

## **Go to a health care provider, not Alice!** <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

I have a nagging pain in my left ovary and it is always there irrespective of what time of the month it is. Could it be endometriosis? I had unprotected sex with my boyfriend (who is now my husband) for two years when I was 15 and 16 and I only fell pregnant once and it ended up as a miscarriage ten days after my period was due. A lot of doctors thought it may be PID but I had cervical swabs taken and it all came back negative, but I took the antibiotics anyway. I was also on the pill but it made me feel sick so I stopped. My husband and I are now trying to conceive but that nagging pain won't go away. I have also noticed that the last two periods were very painful. I have had the pain for three years!! HELP ME PLEASE!!

### **Answer**

Dear Reader,

Pain is your body's way of indicating that there's something amiss, so it's good that you're listening to these signals. It sounds like you have sought medical help in the past, and it can be frustrating and worrisome if you're still in pain. To find some answers and get to the root cause of what's causing your continuous discomfort, seeking out another medical opinion may be your best bet. Doing so can help you get a proper diagnosis, appropriate treatment, and plan for a healthy pregnancy.

There are several possible explanations for the symptoms you described including ovarian cysts <sup>[2]</sup>, endometriosis, and pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). It's also possible that the pain is the result of another health condition unrelated to your reproductive system. Only a medical professional can determine the exact cause of your pain and recommend a treatment plan. If you're wary of going back to a provider who previously diagnosed you with PID, you can ask for a referral to another health care provider to get a second opinion. If you decide to go this route, make sure to request a copy of your previous medical records to inform the new provider's assessment. It might also be worthwhile to visit a specific provider, clinic, or health center that specializes in women's reproductive health, if you haven't already.

No matter who you see moving forward, a little prep work may be in order. Prior to your next appointment, try to jot down the details of what is bothering you and what you've dealt with in the past, including any previous diagnoses, tests, and treatments you've undergone. You might even keep notes on the days, times, and descriptions of what you're feeling and when so that you can better recall details of your experience. It's also a good idea to write down

what questions you'd like to have answered by the provider. These might involve inquiries into the causes of your discomfort and how, or if, it could affect your ability to conceive. Doing all of this ahead of time will help to inform a diagnosis and help you better understand what's going on with your health. Even though it may be embarrassing to discuss personal information, remember that there's probably not very much that the provider hasn't seen or heard. Being open and honest about how you're feeling is really to your benefit. Lastly, asking if your husband, another family member, or close friend to come with you to the appointment could be useful; having a second set of ears may help you catch all of the information shared by your provider.

In any case, if you're experiencing atypical pain (gynecological or otherwise), it's high time to visit a health care provider. Hope you feel better soon and all the best in planning for your new family.

Alice!

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