

Heavy menstrual bleeding

Around one in four women have heavy menstrual bleeding (heavy periods). A heavy period is when you lose lots of blood each period. The amount of bleeding can change at different life stages, for example, in teenage years or before menopause (your last period). Heavy periods are common in women aged 30 to 50.

How do you know if you have heavy periods?

It can be hard to know if your period is too heavy, but there are some common signs. For example:

- your bleeding can't be contained with a pad or tampon
- you need to change your pad or tampon every two hours or less
- you need to change your pad overnight
- you notice blood clots that are bigger than a 50-cent coin
- your period lasts more than seven to eight days
- your period stops you from doing things you normally do.

Common symptoms of heavy periods

If you have heavy periods, you might:

- feel tired or dizzy
- have low iron levels due to blood loss
- look pale
- have cramps or pain in the lower abdomen.

What causes heavy periods?

Heavy periods can be caused by different things. They are commonly caused by hormonal changes that make your uterus lining grow more than usual. This lining sheds to create a period.



When to see your doctor

You should see your doctor if you are worried about heavy periods. They will ask questions to find the cause. For example, they might ask about your general health, medical history, sexual activity and plans to get pregnant.

If you agree, your doctor will also do an internal examination to check your uterus and ovaries.

Tests

Your doctor might ask you to have some tests done. For example, a pregnancy test, an iron test or a blood test.

They might also do an ultrasound to check your pelvic organs. An ultrasound shows the inside of your body. It can be done on your abdomen or inside your vagina.

Treatment options

If you are diagnosed with heavy menstrual bleeding, your doctor will tell you the possible causes and different treatment options available. For example, they might give you medicine to help with your symptoms.

Depending on the cause, your doctor may refer you to a specialist to talk about other treatment options. For example, an operation.

Ask your doctor about the risks and benefits of these options.

For more information, visit jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/periods/heavy-bleeding

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This fact sheet is designed to be informative and educational. It is not intended to provide specific medical advice or replace advice from your medical practitioner.

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Jean Hailes for Women's Health takes a broad and inclusive approach to the topic of women's health. This fact sheet generally uses the terms 'women' and 'girls'. These terms are intended to include women with diverse sexualities, intersex women and women with a transgender experience.



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