

Irregular and Postmenopausal Bleeding: When to Contact Your Doctor

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Irregular menstrual bleeding (irregular periods) can come in many forms. It is defined as any type of bleeding that is abnormal when compared to the last few periods. It can include heavy bleeding, spotting, light periods, or periods that start early or come late. It also includes periods that are less than 21 days or greater than 35 days apart.

WHAT CAUSES IRREGULAR MENSTRUAL BLEEDING?

There are many causes of irregular bleeding. Non-threatening causes include polyps or overgrowth of tissue within the womb. Occasionally, cancers can cause irregular bleeding. Factors like stress, diet, birth control pills, thyroid imbalance, and pregnancy can have an effect on your period.

Call your doctor if you are suffering from any of the following:

- Heavy bleeding: soaking more than 1-2 pads or tampons per hour
- Bleeding that lasts for more than 7 days
- Periods that occur more frequently than every 21 days or less frequently than once every 35 days
- Are heavy and are associated with excessive bruising or a family history of bleeding disorders
- If you are dizzy or lightheaded after bleeding for some time

POSTMENOPAUSAL BLEEDING:

Menopause is the natural ending of periods that usually occurs for women between the ages of 45 and 55. The average age for women is 51. You are considered postmenopausal once you have not had any bleeding for 12 months in a row.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR:

Any vaginal/uterine bleeding that occurs after a woman has achieved menopause should be discussed with your doctor in order to rule out cancer as a potential cause.

MEDICAL CARE AND TREATMENT OPTIONS:

If you develop postmenopausal bleeding or irregular menstrual bleeding, please call your Osteopathic Family Physician. Most causes of irregular menstrual bleeding are not life threatening and can be resolved with medication, or they may resolve on their own. However, if you have heavy bleeding or bleeding after going through menopause, it is important to be evaluated right away. In case of any emergency, you should call your doctor or 911 right away.

SOURCE(S): American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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