

# Solutions for Heavy Periods

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***Dr. Christina Kramer***, obstetrician and gynecologist practicing at Riverwood Healthcare Center in Aitkin and Cuyuna Regional Medical Center in Crosby, offers an overview of the testing and treatment that can help women who are experiencing heavy bleeding during menstrual periods.

## TESTS TO EVALUATE CAUSES OF HEAVY MENSTRUAL BLEEDING

- It's very common and normal for young girls, 20 years old or younger, who are just beginning their menstrual cycles to have irregular periods, sometimes with heavy bleeding during the first few years of menstruation until a more regular pattern is established.
- We inquire about a patient's menstrual bleeding pattern, any changes taking place in the monthly cycle, and examine other symptoms and activities too, such as fatigue, weight loss/gain, medications, sexual activity and any diet changes.
- A pregnancy test is given a patient to ensure there is not a pregnancy-miscarriage in progress.
- A physical exam with a pap smear is done to see if there are any structural issues in the uterus such as a fibroid or cyst, or precancerous conditions or cancer.
- An endometrial biopsy may be ordered for those over 35-40, at risk for pre-cancer of the uterus, or who have high blood pressure or obesity/weight issues.
- Hysteroscopy with D&C can be helpful in situations where the abnormal bleeding is caused by a fibroid or polyp.
- We evaluate whether any other bleeding tendencies such as difficulty with blood clotting are a factor to be considered and treated.

## CAUSES OF HEAVY MENSTRUAL BLEEDING

- Blood clotting issues
- Hormonal issues such as a thyroid problem or nearing change of life/menopause
- Uterine cancer or pre-cancerous conditions
- Uterine fibroids
- An ovarian cyst
- Medications such as Coumadin, a blood thinner
- Chemotherapy side effect (can thin blood)

## TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR HEAVY MENSTRUAL BLEEDING

A thorough workup and tests help guide treatment for heavy menstrual bleeding.

### Nonsurgical Treatment options include:

- A birth control pill or shot
- A monthly progesterone pill
- Placement of an IUD (with hormones)
- Progesterone hormones (via pill or injection)

### Surgical Treatment options include:

- Endometrial Ablation – an outpatient procedure that destroys the lining of the uterus so that periods lighten up and become more normal. This is not a form of birth control and not for someone who wants to become pregnant in the future. The recovery time is quite fast, usually just a few days before return to work.
- Hysterectomy – an inpatient procedure that removes the uterus and cervix. This can frequently be done with a minimally invasive, laparoscopic procedure using very small incisions. Other options are a vaginal hysterectomy, with the uterus being removed through the vagina, or an abdominal procedure, which is more involved and requires an abdominal incision. The recovery time/return to work for a hysterectomy is usually several weeks for a hysterectomy.

## OUR OBGYN TEAM IS HERE FOR YOU!

**Dr. Michael Cady, Dr. Rachel Cady, Dr. Christina Kramer** and **Dr. Marie Nelson**—all tailor gynecological care to a patient's wishes and special circumstances. For an appointment, call Riverwood's Specialty clinic in Aitkin at **218-927-5566**.



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