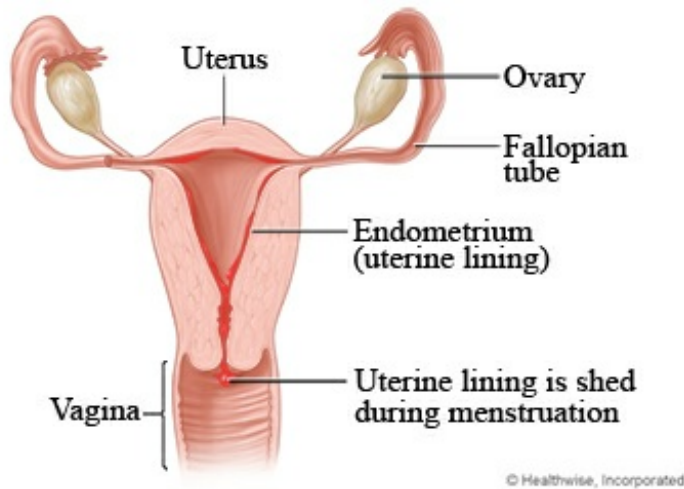


Heavy Menstrual Periods: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

Many women get heavy menstrual periods and painful cramps. For some women, this means passing large blood clots and changing sanitary pads or tampons often. You may also have periods that last longer than 7 days.

A change in hormones or an irritation in the uterus can cause heavy bleeding. Women who are overweight are more likely to have heavy menstrual periods. But there may not be a specific cause for your heavy menstrual periods.

Your doctor may recommend hormone treatments to slow or stop your periods. If a fibroid (a growth that is not cancer) is causing your heavy bleeding, your doctor may recommend surgery or other treatments to remove the growth. Because blood loss from heavy menstrual periods can make you very tired and weak (anemic), your doctor may recommend that you take extra iron.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Get plenty of rest.
- Keep a record of your periods. Write down when your period begins and ends and how much flow you have. That means counting the number of pads and tampons you use. Note whether they are soaked. Note any other symptoms. Take this record to your doctor appointments.
- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
 - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
 - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- Try to reach a healthy weight. If you are trying to lose weight, do it slowly with your doctor's advice.
- If you are taking iron pills:
 - Try to take the pills about 1 hour before or 2 hours after meals. But you may need to take iron with some food to avoid an upset stomach.
 - Vitamin C (from food or pills) helps your body absorb iron. Try taking iron pills with a glass of orange juice or other citrus fruit juice.
 - Do not take antacids or drink milk or caffeine drinks (such as coffee, tea, or cola) at the same time or within 2 hours of the time that you take your iron. They can make it hard for your body to absorb the iron.
 - Iron pills may cause stomach problems, such as heartburn, nausea, diarrhea, constipation, and cramps. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids, and include fruits, vegetables, and fiber in your diet each day.
 - If you forget to take an iron pill, do not take a double dose of iron the next time you take a pill.
 - **Keep iron pills out of the reach of small children.** An overdose of iron can be very dangerous.

When should you call for help?

Call anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness).

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new or worse belly or pelvic pain.
- You have severe vaginal bleeding.

- You feel dizzy or lightheaded, or you feel like you may faint.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You think you may be pregnant.
- Your bleeding gets worse.
- You do not get better as expected.

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