

Choices for Menstrual Bleeding

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We, like others in the animal kingdom, are amazingly resilient creatures. Our ability to adapt has allowed us to become stronger- partially due to the evolutionary process and partially because of our determination to continue to be.

As I talk to women-friends and patients- this adaptation process often becomes evident. I cannot count the number of times I have been told that “yes, my period used to last six days but it is now nine to ten days.” Or: “I have to sleep with an adult overnight diaper during my period because the bleeding is so heavy.”

The average, normal menstrual period lasts between 4 and 7 days and should occur no more often than every 21 days from 1st day to 1st day. In addition, if there is any clotting, the clots should be small, no larger than a dime or nickel and the bleeding at night should only require two maxipads to avoid an accident. It should not be necessary to change protection any more than 4 to 5 times in a 24-hour period.

There are many women who are forced to actually change their routines during their menstrual periods- perhaps a change in the way they dress and type of activity they engage in, and even the need to scope out restrooms everywhere they go in the event it is needed to head off a potential disaster. A good friend of mine travels with protection in the trunk of her car at all times!

This, ladies, is a change in lifestyle that affects quality of life and can occur so gradually that one doesn't even realize it has happened. If you are avoiding car trips, social engagements and exercise, you have lost control of your life and it is time to reclaim it.

It is estimated that one in five women suffers from heavy menstrual periods. While many of these women have fibroid tumors or bleeding disorders, many do not have an identifiable cause. Heavy menstrual bleeding can result in anemia, lethargy and difficulty functioning on a daily basis.

Many women fail to seek treatment because they prefer to avoid major surgery and they have the impression that this is the only operation available to them. That is no longer the case. There is now a treatment option that not only avoids major surgery but can be done in the comfort of the office setting.

Reducing menstrual bleeding involves destruction of the lining of the uterus. This may be done by using extremes of heat or cold. Because of it's safety, utilization of cold techniques has been approved as an in-office procedure and has been used successfully in Europe and here in the U.S. Utilizing minimal anesthesia, the process occurs in the physician's office. Much less intimidating than a surgery setting and a place women are familiar and more comfortable with. There is minimal discomfort and the patient is able to return to work within a day or two.

The cryosurgery procedure, called HerOption, may not be appropriate for all bleeding and it is not a substitute for birth control. But if appropriate, it may mean that a woman can throw away those birth control pills she has been taking for the last several years and start living her life as she used to. That seems to be an easy choice to make.

It often takes several generations for adaptation of the species to occur. We don't have that long. Reclaim your life today!



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Dr. Allison believes the more women are educated about health issues, the more they can practice preventive health care. She has written articles on gynecology, menopause, sexual dysfunction, and other health issues for local newspapers.