



The Center for Women

Obstetrics & Gynecology

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Menorrhagia

Dysfunctional uterine bleeding is irregular vaginal bleeding. Having a period more often than every 21 days or farther apart than 35 days. Your period may last longer than 7 days. It is not serious, but it can be annoying and disrupt your life.

In most cases, this problem is related to changes in hormone levels. It is **not** caused by other medical conditions, such as miscarriage, fibroids, cancer, or blood clotting problems. Your doctor will rule out these and other causes of vaginal bleeding to confirm that you have dysfunctional uterine bleeding.

What causes dysfunctional uterine bleeding?

Dysfunctional uterine bleeding is usually caused by changes in hormone levels. In some cases the cause of the bleeding isn't known.

Normally one of your ovaries releases an egg during your menstrual cycle. This is called ovulation. Dysfunctional uterine bleeding is often triggered when women don't ovulate. This causes changes in hormone levels and in some cases can lead to unexpected vaginal bleeding.

Women can also get this condition even though they ovulate, although this is less common.

What are the symptoms?

You may have dysfunctional uterine bleeding if you have one or more of the following symptoms:

- Periods more often than every 21 days or farther apart than 35 days. A normal adult menstrual cycle is 21 to 35 days long. A normal teen cycle is 21 to 45 days.
- Periods lasting longer than 7 days (normally they are 4-6 days)
- Bleeding is heavier than normal which consist of passing blood clots, soaking through the normal use of pads or tampons each hour for 2 or more hours. Clots and soaking through this amount is considered severe.

Talk to your doctor if you have had irregular vaginal bleeding for three or more menstrual cycles, or if your symptoms are affecting your daily life.

How is dysfunctional uterine bleeding diagnosed?

Your doctor must first rule out all other causes of vaginal bleeding before diagnosing dysfunctional uterine bleeding. These causes include miscarriage and problems with pregnancy. Vaginal bleeding may also be caused by common conditions, such as uterine fibroids.

Your doctor will ask how often, how long, and how much you have been bleeding. You may also have a pelvic exam, urine test, blood tests, and possibly an ultrasound. These tests will help your doctor check for other causes of your symptoms. He or she may also take a tiny sample (biopsy) of tissue from your uterus for testing.

You have dysfunctional uterine bleeding if, after testing, your doctor finds no other diseases or conditions that are causing your symptoms.

How is it treated?

There are many things you can do to treat dysfunctional vaginal bleeding. Some are meant to return the menstrual cycle to normal. Others are used to reduce bleeding or to stop monthly periods. Each treatment works for some women but not others. Treatments include:

- Hormone supplements
- Short course of high-dose estrogen
- IUD placement that contains levonorgestrel
- Endometrial ablation procedure
- Hysterectomy as last resort.

Ibuprofen can be taken for the pain associated with heavy bleeding.

Your doctor you treat each patient individually on the decision of treatment because of the age factor and other issues of life styles that affect each person.