

ALL ABOUT YOUR PERIOD

Heavy Bleeding

Your monthly menstrual cycle, or period, should be a healthy and regular part of your life. For some people, it's more difficult. They may bleed heavily, or for longer than average, have painful cramping, or have more than one period per month.

Do you have one or more of these symptoms? Talk with your health care provider. They can listen to your concerns and find treatments to help you feel better.

What is heavy menstrual bleeding?

Heavy menstrual bleeding is a common condition. It's called menorrhagia – *pronounced men-or-AGE-ee-uh*

This condition is common. Symptoms can include:

- Heavy blood flow, often lasting for several hours. A new tampon or pad may be needed every one to two hours.
- Heavy bleeding that can interfere with day-to-day life.
- Having more than one period a month, or
- Periods lasting eight days or more.

What causes heavy bleeding?

Many conditions can cause heavy bleeding, including problems with:

- Hormones, which are chemicals in your body. They tell your cells what to do.
- The uterus, or “womb.” This is where a baby develops. The lining of your uterus is shed each month during your period.

There may be other reasons why you have heavy bleeding. You and your health care provider can talk about your symptoms and possible treatments.

As part of a physical exam, the health care provider may also use blood tests, urine tests, and ultrasounds. These tests will help find the cause of heavy bleeding and may help to find treatments that will work. An ultrasound is a test that sends out sound waves. It creates pictures of your body's structures, such as your organs. It is not an X-ray; there is no radiation involved.

How can heavy bleeding affect me?

Heavy bleeding can cause low iron in your blood. This condition is called iron deficiency anemia. It can make you feel weak and tired. If you have these symptoms, it's important to get checked out by a health care provider. If your iron is too low, your provider may order a prescription iron vitamin for you. Vitamins are also called supplements.

How do I prepare to talk to my health care provider about my heavy bleeding?

Keep track of your symptoms to help your health care provider find out why you have heavy bleeding. You can track your periods and symptoms using paper and pen or a calendar. Track these facts:

- When your period is heavy, how often do you have to change your pad or tampon?
- How many days does your period last?
- Does it ever feel like your period is flooding or gushing?
- Does your period or its symptoms interfere with your day-to-day life?

How is heavy bleeding treated?

Depending on the cause, treatment can include medicine, such as ibuprofen. This is also called Advil® or Motrin®. Naproxen may also be considered. It's called Aleve®, Anaprox®. Treatment may also include birth control pills or other hormone therapies, and iron vitamins.

If bleeding is severe, and treatments aren't helping, your health care provider will talk to you about more options. Your health care provider will work with you to create the best treatment plan for you.

Need to find a health care provider?

Ask for help from a trusted adult, parent, guardian, or school nurse. If you or your family need health insurance, call New York State of Health at 1-855-355-5777.

This handout is part of the “All About Your Period” series on menstrual health. For more information and helpful resources, visit: <https://health.ny.gov/TeenHealth>.