

Abnormal Uterine Bleeding

What is abnormal uterine bleeding?

Abnormal uterine bleeding (AUB) is a condition that causes vaginal bleeding which is longer than usual or happens outside of your regular period.

What causes it?

AUB can be caused by many things, including:

- Hormone imbalances
- Uterine fibroids or polyps (growths)
- Thickening of uterine lining or wall
- Bleeding or blood clotting disorders
- Polycystic ovary syndrome
- Birth control pills or intrauterine devices (IUD)
- Extreme weight loss or gain
- Infection of the cervix or uterus
- Cancers of the vagina, cervix, uterus, or ovaries

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of AUB may include:

- Spotting or bleeding from the vagina between periods
- Length of time between periods changes from month to month
- Periods that occur less than 24 days or more than 35 days apart
- Very heavy bleeding, which is bleeding that:
 - Lasts more than 7 days
 - Soaks through one or more tampons or pads every hour for several hours in a row
 - Causes you to wear more than one pad at a time, or to change pads or tampons during the night
 - Contains blood clots that are the size of a quarter or larger



What do I need to do next?

- 1** Review this fact sheet and write down any questions you have for your healthcare provider.
- 2** Make a decision with your healthcare provider about which treatment is best for you.

How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will likely perform a pelvic exam and Pap smear. Your provider may also do these tests or procedures:

- **Blood test.** This test can look at numbers of different blood cells, clotting proteins, hormone and sugar levels, liver function, and thyroid function.
- **Pregnancy test.**
- **Culture** to check for infection.
- **Ultrasound.** This imaging procedure allows the provider to look for problems in the pelvic area.
- **Biopsy.** This procedure can check your reproductive system for precancer or cancer.
- **Hysteroscopy** [HIS-tuh-ROS-kuh-pee]. This procedure allows your provider to look closely at the inside of your uterus using a **hysteroscope** [HIS-ter-oh-SKOHP], which is a long tube with a light and video camera on the end. The hysteroscope transmits a picture of your uterus to a monitor.

How is abnormal uterine bleeding treated?

AUB may be treated with one or more of these:

- Birth control pills.
- Hormone therapy.
- Intrauterine device.
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).
- Surgery. This may be necessary if a polyp or fibroid is causing of bleeding. It may also be recommended in women with more severe symptoms and if the uterus needs to be treated or removed (called a **hysterectomy**).

Sometimes, AUB causes anemia [uh-NEE-mee-uh]. If that is the case, your provider may prescribe iron supplements.



When should I call my doctor?

Call your healthcare provider if you have:

- Unusual vaginal bleeding
- Heavy vaginal bleeding
- A fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Chills or body aches
- Severe cramps or abdominal (belly) pain
- Foul-smelling discharge



Questions for my doctor

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