

About Heavy Menstrual Bleeding (Menorrhagia)



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During a normal menstrual period, most women lose about 2 ounces of blood, or less. If there is a lot more blood loss than this, it is called menorrhagia. There can be many reasons this can happen. Some of them are:

- Being older - women who are going through menopause (change of life when periods stop) may have heavy bleeding at times.
- Having more than 5 pregnancies.
- Having fibroids, (growths that are not cancer) in the uterus (womb).
- Having polyps (growths that are not cancer) in the uterus (womb).
- Endometriosis which is when pieces of the lining of the uterus grow outside the uterus, in other places in the abdomen (belly).
- Adenomyosis which is when pieces of the lining of the uterus grow into the muscle of the uterus (womb).
- Cancer of the uterus (womb), or infections in the vagina or ovaries.
- Blood disease in which the blood does not clot as it should.



What problems may menorrhagia cause me to have?

- Anemia. If the anemia gets bad and is not treated, you can have heart problems. Your health care provider may want you to take iron pills to help your red blood cells carry oxygen through your body better.
- Pain. You may have a lot of pain, or it may not be bad, or you may not have any.

How will my menorrhagia be treated?

Your health care provider may:

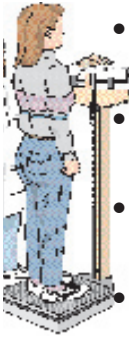
- Have you take birth control pills (Oral Contraceptive Pills). The 'pill' is used to keep a woman from getting pregnant, but it is also used to keep a woman's menstrual cycle regular and to keep her from having heavy bleeding. It is also used to ease cramping and pain during the menstrual cycle.
- Put a special IUD (Intrauterine Device) into your uterus (womb). This IUD has a hormone called progestin in it. The hormone helps to lessen heavy bleeding.
- Have you take a hormone such as Provera, which does not have estrogen in it. This medicine helps lessen heavy bleeding.
- Give you a hormone injection, such as Depo-Provera. Many women who use Depo-Provera stop having menstrual periods after a year. This medicine helps lessen heavy bleeding, cramping, or both. If you want to have children, remember that it may take



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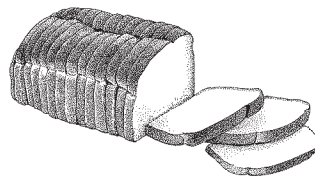
10 - 22 months after stopping the medicine, to get pregnant. Some women gain weight when using this medicine. If you use Depo-Provera, you should also take a calcium supplement to keep your bones strong.

What other things can I do to lessen heavy bleeding?



- Keep a Menstrual Diary for 2 - 3 months. Write down when you are having your menstrual cycle, and how much pain and bleeding you have each day during the cycle.
- Get to and stay at a healthy weight for you. Fat cells in your body make estrogen. Too much estrogen makes your bleeding worse.
- Some tests, such as ultrasound and sonohysterography can be done to look at your female organs. These tests do not hurt, and do not put you at any risk.
- Your health care provider may want to do an endometrial biopsy, in which a small piece of the lining of your uterus (womb) is taken out to be checked in the lab for cancer. It will be taken out through a thin tube which is put into your uterus.
- When you have heavy menstrual bleeding, it is very important for you to keep from having anemia. Anemia can make you feel very tired. You should eat foods that have a lot of iron in them, and your health care provider may also want you to take an iron supplement. Here is a list of foods that have iron:

- Clams and oysters
- Organ meats such as liver
- Beef, pork, and sardines.
- Egg yolks
- Beans and peas
- Cereal with added iron
- Bread and pasta with added iron
- Dried fruits, nuts, and seeds
- Molasses
- Wheat bran



Eating foods which are high in Vitamin C (such as oranges, orange juice, and grapefruits) can help your body take in more of the iron from the foods listed above.

If none of these ways to lessen heavy bleeding work for you, you may need to have surgery to take out your uterus. This surgery is called a hysterectomy.



Call your clinic or go to the Emergency Room if you:

- Have trouble breathing.
- Bleed even more heavily than usual.
- Feel dizzy.
- Feel weak or faint.

