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# Period problems

If problems with your [periods](#) are affecting your life, you can get help and support.

Before you see your GP, it's useful to keep a diary of your symptoms during your menstrual cycle. This can give your GP a detailed idea of what happens, and when, during your cycle.

## Painful periods

Pain during periods is common. It's usually caused by the womb contracting to push out the blood.

To help relieve the pain, do some exercise or take over-the-counter painkillers. For example, ibuprofen and aspirin.

### Important

Do not take ibuprofen or aspirin if you have asthma or stomach, kidney or liver problems. Aspirin should not be taken by anyone under 16 years of age.

Paracetamol does not reduce period pain as well as ibuprofen or aspirin.

Hormonal contraception can reduce period pain.

For example the:

- [contraceptive pill](#)
- [intrauterine system \(IUS\)](#)
- [contraceptive patch](#)
- [contraceptive injection](#)

See your GP if the pain is so severe that it affects your daily life.

Read more about [period pain](#)

## Heavy periods

You may have naturally heavier periods than others. But if your periods are so heavy that they impact

your life, there is help available.

Talk to your GP about your bleeding. Tell them how often you need to change your sanitary protection - towels, tampons or menstrual cup.

Your GP can try to find the cause of your heavy bleeding. They may do a physical examination, blood tests or scans.

Treatments for heavy periods can include:

- some types of hormonal contraception, such as the intrauterine system (IUS) or the contraceptive pill
- tranexamic acid tablets
- anti-inflammatory painkillers, such as ibuprofen or mefenamic acid
- progesterone tablets
- surgery (depending on the cause)

Read more about [heavy periods](#)

## Irregular periods

A period usually lasts 2 to 7 days. The average period lasts 5 days.

The length of the menstrual cycle can vary. But the average is to have a period every 28 days. Regular cycles that are longer or shorter than this, from 21 to 40 days, are normal.

But some women have an irregular menstrual cycle.

This is where there is a big difference in:

- the time between your periods - they may arrive early or late
- the amount of blood you lose - periods may be heavy or light
- the number of days the period lasts

Irregular periods are common during puberty and just before the menopause. Changing your method of contraception can also change your normal menstrual cycle.

Read more about [irregular periods](#)

## Stopped or missed periods

There are many reasons why you may miss your period, or why periods may stop altogether.

Some common reasons are:

- pregnancy
- stress
- sudden weight loss

- being overweight
- over-exercising
- reaching the menopause

If your periods stop and you're concerned, see your GP.

Read more about [stopped or missed periods](#)

## PMS (premenstrual syndrome)

PMS may be linked to changing levels of hormones during the menstrual cycle.

You might not get PMS. If you do, the range and severity of symptoms can vary.

Symptoms may include:

- mood swings
- feeling depressed or irritable
- headaches
- tiredness
- bloating
- breast tenderness

Symptoms usually start and can increase in the 2 weeks before your period. They ease and disappear after your period starts.

## Endometriosis

Endometriosis is a condition where the endometrium (the tissue that lines the womb) grows outside the womb. For example, in the ovaries and fallopian tubes.

Endometriosis does not always cause symptoms.

But it can cause:

- painful, heavy or irregular periods
- pelvic pain
- pain during or after sex
- pain or discomfort when going to the toilet
- bleeding from your bottom
- feeling tired all the time

See your GP if you have symptoms of endometriosis, especially if they're having a big impact on your life.

Read more about [endometriosis](#)

# Ovulation pain

You may get a one-sided pain in your lower abdomen when you ovulate.

The pain can be a dull cramp or sharp and sudden. It can last a few minutes or continue for 1 to 2 days. You may notice a little vaginal bleeding when it happens.

Taking a warm bath or an over-the-counter painkiller, such as paracetamol, can ease the pain.

If you're in a lot of discomfort, see your GP about other treatment options.

Read more about [ovulation pain](#)

Read more about [periods](#)

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