It is estimated that one-third of all women will experience chronic pelvic pain in their lifetime. Many of these women are told the problem is “all in their head” but recent advancements now show the pain may be due to hard to detect varicose veins in the pelvis, known as pelvic congestion syndrome.

The causes of chronic pelvic pain are varied, but are often associated with the presence of ovarian and pelvic varicose veins. Pelvic congestion syndrome is similar to varicose veins in the legs. In both cases, the valves in the veins that help return blood to the heart against gravity become weakened and don’t close properly, this allows blood to flow backwards and pool in the vein causing pressure and bulging veins. In the pelvis, varicose veins can cause pain and affect the uterus, ovaries and vulva. Up to 15 percent of women, generally between the ages of 20 and 50, have varicose veins in the pelvis, although not all experience symptoms.

The diagnosis if often missed because women lie down for a pelvic exam, relieving pressure from the ovarian veins, so that the veins no longer bulge with blood as they do while a woman is standing.

Many women with pelvic congestion syndrome spend many years trying to get an answer to why they have this chronic pelvic pain. Living with chronic pelvic pain is difficult and affects not only the woman directly, but also her interactions with her family, friends, and her general outlook on life. Since the cause of the pelvic pain is left undiagnosed, no therapy is provided even though there is therapy available.

Symptoms
The chronic pain that is associated with this disease is usually dull and aching. The pain is usually felt in the lower abdomen and lower back. The pain often increases during the following times:

- Following intercourse
- Menstrual periods
- When tired or when standing (worse at end of day)
- Pregnancy

Other symptoms may include:

- Irritable bladder
- Abnormal menstrual bleeding
- Vaginal discharge
- Varicose veins on vulva, buttocks or thigh.
PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

Pelvic Congestion Syndrome

Treatment Options

Conservative treatment
Analgesics may be prescribed to reduce the pain. Hormones such as birth control pills decrease a woman’s hormone level causing menstruation to stop may be helpful in controlling her symptoms.

Endovascular WA’s minimally invasive treatment
Endovascular WA provides effective relief from pelvic congestion syndrome using a minimally invasive procedure called Ovarian Vein Embolisation. Embolisation is a minimally invasive procedure performed by one of our skilled interventional radiologists using imaging for guidance.

In addition to being less expensive to surgery and much less invasive, embolisation offers a safe, effective, minimally invasive treatment option that restores patients to normal. The procedure is very commonly successful in blocking the abnormal blood flow. It is successfully performed in 95-100 percent of cases. A large percentage of women have improvement in their symptoms, between 85-95 percent of women are improved after the procedure. Although women are usually improved, the veins are never normal and in some cases other pelvic and leg veins are also affected which may require further treatment.

During the outpatient procedure, Endovascular WA’s interventional radiologist inserts a thin catheter, about the size of a strand of spaghetti, into the femoral vein in the groin and guides it to the affected vein using X-ray guidance. To seal the faulty, enlarged vein and relieve painful pressure, tiny coils often with a sclerosing agent (the same type of material used to treat varicose veins) are inserted to close the vein.

After treatment, patients may return to normal activities within a few days.

Benefits of Endovascular WA’s treatment

- The treatment is minimally invasive, which means patients walk in walk out.
- Very little, if no scarring
- No hospital visit or hospital fees
- No general anaesthetics’
- Fantastic success rate

Surgical options include a hysterectomy with removal of ovaries, and tying off or removing the veins.

Patient Preparation

Prior to a procedure for the treatment of pelvic congestion syndrome, patients are required to complete the following

i. Ensure you have someone to take you to and from the clinic on the day of your procedure (they can even stay with you through the whole procedure)
ii. Make sure you have returned your signed information to our Patients’ Service team at reception
iii. Have a shower on the morning of your procedure
iv. Wear comfortable loose clothing

Post Procedure Patient Care

Making an appointment

Making an appointment to see one of or physicians is easy. We have two options:

1. Phone our Claremont clinic on (08) 9284 2900 and you will speak directly to one of our friendly Patients’ Service team members who will book your appointment and answer any of your questions.
2. Patients can book online by going to our website www.endovascularwa.com.au. The booking is tentative until you receive a follow email or call from our Patient’s Service team confirming your appointment. Booking will be confirmed within one working day, if not sooner.