



Heavy periods

A heavy period (heavy menstrual bleeding) is when you lose lots of blood each period. About one in four women have heavy periods.

How do you know if you have heavy periods?

It can be hard to tell if you have heavy periods, but there are some common signs. For example:

- you need to change your period product (e.g. pad, tampon, menstrual cup) every two hours or less
- you need to change your period product overnight
- you notice blood clots that are bigger than a 50-cent coin
- your period lasts more than eight days
- your periods stop you from doing things you normally do.

Symptoms of heavy periods

If you have heavy periods, you might:

- have cramps or pain in your lower belly (abdomen)
- look pale or feel tired or dizzy due to low iron levels.

What causes heavy periods?

Heavy periods may be due to hormonal changes that make your uterus lining grow more than usual. This lining sheds to create a period. But there may be other causes, for example, endometriosis, polyps, fibroids or adenomyosis.

How are heavy periods diagnosed?

It's important to see your doctor if you are worried about heavy periods and symptoms are affecting your daily life. Your doctor will ask about your medical history and may ask to do an internal examination to check your uterus and ovaries.

They might also do tests or investigations to find out what's causing the problem. For example, a pregnancy, iron or blood test, or an ultrasound.

Treatment options

If you are diagnosed with heavy periods, your doctor will discuss different treatment options. For example:

- certain medicines (e.g. anti-inflammatory drugs or tranexamic acid)
- hormonal treatments (e.g. a Mirena® intrauterine device (IUD) or the Pill)
- progestins (synthetic forms of the progesterone hormone).

Depending on the cause of your bleeding, you might need to have a surgical procedure. For example:

- a hysteroscopy – a day procedure to assess the inside of your uterus
- an endometrial ablation – a day procedure to remove the lining of the uterus.

In some cases, when medical or other surgical procedures haven't helped to manage bleeding, you may need to have a hysterectomy (an irreversible operation to remove the uterus and often the fallopian tubes).

It's important to discuss the risks and benefits of each procedure with your specialist before you decide.

When to see your doctor

If you think you have heavy periods and symptoms are affecting your daily life, see your doctor.

For more information, resources and references, visit jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/periods/heavy-periods-menorrhagia