



# SELF-CARE for Menstrual Symptoms

A week or so before your period, you may get headaches, cramping, feel bloated or cranky, or have trouble sleeping. Cramping during your period in your lower stomach and lower back is also normal. Most symptoms are not a cause for concern, but can cause varying degrees of discomfort. Usually, menstrual bleeding lasts about 4 to 5 days and the amount of blood lost is small (2 to 3 tablespoons). Women who have heavy menstrual bleeding (menorrhagia) usually bleed for more than 7 days per period and lose twice as much blood, which can be a cause for concern. (See also Vaginal Infections and Urinary Tract Infections, <https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/healthyliving/wh/Pages/Women'sHealthPortal-SelfCare.aspx>).

This document provides basic information on prevention of menstrual symptoms and when to seek care. For 24/7 support and guidance, use the Military Health Systems (MHS) Nurse Advice Line at 1-800-TRICARE (1-800-874-2273, select option 1).

## Self-Care Measures

These self-care measures can help prevent menstrual symptoms.

- » Avoid salty foods and eating large meals if you have bloating.
- » Take over the counter medicine to treat pain or headaches.
- » Take a hot bath or use a heating pad to relax muscles and reduce cramping pain.
- » Eat healthy foods such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.
- » Get 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night.
- » Get regular exercise.
- » Find a way to unwind such as yoga or relaxation exercises.
- » Avoid tobacco products.

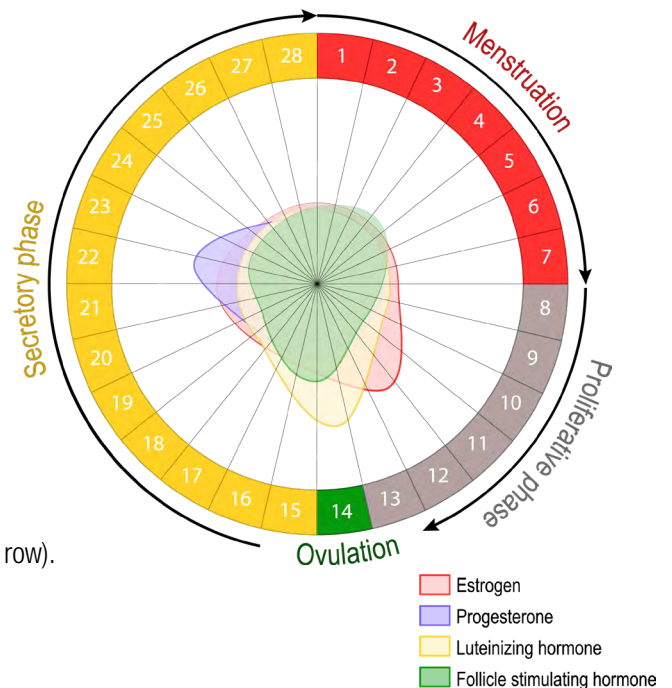
## Contact Your Primary Care Provider if You Have:

- » Pain during sex.
- » Severe mood swings.
- » Dizziness, weakness, or fatigue around your period.
- » Bleeding that is heavier or lasts longer than normal.
- » Unusual pain during your period.
- » Unexplained changes in the frequency of periods.
- » Spotting between periods.
- » Bleeding after sex more than once.
- » Three months without a period for unexplained reasons.

## Seek Immediate Care if You Have:

- » Bleeding and think you are pregnant (or are pregnant).
- » Severe abdominal pain.
- » Severe vaginal bleeding (2 pads or tampons in 1 hour for 2 hours in a row).
- » Cold/pale/clammy skin, or are too weak to stand.
- » Severe dizziness.
- » Severe nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal bloating.

Menstrual Cycle Overview



Women's Health Portal: <https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/healthyliving/wh/Pages/default.aspx>



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SOURCES

- <https://medlineplus.gov/periodpain.html>
- <https://www.womenshealth.gov/menstrual-cycle/period-problems>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/womensrh/healthconcerns.html>
- <https://medlineplus.gov/periodpain.html>