

## ENDO WELLNESS GUIDE

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## ENDO WELLNESS GUIDE

### I. Why I made this program

I have been thinking about making this program for years, but I am glad I waited. I needed to learn a few lessons before I put together a plan to help others. Okay, let's be real. I needed to learn a great deal, and I am still learning every day.

Let's clear something up right now; I am not a fitness expert; I am not a nutrition expert. I do know a great deal about Endo, that I cannot deny, but I would not consider myself an expert. I am not a doctor as well as I am not trained in fitness or nutrition. I am making you feel confident right now, aren't I?

So why the heck would you read this? Well, I can tell you I have learned a great deal in the past three years about fitness and the past **20 years** about Endo. My intention for this guide is to assist you to live your best life with Endo and to help you avoid some of the mistakes I made.

Ready to jump in?

Let's do it.

#### a. Introduction

Most of what you are about to read/learn comes from my personal experience as well as many nights and weekends of reading, watching videos, and learning from people who have mentored me. About 14 years ago, I was diagnosed with Endometriosis, at that time, I had no idea what that meant, but I was happy I finally had a diagnosis for how terrible I was feeling. I was an active, workaholic, not much has changed in that regard, but it's been a fight to remain strong and healthy. It's been a bumpy ride with many surgeries and ups and downs. I have learned a great deal along the way, and that is what I plan to share with you in this guide. This guide will focus on wellness, fitness & nutrition; it will not address medical treatment.

I know this disease can make some of the items in this guide seem impossible, adjust to what works best for you. **Taking care of yourself is the most important thing you can do when you have Endometriosis or any chronic illness.** Which personally has been one of my biggest struggles.

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### b. Basic information on your cycle (aka your period).

I wanted to share the actual cycle before we jump into the real guts of this guide, obviously, feel free to skip this part if you know how your menstrual cycle works.

1. Follicular Phase
  - a. First day of period and lasts until ovulation
2. Luteal Phase
  - a. Starts the day after you ovulate and goes until first day of your period
3. Menstrual Phase
  - a. First five days of the follicular phase, the uterus sheds its lining
4. Ovulation Phase
  - a. In between the follicular & luteal phases; ovary releases mature egg

### II. Training

A quick note about training: specifically, I mean strength training, aka working out with weights. Strength training is something that changed my life, body, and recovery from my latest Endo surgery. I did not have a deep understanding of this form of fitness; until recently. I've loved many forms of exercise such as Kickboxing, Boxing, Rock climbing, Hiking, Walking, Running, Spinning, Yoga, and even the Elliptical. I would do very light weights 3-5 lbs here and there. However, I was not someone who liked the gym, and I was a novice when it came to the weight lifting section.

How that changed, I was gaining weight but doing crazy cardio all the time. (I loved the cardio high, but after that, I would tend to feel sick and tired with an awful headache) What I do know about Endo, is that inflammation makes it angry, aka flare-ups, and for some of us, this includes doing crazy cardio. (Weight training does not have this effect on me, I do [LISS cardio](#) now.) I was gaining weight and working out like a fool; it did not add up. One day I ran into my neighbor, and she asked me if I was expecting. The worst thing someone with Endo can hear (since most of us struggle to have a child) and it was an eye opener, I had gained 30 lbs slowly over the past few years, and now I had endo belly and looked pregnant. I was sad, confused, and lost. I was doing the scroll on Facebook, and a fellow Endo sister had posted this video [Why Fitness Matters](#), it spoke to me. I was like "who is this guy?", looked him up and emailed him about my struggle. (I left out the endo part) He happened to be an online fitness trainer for "normal people" he says, lol. I was like that's ME!

I began to work with him, and for two years, he guided me on food and strength training. His name is [Mike Vacanti](#). I wanted to pay tribute to him here as well as you should look up his [YouTube videos](#). He taught me so much and was patient, understanding and kind as we had to deal with ups and downs of Endo. I would not

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understand how impactful training was until I faced the fact of being ill again with surgery six on deck.

Training made me strong, very strong, mentally, and physically. I enjoy the mental gains a bit more. It also helped reduce my pain and allowed me to get out of bed and sit on a toilet **one day** after my most recent surgery. (which was considered the most major compared to the other 5). At that moment, I knew this guide needed to be made. In previous surgeries, it would take me days/weeks to be able to move out of bed alone or use the restroom without help.

There is limited research on training around your cycle, but there could be some benefit to working within the hormone and insulin fluctuations. Mostly this is used to optimize strength training. This guide is meant to support you during each phase of your cycle in hopes to make training/working out more comfortable and efficient depending on that phase you are in. I cannot tell you how many days I skipped a hard workout due to pain, and there is nothing wrong with that. You have to decide the days you need rest and the days you may need to push.

### a. How to train for each week of your cycle

Okay, on to it. Training for your period is within the 4-week cycle (28 days). Now as we all know this is not a science and your period can have a mind of its own (like come on every vacation no matter what). Please adjust this as needed based on your cycle. I suggest tracking your period via an app. There is a great deal out there; it will help figure out your date ranges. For example, my period comes every 25 days vs. 28.

Week 1: (Cycle Days 3-9)

Increase intensity (**Moderate Weight**)

Week 2: (Cycle Days 10-16)

Energy at peak max efforts (**Go heavier 2.5-5 lbs**)

Week 3: (Cycle Days 17-23)

Hydration and moderate intensity (**Drop weight from last week & reps**)

Week 4: (Cycle days 24-2) Aka You period

Light workouts, de-load (lighter weight), walking, yoga, rest, meditation, foam roll, stretch.

### **b. Example program**

- a. This is an online program for starting to work in strength training. Now you may look at this and be like UM, NO. Ha. I understand, but you can adjust these moves using lower weight and use dumbbells. You do not have to use the barbell, but you should try, even if you use the bar without weight, its typically 45lbs with no load. I was terrified of the barbell. Now, I enjoy using it. You can find all these moves on YouTube to learn the correct way to do them. The form is SUPER important; you do not want to get hurt! I would suggest you start with two days a week and see how it goes. I started with three days, moved to 4 days and 5 for a bit. I am back to 3 days a week when you break it down, its only 3 hours of my week.
- b. You can also hire an in person or online trainer to assist you.
- c. If you do not feel ready to use weights, check this [article](#) out for body weight exercise.

Because of legal stuff, I have to say this:

**\*\* To reduce the risk of injury, before beginning this or any exercise program, please consult a healthcare provider for appropriate exercise prescription and safety precautions.**  
The exercise instruction and advice presented are in no way intended as a substitute for medical consultation.

### **c. Mobility & Foam rolling**

This next section is going to cover warming up, something I did not do when I first began to lift weights, a good lesson learned the hard way. Now I warm up with a foam roller as well as 10-15 minutes of mobility.

There are a variety of foam rollers out there. I use this [one](#) and this [one](#). I like the short one to roll out my legs and hips. If you are like me, Endo has caused me so much hip pain as well as leg pain. [Why this is good for you & how to use.](#)

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These are some moves I do for a warm up before all workouts, or this is all I do on high pain days:

[Roll out](#) all body parts- Five min

20 Jumping Jacks (if you cannot jump, do step outs)

20 [Glute Bridges](#)

10 [Hamstring Stretches](#) (each leg)

10 [Cat/ Cow](#)

10 [Hip Flexor Stretch](#) (each leg)

10 [Standing Twists](#) (each side) You can do this w/o PVC pipe.

10 [Bodyweight squats](#)

After I work out, I stretch a bit too, just what feels right and if I have time, I roll out again! Extreme? Maybe but feels good. There are days if I felt sick; this is all I would do. Just to get moving. I ALWAYS feel better after, ALWAYS. Just MOVE.

### d. Stress Reduction

Easier said than done, I know. Stress Reduction is a weakness for me, personally. I thrive on stress and being in chaos. There is good stress & bad stress, and guess what it all causes inflammation and what does inflammation do, causes flare-ups UGH! I know, I know. So, this is KEY to work on. Some of the things I do:

- Meditate, I use the [headspace app](#), love it, the pain meditation they offer taught me some key ways to think about pain. There are many apps out there; this is the one I enjoyed the most.
- Breath, just breath. Stop right now, take three deep breaths..do it. Feel the difference? Start doing this but do ten a few times throughout the day. Breathing calms your entire nervous system. Your shoulder feels slightly more relaxed, don't they?
- Yoga, I love slow yoga. Breath, stretch, and relax. There free online videos all over the web or take an in-person class.
- Acupuncture, 45 minutes alone with needles in your body freak you out? Yeah, it used to freak me out too now I am very relaxed I don't feel my body and float home after. It also helps get your [Qi \(Chi\)](#) back on track, which can help with Endo and inflammation.
- Hang out with people! Loved ones, friends, family, your dog, cat, bird. I know it can be easy to isolate yourself when you feel sick and down. Reach out have fun and laugh. Call/ text someone you miss and tell them you miss them.

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- Help someone else, volunteer, pay it forward.
- Be vulnerable, be honest; you don't have to be a hero all the time. Let it out; this disease is no cake walk; find people you can be raw with. Endo sisters, a therapist. LET IT OUT.
- Read/ Write; I personally love these two things. I began to write each night about my day and how I felt years ago. Now I have a record, and I feel better each night.
- Gratitude, this is something I work on daily. It can be tough when you deal with chronic illness. Each morning write down three things you are grateful for. Start your day right. They can be big or small. (food, water, shelter) (I can walk, read, have clean water or even something like coffee) I could go on forever here, but I won't this can be mighty if you shift your perspective to see all you have. Don't get me wrong on the bad days; I have trouble seeing through the dark.

### III. Nutrition

There are a good amount of ideas and diets out there to help with Endo, but each person is different in how they respond to diet changes. I gave up caffeine and gluten 12 years ago when I read this could make me feel worse. A few years later, I learned I was allergic to dairy (many people with Endo are, not sure why). I do feel better omitting these items from my diet. I do not cheat; it's not worth it. I will feel terrible if I do — bloated, foggy, sick to my stomach. I tried paleo for about eight months straight, I felt great, but it was tough to maintain, as I do not eat red meat. I try to buy organic poultry, veggies, and fruits. My advice is to remove potential food allergens and log a food diary to see how you feel. It all comes down to inflammation and if something causes you to flare up.

#### a. Endo Diet

<https://www.endofound.org/10-foods-endo-women-should-avoid>

#### b. Anti-inflammation Diet

<https://www.drweil.com/diet-nutrition/anti-inflammatory-diet-pyramid/what-is-dr-weils-anti-inflammatory-food-pyramid/>

#### c. Tips and Tricks

- Read all food labels, dairy, soy and gluten are hiding in many foods
- Keep a food diary
- Get blood work done to see if you have any allergies to food
- Research

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- Do your best, so what if you really wanted some cake and you ate it. It's going to be okay. Move forward.
- Looking to gain weight or lose fat, [count your macros](#).

The End.

Lots of info and I could go on and on, but I am just thankful that you are here. I hope this has brought a bit of value to you. This is just the start, but you can do this. I wanted to talk about supplements as well, but it needs more work..so more to come in that note.

If you would like to follow me, please do!

IG: [@melisbou](#) & [@endo\\_lady](#)

Facebook: [Melissa Bou](#)

Facebook Support Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/endosupportgroup/>

Podcast: <https://tinyurl.com/yy6neeev>

Web: [www.melissaboudreau.com](http://www.melissaboudreau.com)

Or reach out anytime via email.

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Thank you again for digging into this, I appreciate it. Endo is no fun, but the community is strong and supportive. You are NEVER alone in this fight. Sending love and light. <3

