



# Help for WOMEN

Do you put your life on hold every month as you endure heavy and/or irregular menstrual bleeding patterns? Since this is an issue many women don't often bring up during doctor appointments, they are unaware of what is "normal" and what is excessive, or that there may be treatment options to help resolve or lessen these problems.

The medical term for menstruation that has excessive flow and duration is menorrhagia. According to Dr. Mohammed Ahmed of Baystate Medical Practices—Mary Lane Ob/Gyn, the important thing is for women to understand that they don't necessarily have to endure this regular disruption of their daily lives.

## Q. HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE MENORRHAGIA?

In general, menorrhagia is associated with heavy bleeding, large clots, and irregular and unpredictable bleeding patterns. There's a medical standard—losing more than 80 mL (about 5½ tablespoons) of blood in each menstrual cycle—but most doctors now diagnose menorrhagia by how much it affects your daily life, so it's important to talk with your gynecologist about your individual experience. Approximately 10 to 20% of women are diagnosed with menorrhagia. If you are experiencing quality of life issues due to menstrual irregularities, talk to your gynecologist; it may be time to have tests run to determine possible next steps.

## Q. WHAT TESTS ARE USED TO HELP IDENTIFY THE POSSIBLE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS CONDITION?

It's first necessary to perform a complete work-up, which often includes an ultrasound, biopsy, blood test, and check for anemia. Once this work-up is complete, and there is no evidence of cancerous or pre-cancerous causes, you and your gynecologist can discuss the appropriate way to move forward.

## Q. WHAT TREATMENT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

Depending upon the severity of your symptoms, you and your doctor may agree to simply monitor the problem for any changes. Medication options include hormonal therapy, usually using either oral contraceptives or an intrauterine device (IUD). Ablation, a procedure during which the lining of the uterus is inactivated, may also be an option and can now be performed using minimally invasive techniques right in the doctor's office. Surgical treatments may include fibroid removal or hysterectomy, which can also be performed using minimally invasive surgical techniques in many cases.

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Dr. Ahmed is the medical director of BMP - Baystate Mary Lane Ob/Gyn, with offices in Ware and Belchertown. For a free referral to a gynecologist on staff at a Baystate Health hospital, call 1-800-377-4325.

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Dr. Mohammed Ahmed