

Eating for ENDO



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Hello!

I'm Laura, UK & France Registered Dietitian

I am passionate about supporting women to manage their endometriosis symptoms and to optimise their reproductive health.

I became passionate about the link between food, lifestyle and women's health when, like many women, I struggled with trying to conceive. I was told multiple times that I was suffering from 'unexplained infertility', but I didn't give up and kept searching for answers.



After a while I was finally diagnosed with endometriosis. The journey was long, and I soon became aware of the limited amount of factual, consistent and reliable information out there relating to endometriosis and nutrition.

I know first hand how the information gaps, combined with the emotional and physical demands of managing a health condition, can be challenging. So I decided to set up Nurture for Life Nutrition to help other women on their journey to a healthier and happier life.

My goal is to be your reliable source of accurate nutrition information, so that you can more easily manage your endometriosis symptoms and optimise your health. I hope this guide helps you to get started on your journey.

If you'd like further support, feel free to drop me a line:
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I'd love to chat!

Laura x

What is the best diet for endometriosis?

Have you heard about the latest “endometriosis diet” which focuses on foods you shouldn’t be eating to manage your symptoms? Considering cutting foods out of your diet to help your endometriosis? You’re not alone. A study found that 35% of women with endometriosis were following restrictive diets in an attempt to manage their symptoms, ([Kumar et al, 2023](#)).

While it might sound tempting, many ‘endometriosis diet’ claims are often based on small studies and can lack scientific evidence.

Any diet that suggests you cut out any of the core food groups (proteins/carbohydrates/dairy & alternatives/fats) can have a downside. If you cut these foods out of your diet, you can become deficient in certain nutrients.

There have been a small number of studies completed to establish if any dietary changes can help with symptom control and management of endometriosis, all of which I will discuss in this book! However, there are no official guidelines or recommendations for following a specific diet or way of eating in the management of endometriosis.

Different eating plans can work for different people. You may find that going gluten-free or dairy-free works for you, but it’s important to plan your food carefully to ensure you’re not missing out on important nutrients.

It’s about finding what works best for you. You may also want to consider seeking support from your healthcare professional, such as a registered dietitian, for a personalised nutrition plan that suits your unique needs and lifestyle.

In this guide, I’ll be highlighting the latest patterns of eating that have shown promise in the management of endometriosis. I’ll also share some simple endo-friendly recipes to help you get started!

The Mediterranean Diet for Endometriosis

The Mediterranean diet is the traditional eating pattern of people who live in countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, including Spain, Greece, Southern France, Italy and Morocco.

It's a way of eating that focuses on fresh, seasonal fruits, vegetables, pulses, nuts, whole grains, fish, garlic, herbs, spices, and olive oil. It includes moderate amounts of dairy, poultry, and eggs with red meat eaten less frequently. There's a big focus on cooking, enjoying more meals at home, with minimal amounts of processed foods.

Ongoing studies strongly suggest that a Mediterranean-style diet can help reduce inflammation, regulate oestrogen levels, and help improve symptoms of endometriosis, ([Cirillo et al, 2023](#))

This pattern of eating has also been shown to be beneficial for fertility and it's also recommended for heart disease prevention.

The Mediterranean diet also supports a healthy gut microbiome and has shown positive effects on mood and mental health.



Fats

Part of the benefit of the Mediterranean way of eating for endometriosis is thought to be due to reduced amounts of saturated fats. These are replaced with a variety of unsaturated fats (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats) from olive oil, avocado, nuts, seeds, and fish.

Research ([Abokhrais, I.M. et al., 2020](#)) shows that one type of unsaturated fat, known as omega-3 fats, can help with inflammation in endometriosis and reduce symptoms such as pelvic pain. It also appears to reduce the size of endometriosis lesions and improve fertility.

The best sources of omega-3 fats are found in oily fish (salmon, trout, mackerel and sardines). Aim to eat 1-2 portions of oily fish per week. If you don't eat fish, a fish oil supplement or an algae omega-3 supplement may be beneficial. You can also find omega-3 fats in plant sources such as canola, flaxseed and soy bean oils as well as chia seeds, walnuts, hemp seeds and flaxseeds.



Antioxidants

The other major benefit of this way of eating for endometriosis is due to its antioxidant properties.

Antioxidants are found in a number of different plants and plant products and they're molecules that act as the body's defence network against damage to cells. They help to neutralise substances called free radicals which threaten to cause damage to the body through a process known as oxidative stress.

Women with endometriosis may have increased oxidative stress, which can enhance inflammation in the body, and this can contribute to the severity of endometriosis symptoms.

There are many benefits to eating a variety of fruit and vegetables, including the fact that they are high in antioxidants, which is why they may reduce inflammation and help alleviate symptoms of endometriosis.

The Mediterranean diet includes an abundance of fruit and vegetables and provides a wide variety of dietary antioxidants, such as vitamins C and E, carotenoids and flavonoids.

Additionally, supplementation with antioxidant vitamins C and E is effective in decreasing oxidative stress and pain experienced with endometriosis, ([Santanam et al, 2013](#))



Fibre

Research has found that women with endometriosis have higher levels of oestrogen. High oestrogen levels have been linked to the production of prostaglandins which are pro-inflammatory and can worsen endometriosis pain and bloating.

High fibre foods such as fruits, vegetables, wholegrains, pulses, nuts and seeds can help to regulate levels of oestrogen. It does this by preventing the absorption of oestrogen, moving it out of our body through our bowels, thereby reducing oestrogen levels and lowering levels of inflammation and bloating.

Fibre is also an important component of an endometriosis diet, due to a high proportion of endo sufferers also complaining of gut issues such as bloating, constipation and diarrhoea.

Research shows that the Mediterranean pattern of eating not only supports a healthy gut microbiome by increasing total gut bacteria, but it also supports the growth of varieties of bacteria that may have mood-boosting qualities and positive effects on mental health, (Jacka et al, 2017)

Therefore, including a diverse range of high fibre foods in your diet can result in a healthier gut with improved gut symptoms along with a lower risk of anxiety, stress-related symptoms and depression.

Along with fruit and vegetables, the Mediterranean diet is also rich in other plant foods which are high in fibre. Include a variety of wholegrain bread and cereals, oats, quinoa, barley, rye and brown rice. Pulses such as lentils, chickpeas, beans and a variety of nuts and seeds are packed full of fibre and are also good sources of protein.



The Gluten-Free Diet For Endometriosis

Gluten is part of a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. For people with coeliac disease, gluten can trigger an immune response damaging the lining of the small intestine. This can cause a range of serious health problems if left unmanaged.

Endometriosis is commonly associated with gastrointestinal upset, similar to the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Some people find improvements in their digestive and endo symptoms from following a gluten-free diet.

There haven't been many studies looking into the effectiveness of a gluten-free diet for managing symptoms of endometriosis. However, a couple of studies involved women (with endo) following a gluten-free diet and they found a reduction in pain symptoms.

It was found that 75% of women experienced significantly less pain from following a gluten-free diet. Women with endo in another UK study saw a 50% reduction in pain after 3 months of no gluten. These studies looked at reduced pelvic pain, pain during intercourse and period pain, ([Marziali et al, 2012](#)).

It's unknown as to why following a gluten-free diet could result in reduced pain in endometriosis. It could be down to the fact that a gluten-free diet contains fewer high FODMAP foods, particularly fructans from wheat. The low FODMAP diet is discussed in more detail in the next section.

The main thing to remember is that when you follow a gluten-free diet, it can be difficult to meet your fibre needs. This can be unhelpful for your gut health and this can make your endometriosis symptoms worse. Therefore, it's important to work with a dietitian to ensure you're meeting your fibre and nutrient requirements if you are considering following a gluten-free diet.

Low FODMAP Diet for Endometriosis

Women with endometriosis are three times more likely to have irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) compared to women without endometriosis (Nabi et al, 2022).

IBS is a condition that affects the digestive system. It can involve a range of gut-related symptoms, including abdominal pain and discomfort, bloating, constipation and diarrhoea. These symptoms usually occur after eating, and during what is frequently known as a “flare up”. There is no simple test for IBS, and it’s important to rule out any other possible conditions (such as coeliac disease, lactose intolerance, and inflammatory bowel diseases) to make a firm diagnosis.

Some types of carbohydrates, which are poorly absorbed in the small intestine, can contribute to IBS-type symptoms. These carbohydrates are called FODMAPs, which are Fermentable, Oligo-saccharides, Di-saccharides, Mono-saccharides And Polyols.

A low FODMAP diet can be used to reduce symptoms of IBS and it involves eliminating certain carbohydrates for several weeks. A recent study found that 72% of women with endo and IBS reported a 50% improvement in gut symptoms after just 4 weeks of starting the low FODMAP diet, (Moore et al, 2017).

If you have been diagnosed with IBS it’s important to work with a FODMAP trained dietitian so that you can get the right support and guidance to make the most appropriate changes for you.

Dairy Free Diet For Endometriosis

Similar to IBS, some women with endo are also at risk of lactose intolerance. Lactose intolerance is a common digestive condition where the body is unable to digest lactose, a type of sugar mainly found in milk and dairy products.

Symptoms usually develop within a few hours of consuming food or drink that contains lactose. They may include: bloating, stomach pain, gas, diarrhoea and nausea.

It's important to see your GP for a diagnosis before removing milk and dairy products from your diet. If you are diagnosed with lactose intolerance many people can tolerate small amounts of hard cheese and yoghurt. However, it's important to work with your dietitian so that you can find alternative sources of calcium in your diet.

Soy Free Diet for Endometriosis

Soy foods such as soy milk, tofu, tempeh, and edamame beans are rich in phytoestrogens, called isoflavones. These are plant compounds which mimic oestrogen in the body.

As endometriosis is an oestrogen-dependent condition many women are concerned that consuming soy foods will worsen their endo symptoms. However, isoflavones have been found to have an anti-oestrogen effect when oestrogen levels are high in the body. It causes a protective effect where the isoflavones bind to the receptors that oestrogen would usually bind to, thereby blocking oestrogen's effects.

In countries that consume soy in large amounts, such as Japan, they have found that women who ate more soy foods had a lower risk of their endometriosis progressing, ([Tsuchiya et al, 2007](#)).

Therefore, soy foods are safe to eat and are naturally rich in protein, iron, zinc and calcium as well as being low in saturated fat.

ENDO-FRIENDLY RECIPES





Overnight Oats with Berries & Walnuts

2 servings

8 hours

Ingredients

81 grams Oats (rolled)
24 grams Chia Seeds
300 milliliters Cow's Milk, Reduced Fat
111 grams Blueberries
108 grams Strawberries (quartered)
40 grams Walnuts (roughly chopped)

Directions

- 1 In a large bowl or container combine the oats, chia seeds, and milk. Stir to combine. Place in the fridge for eight hours, or overnight.
- 2 Divide the oats evenly between bowls or containers and top with blueberries, strawberries, and chopped walnuts. Enjoy!



Ricotta & Zucchini Frittata

4 servings

45 minutes

Ingredients

6 Egg
3 grams Garlic Powder
Sea Salt & Black Pepper (to taste)
1 Zucchini (large, sliced)
80 grams Red Onion (sliced)
248 grams Ricotta Cheese
30 grams Parsley

Directions

- 1 Preheat the oven to 400°F (205°C). Grease a round baking dish.
- 2 In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Add the zucchini and red onion. Stir well.
- 3 Pour the egg mixture into the baking dish and spoon the ricotta on top.
- 4 Bake in the oven for 35 to 40 minutes or until the egg has set and zucchini is cooked through.
- 5 Top the frittata with parsley and enjoy!

Notes

Leftovers: Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to three days.

Serving Size: A 9-inch (23 cm) round baking dish was used to make four servings. One serving is roughly 1/4 of the frittata.

More Flavor: Add parmesan cheese.



Za'atar Chicken, Chickpeas, Tzatziki & Rice

2 servings

30 minutes

Ingredients

100 grams Basmati Rice (dry, rinsed)
7 milliliters Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1/2 Lemon (juiced)
10 grams Za'atar Spice
1 Garlic (clove, minced)
Sea Salt & Black Pepper (to taste)
283 grams Chicken Breast (boneless, skinless, sliced)
82 grams Chickpeas (cooked)
56 grams Tzatziki
2 grams Cilantro

Directions

- 1 Cook the rice according to the package directions.
- 2 Preheat the oven to 400°F (205°C) and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a bowl, whisk together the oil, lemon juice, za'atar, garlic, salt, and pepper. Add the chicken and chickpeas and toss to combine.
- 3 Transfer the mixture onto the prepared baking sheet. Bake in the oven for 15 to 17 minutes or until everything has cooked through.
- 4 Divide the rice, chicken, and tzatziki between plates. Top with cilantro and enjoy!

Notes

Leftovers: Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to three days.

Serving Size: One serving is equal to approximately 1/2 cup rice, one cup chicken and chickpeas, and two tablespoons tzatziki.

More Flavor: Add red onion and bell pepper to the chicken mixture.



Roasted Sweet Potato & Kale Salad with Salmon

2 servings

35 minutes

Ingredients

1 Sweet Potato (medium, cut into fries)
1 Red Bell Pepper (medium, sliced)
44 milliliters Extra Virgin Olive Oil
(divided)
Sea Salt & Black Pepper (to taste)
283 grams Salmon Fillet
750 milligrams Turmeric
15 milliliters Lemon Juice
42 grams Kale Leaves (chopped)
16 grams Pumpkin Seeds

Directions

- 1 Preheat the oven to 400°F (205°C) and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- 2 Place the sweet potato and bell pepper onto the baking sheet. Drizzle with 1/3 of the oil and season with salt and pepper. Bake for 15 minutes.
- 3 Remove from the oven and add the salmon to the sheet. Season the salmon with turmeric and salt to taste. Return the baking sheet to the oven and continue to bake for 12 to 15 minutes or until the salmon is cooked through and the vegetables are tender.
- 4 Meanwhile, in a small bowl, whisk together the remaining oil, lemon juice, salt, and pepper.
- 5 In a large bowl, add the kale. Add a splash of the dressing and massage with your hands to soften the kale.
- 6 Divide the kale, salmon, and vegetables evenly between plates. Top with pumpkin seeds and serve with the dressing. Enjoy!



Strawberry Yogurt Chia Pudding

2 servings

35 minutes

Ingredients

226 grams Plain Greek Yogurt
64 grams Chia Seeds
120 milliliters Cow's Milk, Reduced Fat
221 grams Frozen Strawberries
48 grams All Natural Peanut Butter
13 grams Hemp Seeds

Directions

- 1 Add the yogurt, chia seeds, milk, and strawberries to a medium-sized bowl. Stir well to combine.
- 2 Place in the fridge for 25 to 30 minutes or until thickened.
- 3 When ready to serve, stir in the peanut butter and garnish with the hemp seeds. Enjoy!

Notes

Leftovers: Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to three days.

Serving Size: One serving equals about one cup.

More Flavor: Add a pinch of cinnamon or vanilla.

Likes it Sweeter: Add a drizzle of honey or maple syrup.

Dairy-Free: Use plant-based yogurt instead of Greek yogurt.

What next?

I hope you've enjoyed this guide!

If you're looking for more personalised support, I'd love to support you on your journey!

Please feel free to connect with me so that I can help create an individual plan for you.

You can click on the link [here](#) to organise your free 20-minute Discovery Call, or you can also email me here:
laura@nurture-for-life.com

DISCLAIMER

This guide is not intended to diagnose, treat or cure any medical condition. The opinions and advice expressed on my website and in this book are general only and are based on available research, in addition to my own thoughts, knowledge and experiences. Please consult a registered dietitian if you'd like personalised advice.