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

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 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.

Questions for my doctor

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