

# Irregular Vaginal Bleeding

Irregular bleeding is bleeding that occurs outside of a person's typical menstrual cycle. This could include bleeding between menstrual cycles, bleeding after menopause or heavier bleeding than expected during a mensural cycle.



## When to Get Help

**See your primary care provider or call 811 (711 for the hearing impaired) if:**

- You have questions or need more information.
- You are pregnant.
- The bleeding does not stop in 7-10 days.

**Go to the nearest Emergency Department or Urgent Care if:**

- The amount of bleeding increases. (You need to change your pad more than twice an hour.)
- You develop a fever.
- You have pain that is more severe than mild menstrual cramps.
- The pain localizes or moves to one side of your lower stomach.
- You feel weak, light-headed or dizzy.

**To Learn More:**

- Ask your health care provider.
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca)

## Recommended Follow-Up

- ☐ Follow up in \_\_\_ days.

Name of Provider

Reason

Date/Time

Location

Contact Info

- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## Causes

There are many possible causes of irregular vaginal bleeding. One common cause is hormonal changes that come from stress or other life changes that affect ovulation. It may be a result of the hormones in contraceptive choices, like the birth control pill, IUDs and implants causing unusual bleeding. Other causes can be injury to the vagina, fibroids or polyps in the uterus or on the cervix which can bleed. Additionally, medications such as anticoagulants can play a role.

Though rare, when someone presents with irregular bleeding, it is also important to think about checking for signs of potential cancer of the uterus, cervix or vagina.

## Tests

There are tests that often happen after someone presents with abnormal bleeding. These include a pregnancy test, a physical examination of the vagina to see if bleeding can be identified, perhaps a cervical cancer screening test (i.e. Pap smear or test for Human Papilloma virus (HPV), screening for other infections and perhaps blood tests. Ultrasounds may also be done to see if there are other causes of the bleeding such as fibroids. If there are ongoing concerns, a referral to a gynecologist may be done to see if they can identify the cause of the bleeding.

## Treatment

Treatment of vaginal bleeding depends on the cause of the bleeding and may include changing the medications (contraception/blood thinners), taking anti-inflammatory medications, or having surgery to help address any structural changes identified such as fibroids or polyps.



## How to Care for Yourself at Home

Follow up with your primary care provider or specialty clinic to ensure the appropriate bloodwork and ultrasounds occur, as per the Emergency doctor's instructions.

If you have cramping, you can take simple analgesics like acetaminophen 1000 mg up to 4 times a day and/or Ibuprofen 400 mg three times a day (or Naprosyn) if your care provider says that is OK.

Take showers not baths, avoid intercourse and douching while bleeding.

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Find this information sheet on the ECBC website:

[https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical\\_resource/patient-information-sheet/irregular-bleeding/](https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical_resource/patient-information-sheet/irregular-bleeding/)

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