Heavy menstrual bleeding and what you can do about it!

The intrauterine system as an alternative to hysterectomy.
Confidence that lasts

What is heavy menstrual bleeding? Do I have it?

A woman’s menstrual periods are considered ‘heavy’ if they significantly interfere with her daily activities and reduce her quality of life. Long periods (more than seven days), flooding (bleeding that soaks at least one pad every hour), and the passing of blood clots are all indications of heavy menstrual bleeding (menorrhagia).

Who gets heavy menstrual bleeding (menorrhagia)?

Heavy menstrual bleeding is a common condition. Heavy periods can occur at any point but are especially common in perimenopause, the years of hormonal upheaval before menopause. About 20 to 25% of women report suffering from it, yet only 5% of women aged 30–49 consult their doctor each year for heavy menstrual bleeding.

How is heavy menstrual bleeding treated?

Until recent years, conventional treatment has usually been surgical techniques such as endometrial ablation (destruction of the lining of the uterine cavity) or hysterectomy (removal of the uterus and sometimes the ovaries). Hysterectomy results in sterility, meaning the woman can no longer become pregnant. Endometrial ablation results in severe impairment of fertility, but contraception is still needed. A non-surgical, long-acting, reversible contraceptive called the intrauterine system (IUS) is available nowadays that has proved to be equally effective in improving the quality of life of women who suffer from heavy menstrual bleeding. Please note that not all IUSs are indicated for the treatment of heavy menstrual bleeding - if unsure, please contact your healthcare provider.

What is the intrauterine system (IUS) for heavy menstrual bleeding?

The intrauterine system (IUS) is a plastic device placed inside the uterus that contains the progestin hormone called levonorgestrel. The levonorgestrel from the IUS has a strong effect on the lining of the uterine cavity, reducing its growth and thus reducing heavy menstrual bleeding. The IUS is effective for 5 years.

What is the difference between the effect of an intrauterine device (IUD) and the intrauterine system (IUS) on menstrual bleeding?

The IUD acts totally opposite in your body when it comes to heavy menstrual bleeding. Copper IUDs do not contain any hormones but create congestion and inflammation of the inner uterus wall. Because of this mechanism, some women have a heavier menstrual period while using a copper IUD.

How does the IUS work?

The IUS slowly releases very small amounts of the hormone levonorgestrel directly into the uterus.

There is no single explanation for how the IUS works.

What the IUS does:

1. creates a barrier preventing sperm from entering the uterus
2. inhibits movement and function of the sperm
3. thins the lining of the uterus
It is designed to be small and comfortable, so that you and your partner most likely won’t even feel it’s there. Sometimes male partners may feel the threads. If the threads are causing discomfort for you or your partner, just ask your healthcare provider to shorten them.

**How long can I use the IUS?**

The IUS can be left in place for up to five years. After 5 years, the IUS can be replaced by a new system at any time in the cycle. You can use this method until you reach menopause. Once the IUS is placed by your healthcare provider, you don’t have to think about taking medication for heavy menstrual bleeding nor for contraception every day, every week or even every year.

**How long will it take before I notice a difference in my monthly bleeding?**

The IUS reduces the heaviness of a woman’s bleeding by approximately 82% after 3 months. After 12 months the IUS decreases the amount of bleeding up to 97%.

**How well does the IUS work for heavy menstrual bleeding?**

In a clinical trial, performed in women with heavy menstrual bleeding and treated with the IUS, about 9 out of 10 were treated successfully.

---

Occasionally, the release of eggs may be inhibited during the early stages of IUS use. The IUS prevents fertilization (the fusion of sperm with an egg). It is not an abortifacient.

**Is it safe to use a hormonal therapeutic method by women over 35 years?**

The hormone release from the IUS is very low. The hormone acts mainly locally in the uterus. The IUS does not contain any estrogens. Therefore it can be used by women who cannot use estrogen-containing preparations (for example women over 35 years old who smoke).

**Will my partner or I feel the IUS?**

The IUS is made of soft, flexible plastic that is placed in the uterus by your healthcare provider during an office visit.

---

Occasionally, the release of eggs may be inhibited during the early stages of IUS use. The IUS prevents fertilization (the fusion of sperm with an egg). It is not an abortifacient.
Some women may experience some slight discomfort while the IUS is being placed. Abdominal cramping may happen for a couple of days after placement. The cramping should be mild and respond well to pain medication. During and right after placing the IUS, you may experience dizziness, or other symptoms from low blood pressure. These symptoms usually pass very quickly, though. Your healthcare provider knows how to handle any discomfort related to insertion.

Can I still use tampons with the IUS?
Yes. However, if you use tampons you should change them with care so that you don’t pull the threads of the IUS when removing the tampon.

Will I experience any adverse effects on my body?
Possible side effects of the IUS that you might experience in the first three months may include menstrual problems and pelvic or abdominal pain. During the first few months some women might feel transient hormonal side effects such as headache, breast tenderness, or changes in skin complexion (acne).
Talk to your healthcare provider if you happen to experience any of these symptoms.

Most often during insertion, the IUS may penetrate or perforate the wall of the womb which may decrease the protection against pregnancy. An IUS which has become lodged outside the cavity of the womb is not effective and must be removed as soon as possible. The risk of perforation is increased in breastfeeding women and in women who had a delivery up to 36 weeks before insertion and may be increased in women with the uterus fixed and leaning backwards (towards the bowel).

Can the IUS protect me from HIV or STDs (sexually transmitted diseases)?
No. The IUS does not protect against HIV or sexually transmitted diseases.

What does the IUS cost?
The IUS as an effective treatment option for heavy menstrual bleeding may be covered under your health insurance. To find out, please contact your insurance provider. Studies have shown that the IUS is among the cheapest options for the treatment of heavy menstrual bleeding. In addition to treatment for heavy menstrual bleeding, it also offers effective contraception for up to 5 years.

If my family situation happens to change, will I be able to conceive again?
With the IUS, you get effective treatment for heavy menstrual bleeding, protection and flexibility. Especially since you can have it removed as soon as you want to try to have a baby. A woman’s chances of getting pregnant within 12 months of having the IUS removed are approximately 80% which is the same as the normal fertility rate.
# The IUS – The right choice for me?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>✔️</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approved for contraception and for treatment of heavy menstrual bleeding (menorrhagia)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppresses the lining of the uterus and hence decreases bleeding by up to 97%</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective, non-surgical option for the treatment of heavy menstrual bleeding</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preserves fertility</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly reliable, easy-to-use long term (up to 5 years) contraception</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended first-line treatment for menorrhagia by international guidelines</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To learn more about the IUS talk to your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider can supply further information on the IUS for you and your partner.

Me and my partner still need to know:

---

Bayer HealthCare

Bayer Pharma AG
Strategic Marketing General Medicine
13342 Berlin, Germany
www.bayerpharma.com

Please consult the patient information leaflet for full information on the IUS.