased risk of developing endometriosis. And if modifications to [sexual activity](#) could lower the severity of the disease in [women](#) with endometriosis," she says.

The research was published in *The American Journal of Pathology*.

**More information:** *American Journal of Pathology*, [www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S0002944015000796](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S0002944015000796)

Provided by University of Adelaide

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