

Hormone Therapy for Period Problems

What are the options for dealing with my periods?

Many girls and teens have problems with their menstrual periods. Sometimes periods are painful, cause heavy bleeding, or are very irregular. Sometimes periods can interfere with a girl's normal activities like sports or school. ***The good news is that there are safe and effective options to manage this problem.***

Hormonal therapy is a first-line, medical option for treating painful, heavy, or irregular periods. It is also safe and effective for girls and teens. Most of these options are packaged as "birth control" but your provider is recommending them to treat your medical condition.

Here are the most important hormonal options for treating menstrual problems. Based on your specific situation, we may recommend certain one(s) today.

Norethindrone Acetate

This is an oral medicine that contains only the hormone progesterone. It makes the lining of uterus thin so there is less or no bleeding. It needs to be taken the same time each day. Depending on how the medicine is used and how a girl responds to it, periods can be stopped or scheduled every 3-4 months. It may take several months of using the medicine until bleeding is fully regulated.

Norethindrone acetate can also be used in addition to other treatment options, such as the birth control pill, when needed, to make bleeding stop.

Birth Control Pills (also known as "the pill"):

The pill contains the same hormones made by the female body: estrogen and progesterone. The hormones in the pill 1.) prevent an egg from being produced, and 2.) keep the lining of the uterus thin. These effects reduce pelvic pain, cramping, and bleeding. There are many brands of pills available, but all of them have these positive effects.

The pill also can be taken in such a way as to have fewer periods (for example, a period every 3-4 months), or so there are no scheduled periods at all. Reducing or eliminating periods is a safe option when using hormonal therapy.

The pill also has other benefits. It regulates the menstrual cycle, it improves acne, and it can help prevent the growth of unwanted hair on the face and body if that is an issue for you. The pill also prevents uterine and ovarian cancer. The pill has no effect on your future fertility (the ability to have a baby later on) and does not cause weight gain.

- The **vaginal ring** and the contraceptive **patch** contain the same medicine in birth control pills and work in the same way. The ring needs to be changed once per month. The skin patch is changed once every week.
- It may take several months of using any of these medicines every day until bleeding is fully regulated.

Depo-Provera:

This medicine contains only the hormone progestin. It works to prevent ovulation, and makes the lining of the uterus very thin. There may be bleeding during the first few weeks or months of using Depo, but, with its continued use, it is very likely that there will be no menstrual bleeding at all. This is a safe and expected benefit of Depo. For this option, you will need to come into your provider's office every 3 months for a quick and easy injection. There is also an option to give the injection at home.

Levonorgestrel IUD:

The IUD sits inside the uterus and releases a small amount of the hormone progesterone. This IUD is a very effective treatment option for women of all ages who have pelvic pain, cramps, and/or heavy bleeding. It works for 5 years, but can be removed at any time. There may be some irregular bleeding during the first 3-6 months, but then periods are lighter, shorter, or may go away altogether. The IUD is inserted during a pelvic exam. The procedure takes only a few minutes and can cause some temporary discomfort. Current IUDs are designed very differently than those of the past, so this is a safe and effective option for teens of any age.

The Sub-Dermal Implant:

The implant is a toothpick size device that goes under the skin of the upper, inner arm. It releases the hormone progesterone, which stops ovulation and makes the lining of the uterus very thin. It lasts for 3 years but can be removed at any time; it is very quick and easy to insert. Some teens will have infrequent or no bleeding with the implant, but some will have more frequent and unpredictable bleeding. The change in menstrual bleeding is expected and is not dangerous when using this option. There are ways to treat the bleeding that occurs while using the implant if needed.

Comparing medical choices to treat heavy, painful, or irregular periods:

| Treatment Choice | How to Use | What to expect after the first 3-6 months |
|---|---|--|
| Norethindrone Acetate  | Take 1 pill every day | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually no periods when taken every day • Less cramping and less pain. |
| Pill  | Take 1 pill every day | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighter and regular periods. • Less cramping and less pain. • Clearer skin. • No weight gain. • Can be used in a certain way to have a period only every 4 months, or to have no periods at all. |
| Vaginal Ring  | Change every month | |
| Skin Patch  | Change every week | |
| Depo-Provera  | Shot every 3 months | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighter or no periods after 6-9 months of use. • Less cramping and less pain. • May cause increased appetite. |
| Progestin IUD  | Doctor places inside the uterus. IUD works for 5 years. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighter or no periods. • Less cramping and less pain. • No weight gain. |
| Implant  | Doctor places under skin of arm. Implant works for 3 years. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have no periods, or irregular bleeding. • Less cramping and less pain. • No weight gain. |

What if I have questions?

Please call or email us!

- E-mail can be done by MyChart. You can get an activation code today, or go to www.childrenscolorado.org to activate your account.
- Call us at 720-777-2667. You will have the option to:
 - Speak with our Gynecology nurse or leave her a message that will be returned within 1 business day.
 - Schedule or change an appointment.

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