

Understanding heavy menstrual bleeding

Heavy menstrual bleeding (HMB) or heavy periods can mean different things to different people. If your period is making daily life harder - for example, leaking through clothes, missing work or school, or feeling tired & low in energy - it may be time to speak to your GP. There's no strict rule on what counts as "heavy", [if it feels too heavy for you, that matters](#).

This is a common issue and can affect girls from their first periods through to later life. You're not alone, and there are treatments and support that can help.

What might heavy periods look like?

You might have heavy bleeding if you:

- Pass large blood clots (bigger than a 10p coin)
- Need to change your pad or tampon every one to two hours
- Bleed for more than seven days
- Feel tired, dizzy or out of breath (could be due to low iron or anaemia)
- Bleed through clothes or have to use double protection



What can cause it?

Heavy periods can have many causes and sometimes no causes are found (dysfunctional uterine bleeding). [Here are some common reasons](#):

Hormone changes	Like polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), thyroid issues, or irregular ovulation
Fibroids or polyps	Non-cancerous growths in the womb
Endometriosis or adenomyosis	Tissue from the womb growing outside or into the muscle wall
Bleeding disorders	Problems with blood clotting (e.g. von Willebrand disease)
Infections (like PID)	Affecting the womb or fallopian tubes
Side effects from contraception	Especially some IUDs or hormonal methods
Certain medications	Like blood thinners
Cancer (rare)	Especially in women over 50 or with unusual bleeding

What can help?

There are lots of treatments and self-care options depending on what's causing your bleeding and what's right for you.

Non-hormonal medication

- Tranexamic acid – taken during your period, helps reduce bleeding
- NSAIDs (e.g., Ibuprofen, Mefenamic Acid) – reduces pain and bleeding

Surgical options (for more severe cases)

- Surgical removal of endometriosis
- Endometrial ablation – removes the lining of the womb
- Uterine artery embolisation – blocks blood supply to fibroids
- Myomectomy – removes fibroids but keeps the womb
- Hysterectomy – removes the womb; this is usually a last resort

Hormonal options

- Hormonal IUD (e.g. Mirena, Kyleena) – reduces bleeding by releasing small amounts of hormone into the womb
- Contraceptive pills – combined or progestogen-only pills
- Injections or implants – hormone-based options to help manage periods



Support and resources

You're not alone. Many women and girls experience this — and support is out there:

- www.nhs.uk/conditions/heavy-periods
- www.menopausematters.co.uk
- www.brtispag.org
- www.wellbeingofwomen.org.uk/
- www.endometriosis-uk.org/
- www.womens-health-concern.org/

Talk to your GP if:



- Your periods have suddenly changed or become unusually heavy
- You're over 50+, experiencing heavy bleeding
- You're bleeding between periods or after sex

Everyday tips that can help

- **Track your periods** – use a diary or app to log bleeding and symptoms.
- **Eat iron-rich foods** – like lentils, spinach, beans, red meat.
- **Stay hydrated** – and consider iron supplements if needed.
- **Look after your wellbeing** – exercise, healthy eating, rest.
- **Try different period products** – menstrual cups, period underwear, or overnight pads can help manage flow.



Final message

Heavy periods are common but they don't have to be something you just live with. Whether it's medical treatment, self-care tips, or support groups, help is out there. Speak to your GP if your bleeding is affecting your life.