



Heavy Menstrual Periods

Is my period too heavy?

Your healthcare provider may have asked you, “how heavy are your periods?” or “are your periods heavy?” You may be wondering how to answer this question.

You may be bleeding too much if:

- You bleed for longer than 7 days
- You have to change your pad or tampon every 1-2 hours
- You frequently pass large clots of blood
- You have soaked through your clothes or pajamas at night

Your healthcare provider can give you a special worksheet to track how much you are bleeding and determine if it is too much. There are also several apps for your smartphone for tracking your periods.

What happens if my period is too heavy

Heavy periods can lead to iron deficiency and anemia. Anemia means that you don't have enough red blood cells in your body. Red blood cells contain hemoglobin which carries oxygen to all of your organs. People who are anemic may be more tired, have less energy for exercise, have difficulty focusing in school, sleep less well, or have more serious health complications like chest pain, difficulty breathing, or headaches.

Very heavy periods can be difficult for teenagers to deal with if you have to change your pad or tampon in between every class at school, during sports, or if you are often worried about having an accident in your clothes.

Why are my periods heavy?

There are several reasons periods can be heavy. Some teenagers have naturally heavier flow than others. Some teenagers have irregular menstrual cycles because the hormone messages from the brain are not communicating perfectly with the ovaries. This may lead to irregular or abnormal bleeding patterns and heavy flow. Some teenagers have a bleeding disorder that causes them to bleed more than other people when they have their period, get a cut, have surgery, or have a bloody nose. Some other causes of heavy periods are uterine fibroids or polyps, but these are very rare in teenagers.

What will my health care provider do if my period is too heavy?

Depending on your symptoms, your provider may order one or more of these tests:

- “Blood count” and iron tests
- Hormone levels such as thyroid tests
- Testing for a bleeding disorder (the most common one is called von Willebrand Disease)
- If you are sexually active: a pregnancy test and testing for sexually transmitted infections
- A pelvic ultrasound may be done to look at your uterus, the uterine lining, and ovaries

Do I need to take medication?

This is something you will discuss with your healthcare provider in detail. There are several medications that can help decrease your menstrual bleeding or sometimes stop bleeding completely. If you are iron-deficient or anemic as the result of your heavy periods, you will need treatment to correct the anemia.

The most commonly prescribed treatment, and most effective, is hormonal therapy using progesterone alone or progesterone plus estrogen. This can be given as oral contraceptive pills, skin patch, vaginal ring, shots, an intrauterine device (IUD) or under-the-skin implant (Nexplanon).

A non-hormonal option, tranexamic acid (Lysteda) can be given for 5 days during each menstrual period and may decrease the amount of bleeding.

For teenagers who are iron deficient or anemic, iron supplementation is prescribed as well. Your healthcare provider will determine the correct dose of iron for you. Eating a diet rich in iron can also help. Some examples of iron rich foods:

Plant based (Non-Meat)	Animal or meat based:
Oatmeal	Chicken liver
Iron fortified cereal	Beef
Beans or Lentils	Turkey leg
Dark leafy green vegetables	Tuna
Peanut Butter	Eggs
Dried Fruit	

What happens next?

Once a treatment plan is made, it is very important to take your medication exactly as prescribed and come back to see your healthcare provider regularly.

If you feel your periods are too heavy, last too long, or you are feeling symptoms of anemia (tired, weak, or dizzy), be sure to reach out to your healthcare provider to discuss your concerns.

Resources:

There are many free apps for your smart phone that will help you track your periods. Some options are:

- Sisterhood (Hemophilia Federation of America)
- Clue Period & Cycle Tracker (pictured below)

