What is adenomyosis?
Adenomyosis is a disorder that happens in women of childbearing age. The cause isn't known but it is very common and more common in women who have had children than in women who have not had children. The tissue that normally lines the inside of a woman's womb can grow in other places, and this is called endometriosis. When this tissue grows into the muscle wall of the uterus, this is called adenomyosis. The hormones that affect the lining of your womb also affect the lining growing outside of the womb. So each month, when you have your period, this extra lining also begins bleeding. There is nowhere for this blood to go, and this causes cysts and scar tissue to form in the affected areas.

What are the symptoms of adenomyosis?
- Common symptoms of adenomyosis include:
  - Cramps during your period that are worse than normal
  - Dull constant or intermittent pain in your lower abdomen and back
  - Pain during sex
  - Heavier periods that last longer than usual
  - Passing blood clots with periods

What tests are needed?
Your doctor will examine you. This is called a pelvic exam. Typically a uterus affected by adenomyosis is enlarged and tender on examination. Your doctor might refer you to a specialist for an ultrasound or MRI scan. These tests show images of what's inside you and can reliably diagnose adenomyosis.

What treatment is needed?
There are many treatments for adenomyosis and your doctor will help you choose what's best for you. Treatment depends on how bad your symptoms are, how old you are, and if you want to have children.

Your doctor may prescribe pills, for example non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen. They are often given to ease the pain. The birth control pill can help relieve the symptoms of adenomyosis.

Recently the Mirena IUD has also been shown to improve symptoms from adenomyosis. The progesterone hormone the IUD continually releases shrinks the tissue lining the uterus and through this mechanism decreases symptoms from adenomyosis.

You can have surgery to remove your womb, but this is only done if you decide you don't want to have children any more. This is called a partial hysterectomy and does not affect your hormones. At Cleveland Clinic Florida 98% of these procedures are performed laparoscopically or as a belly button surgery, which results in significantly less pain and recovery time than with a traditional partial hysterectomy. This procedure is called a laparoscopic supracervical hysterectomy and typically provides excellent relief and will eliminate periods entirely and there is no risk symptoms from adenomyosis will recur.

This information is for educational purposes only and should not be relied upon as medical advice. It has not been designed to replace a physician's independent judgment about the appropriateness or risks of a procedure for a given patient.
How long does it take for treatment to work?
With the right treatment the symptoms of adenomyosis are relieved quickly. With medical treatment, symptoms are relieved within a few months. With surgery, relief is immediate.

What can be done to stop it from happening again?
With medical treatment, if you stop the treatment symptoms will return. With surgery such as partial hysterectomy, there is no risk of recurrence. Typically symptoms subside on their own with menopause.

Further information on endometriosis and adenomyosis can be found at:

National Women's Health Information Center
The Endometriosis Association
8585 North 76th Place
Milwaukee, WI 53223
Tel: (414) 355-2200
Website: www.4woman.gov/

Women's Reproductive Health Network
PO Box 30167
Portland, OR 97230-9067
Tel: (503) 667-7757

American Society of Reproductive Medicine
1209 Montgomery Highway
Birmingham, AL 35216-2809
Tel: (205) 978-5000
Fax: (205) 978-5005
Website: www.asrm.org/