

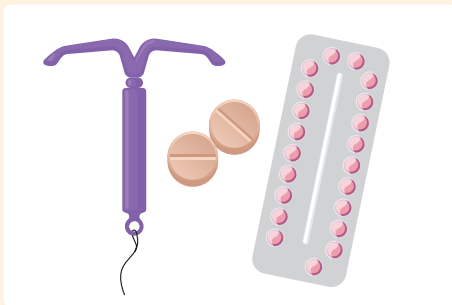
Making a decision about heavy periods

This leaflet is about **heavy periods**.

It is split into sections. You do not have to read it all at the same time. Read it with your carer or doctor or nurse or someone you trust.



It will help you decide about treatment.



There are different things you can do if you have heavy periods.



You can make a decision yourself about treatment.



Or you can make a decision with your carer or doctor or nurse.

Contents



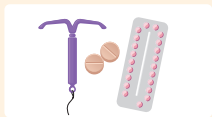
About periods

Page **1**



At the doctor's surgery

Pages **2 – 3**



Treatments

Pages **4 – 6**



At the hospital

Pages **7 – 8**



Preparing for your appointment

Pages **9 – 11**



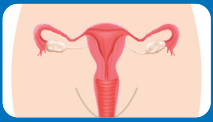
Comparing treatments in detail

Pages **12 – 17**

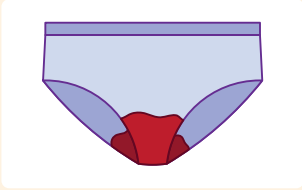


Glossary, more information
and support links

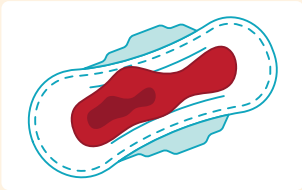
Pages **18 – 21**



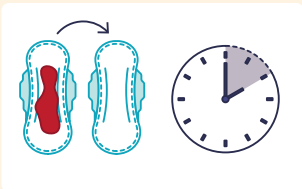
How to know if you have heavy periods



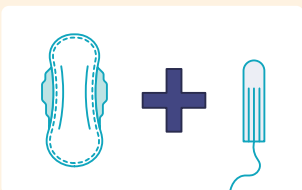
If you bleed through your clothes.



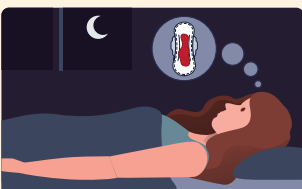
If you have large clots when you bleed. A clot is a thick blob of blood larger than a 10p.



If you need to change your pad or tampon or cup every 2 hours or less.



If you have to use 2 period products at the same time.



If you get up at night to change your period product.



If your periods stop you doing every day activities like going to work or school or socialising.

Easy Health is a website that has leaflets about periods and which products to choose if you have heavy periods.

www.easyhealth.org.uk/resources/333-keep-yourself-healthy-a-guide-to-having-a-period

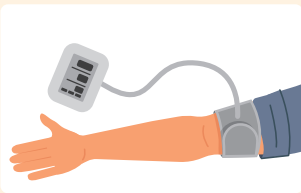


This page and the next, show what might happen if you go to the doctor.



Speak to your doctor if your periods are heavy

They can check if you have a condition that is causing your heavy periods. Some medicines can cause heavy periods.

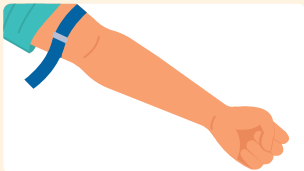


Your doctor might ask if they can examine you or do some tests

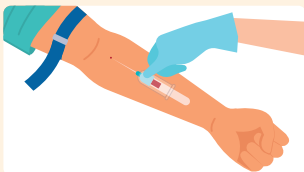
Tests help them know which treatment to offer you.

A blood test.

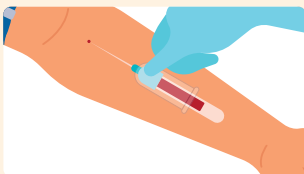
Sometimes your doctor will ask if they can take some blood from your arm.



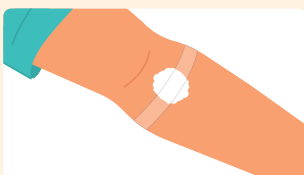
They will ask you to roll up your sleeve and they might put a tight strap around your arm.



They will put a needle in your arm. This might feel like a sharp scratch.



It only takes a few seconds. Try not to move your arm.

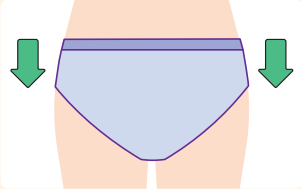


They will put some cotton wool or a plaster on your arm afterwards.



A pelvic examination.

Sometimes your doctor or nurse will ask if they can examine you. This is called a pelvic examination.



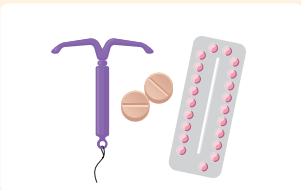
This is a personal exam. Your doctor or nurse will ask you to remove your underwear and lie down.



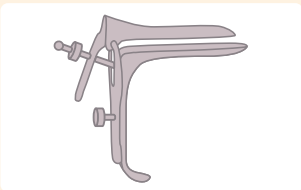
You can ask for a female doctor.
You can take a friend, carer or relative with you.



You can say no to this examination. You can ask your doctor or nurse to stop at any time.



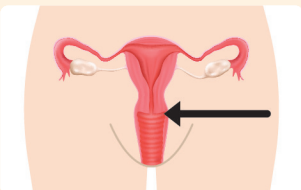
They can give you treatment even if they do not do this examination.



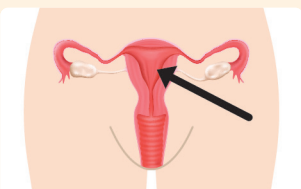
They might use a **speculum**. This is so they can look at your vagina and cervix.



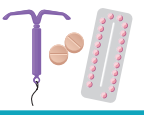
They might put gloves on and put their fingers in your vagina and feel your tummy with their other hand.



Your **cervix** is inside your body at the top of your **vagina**. You cannot see it.



Your **womb** is where a baby grows. You cannot see it.



This section explains about the different treatments you can choose.

1 – No treatment at all

Always coloured blue in this leaflet



Heavy periods do not always need treatment.

You can say no to any treatment if you want.

You can try something and if it does not work you can ask your doctor if you can try something else.

2 – Medicines

Always coloured orange in this leaflet



You can choose to take medicines when you have your period.



You can buy some medicines yourself.

Ibuprofen can help if you take it on the days you have heavy bleeding.

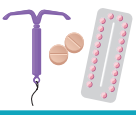
Speak to a pharmacist before taking medicines.



Your doctor can prescribe medicines such as:

- **tranexamic acid**
- **naproxen**
- **mefenamic acid**

Your doctor will explain how many tablets to take and when to take them.



3 – Hormone tablets

Always coloured purple in this leaflet



You can choose to take hormone tablets **that you swallow.**

Your doctor will explain how often to take them. Usually you take them every day.

4 – IUS (intrauterine system)

Always coloured green in this leaflet

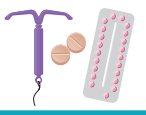


You can choose a device called an **IUS** that your doctor or nurse will put into your **womb**. It is sometimes called **the coil**.

- It can be uncomfortable when it is put in. You can take pain relief. You can ask for someone to be with you.
- It can stay in for **6 years**.
- You might have **unpredictable bleeding** for **6 months** after they put it in.
 - You may have no bleeding, frequent bleeding, possibly every day, or regular bleeding like a period.
 - The bleeding is likely to be less but unpredictable.
 - After 6 months bleeding should be less.



The treatments on this page are contraceptives. They contain **hormones** and stop you getting pregnant. Your doctor needs to prescribe them.



A treatment may work well for one person but not for another person.



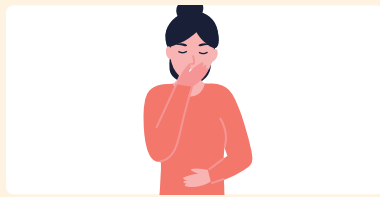
A treatment may cause **side effects** or **complications**.

- These are things that you didn't want to happen when you have a treatment **like feeling sick if you take medicine**.
- Not everyone will have **side effects** or **complications**.

Side effects of these treatments can be



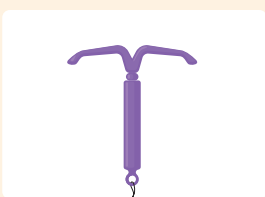
headaches



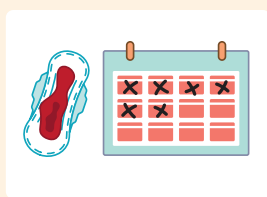
feeling sick



sore breasts, bloating,
mood changes



if you have an **IUS** it might fall out



if you have an **IUS** you might have some bleeding for 6 months

To help you make a decision about treatment:

- you can read about how well each treatment works on pages 13 and 19.
- you can read about the chance you might get each side effect on pages 14 to 19.



This section is about what happens if you go to the hospital to see a specialist.

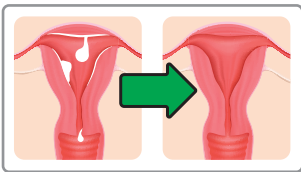


If medicines did not work for you, you might go to the hospital to see a specialist.

They might ask if you want an operation.

There are **3 different kinds of operation** depending on why you are having heavy periods.

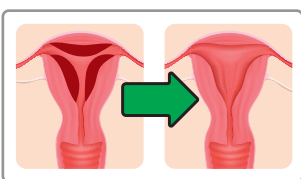
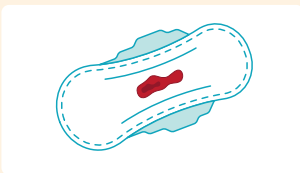
Remember you can say no to any operation. It is your choice.



1 An operation to remove **fibroids** or **polyps**

Fibroids or polyps are growths in the lining of your womb. They can sometimes cause heavy periods.

- Your doctor will explain more if you have them.
- You can have an operation to remove the fibroids or polyps.
- Your periods are usually much lighter.

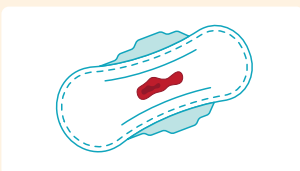
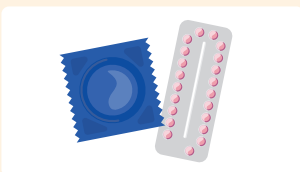


2 An operation called an **ablation**

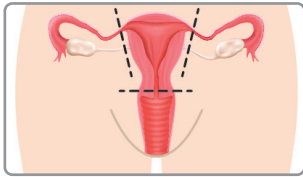
An ablation removes some of the inside lining of your womb.

You are advised not to get pregnant after this operation because there are risks to your baby if you do.

You can use **contraception** to stop you getting pregnant after this operation.



Your periods are usually much lighter. Sometimes they stop completely.



3 An operation called a **hysterectomy**

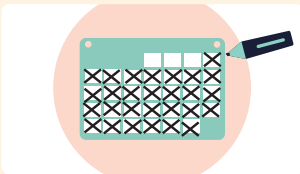
A hysterectomy removes your womb. If nothing else has worked, your specialist might offer a hysterectomy.



You need to stay in hospital for up to 3 days. Sometimes you go home on the same day.



You will need to rest when you get home.



It can take 4 to 6 weeks to recover fully.



You will not be able to have children after this operation.



You will not have periods after the operation. You might go into early **menopause**.

The Easy Health website has lots of information about **menopause** www.easyhealth.org.uk/resources/298-menopause



This section can help you prepare for your next appointment with your doctor or nurse.

Tick the box that relates to you. You can then share this with your doctor or nurse.



My periods affect my sleep

Yes

No



I have a lot of period pain

Yes

No



Period products are expensive for me

Yes

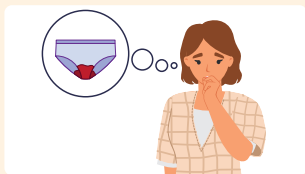
No



I sometimes miss social events with family or friends, or work or school

Yes

No



I am anxious or worried because of my period

Yes

No



When I have my period I feel...



sad



hungry or have cravings



tired



like doing nothing



moody



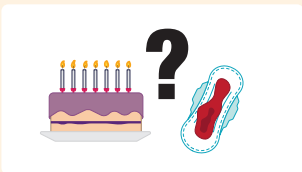
What have you already tried to help you with your symptoms:



Your doctor or nurse might ask these questions about your periods. It helps them know which treatment to offer you.



You can also use a diary, calendar or app to write down when you have your period and what it is like.



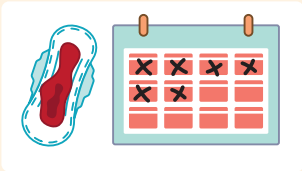
How old were you when your periods started?

.....



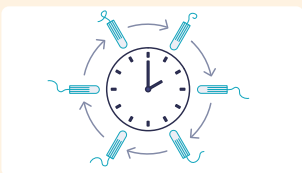
When was your last period?

.....



How many days are your periods usually?

.....



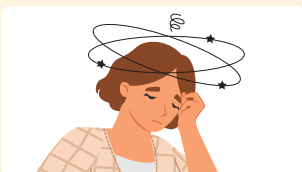
How often do you change period products on a heavy day?

.....



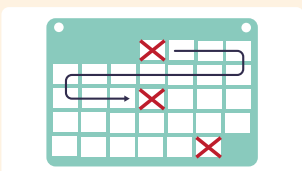
Have your periods always been heavy?

.....



Are you ever dizzy or very tired?

.....



Do you bleed between your periods?

.....



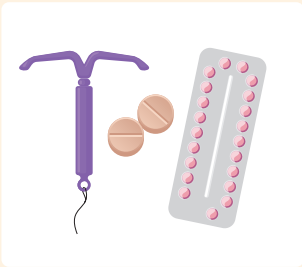
You do not have to make a decision straight away:



- you can take as long as you like to decide
-



- you can talk to someone about how you feel
-



- you can try different things to see which works best for you.

It's a good idea to try something for 3 months before switching to something else.



It is always your choice. You should not feel pressured into anything you do not want to do.

This space is where your doctor or nurse can write down what you can try and what to do next:



This section shows how well each treatment works and the chance you might get a side effect or complication.



How much lighter were periods?



No treatment at all



0.5



Ibuprofen



Mefenamic acid



4.5



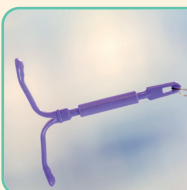
Tranexamic acid



Hormone pills



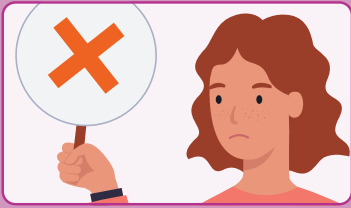
4.5



IUS
(Intrauterine system)



9



Side effects


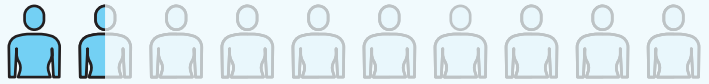


Out of every **10 people** how many have **headaches**?




No treatment at all

1.5




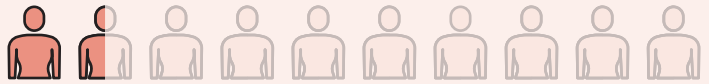
Ibuprofen

Ibuprofen takes away headaches




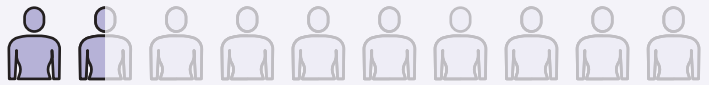
Tranexamic acid

1.5



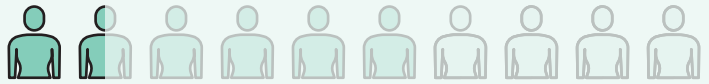
Hormone pills

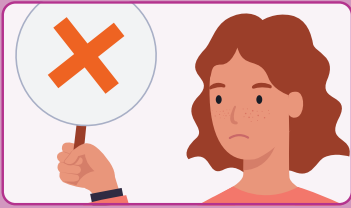
1.5



IUS
(Intrauterine system)

1.5





Side effects

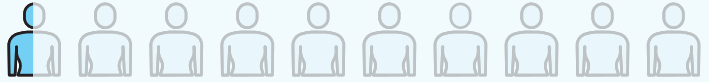


Out of every **10 people** how many **feel sick**?



No treatment at all

0.5



Ibuprofen

1

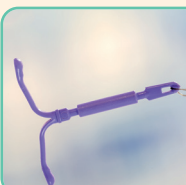


Tranexamic acid



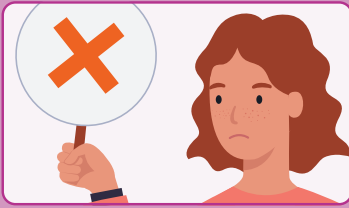
Hormone pills

0.5



IUS
(Intrauterine system)

We don't know how many feel sick




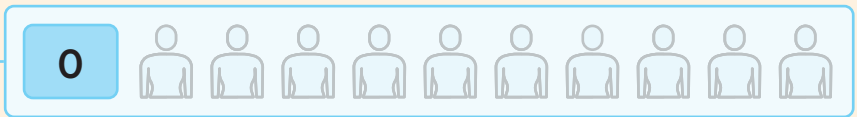
Side effects




Out of every **10 people** how many have **sore breasts, mood changes or bloating**?



No treatment at all



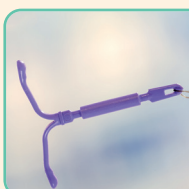
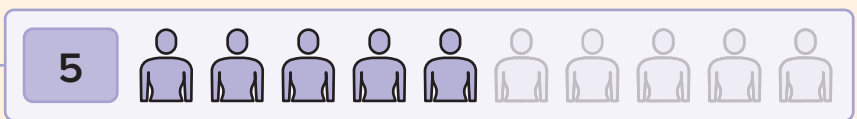
Ibuprofen



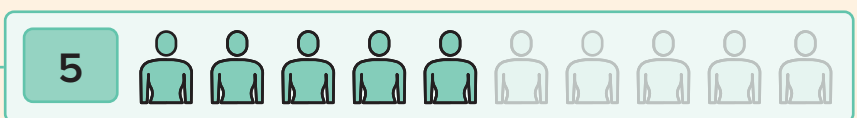
Tranexamic acid

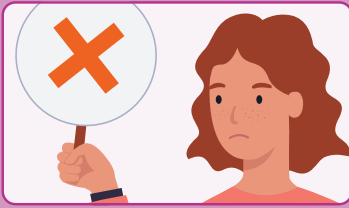


Hormone pills



IUS
(Intrauterine system)

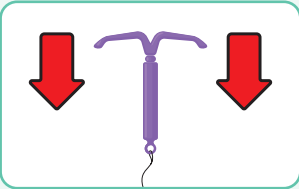




Side effects



IUS (Intrauterine system)

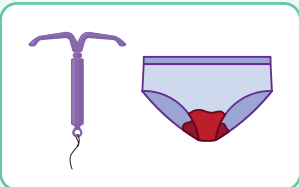


Sometimes an **IUS can fall out**.
This happens to **0.5** out of every **10 people**.

0.5



Your doctor can put another one in for you.



4 out of every **10 people** may have **some bleeding** for the first **6 months** with an **IUS**

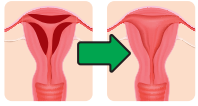
4



You might have no bleeding, frequent bleeding or regular bleeding. Usually it stops or becomes much less after 6 months.



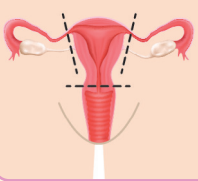
How well does each **operation** work to make periods lighter?



People who had an ablation



9



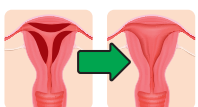
People who had a hysterectomy

They did not have any periods any more



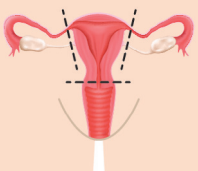
Complications of operations

How many people have **complications**?



People who had an ablation

0.5

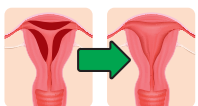


People who had a hysterectomy

4



How many who have an **ablation** need another one?



People who had an ablation

1



1 out of 10 people have another **ablation**.



Ablation

Is an operation to remove the lining of the womb. It can help make heavy periods lighter.

Anaesthetic

A painkilling medicine. There are different kinds. General anaesthetic puts you to sleep. Local anaesthetic makes part of your body numb.

Blood thinners

Medicines that stop blood clots from forming or getting bigger.

Cervix

Part of the body. It connects the womb to the vagina.

Contraceptive medicines

These are medicines that can stop you getting pregnant.

Hormones

These are natural chemicals in the body. They affect how the body works. They can also be in medicines such as pills, IUS, gels or creams, patches.

Hysterectomy

An operation to remove the womb. Sometimes other parts of the body are removed at the same time such as ovaries and tubes.

IUS

IUS stands for Intra-Uterine System. It is a small T shaped device that is put into your uterus (womb) by a doctor. It is a contraceptive and can stop you getting pregnant.

Mefenamic acid

A medicine that can help with period pain. It belongs to a group of medicines called NSAIDs.

Menopause

The time when you stop having periods. Periods usually start in early teens and stop around the age of 50.



Naproxen

A medicine that can help with period pain. It belongs to a group of medicines called NSAIDs.

Pelvic examination

Your doctor or nurse will ask to do a pelvic examination if they want to look at your cervix or vagina. You lie down and they will use a speculum to look inside your vagina.

Speculum

A special plastic device that a doctor or nurse will put inside your vagina so that they can see better. It opens up your vagina so that they can see inside.

Side effect or complication

Something that happens that you did not want when you take a medicine, have a treatment or an operation. It can be harmful.

Tranexamic acid

A medicine that can stop bleeding.

Vagina

Part of the body. It is also called the birth canal. It goes from the outside of your body to your womb. It is where a man's penis goes in during sex.

Vaginal ring

A small plastic ring that has some hormones in it. It can stop you getting pregnant. It can make your periods lighter.

Womb

Part of the body. It is where babies grow. It is also called a uterus.

Each month the lining becomes thicker and if you do not have sex, and do not make a baby, the lining comes out through the vagina. This is a period.



Information about periods

About heavy periods

www.womens-health-concern.org

Patient.info website

<https://patient.info/womens-health/periods-and-period-problems/heavy-periods-menorrhagia>

NHS page on heavy periods

www.nhs.uk/conditions/heavy-periods

Information on heavy periods, including patient stories

www.wearwhiteagain.co.uk

You can get free period products in some places, for example

at all state schools in England and some work places

at Morrisons supermarkets. Go to the customer service desk and say "I want to ask for Sandy"

in Scotland all local councils give out free period products

Information about treatment

Ablation

www.southtees.nhs.uk/resources/endometrial-ablation

Hysterectomy

www.nhs.uk/conditions/hysterectomy

Periods, period problems, tests, procedures

<https://patient.info/womens-health/periods-and-period-problems>

