

Choosing
the right
treatment
for you

Most common treatment options for heavy menstrual bleeding

| | Non-Hormonal | | | Hormonal | |
|---------------|--|--|---|---|--|
| Description | Medication | Minimally Invasive Surgery | Major Surgery | Oral contraceptives | Hormone-Releasing Intrauterine Device or IUD |
| | | Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen are painkillers, generally available as over-the-counter medication. Tranexamic acid is an antifibrinolytic agent that helps block the breakdown of blood clots. ¹ A prescription is required. | Quick, simple and effective procedure that removes the lining of the uterus in about 90 seconds. | Surgery to remove the uterus - a permanent option for women not responsive to other treatments. | Low doses of female hormones (estrogen and/or progestin) such as birth control pills. |
| Advantages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSAIDs are suitable for milder menorrhagia² NSAIDs can relieve painful menstrual cramps⁴ Tranexamic acid is more effective at relieving symptoms than NSAIDs³ Some NSAIDs can reduce the amount of blood volume by up to 45 per cent² Tranexamic acid is shown to reduce the amount of blood flow during each period by 40-60 per cent⁵ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 9 in 10 women return to normal or lower than normal bleeding⁶ Typically takes less than 5 minutes⁷ Can be performed in the hospital or a day surgery unit Local or general anesthetic can be used (general is mostly used in Australia and New Zealand) Can be done at any time during the cycle without hormonal pretreatment Recovery in 1 to 2 days Removes lining but leaves uterus intact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminates problem bleeding Permanent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces bleeding in around one-third of patients⁹ Self-administered – taken by mouth Contraceptive Fertility restored when therapy is stopped | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 39 per cent efficacy after 5 years¹⁰ Does not require taking pills Contraceptive Fertility restored when the IUD is removed |
| Disadvantages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSAIDs and tranexamic acid are associated with gastrointestinal (GI) side effects, including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and dyspepsia, as well as disturbances in colour vision² Tranexamic acid can cause nausea and leg cramps³ Patients on tranexamic acid also run the risk of developing deep venous thrombosis (DVT)² | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only appropriate for women who do not want more children Surgical risks associated with minimally invasive procedures Cannot be reversed After an ablation, your uterus is not able to properly support fetal development, so some form of birth control is required | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involves major invasive surgery Risks of complications associated with major surgery Requires general anesthesia 2 to 8-week recovery time May result in early onset of menopause/possible need for future hormone treatment¹¹ Cannot be reversed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May take up to 3 months before they start working¹¹ About 50 per cent of patients experience side effects⁹ Hormonal side effects can include depression, acne, headache, weight gain, breast tenderness, increased risk of cervical cancer¹² Ongoing cost Must remember to take them 77 per cent of women eventually progress to a surgical solution¹³ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be removed and replaced every 5 years 70 per cent of women experience intermenstrual bleeding/spotting¹⁰ 50 per cent of women experience hormonal side effects¹⁴ Hormonal side effects may include: depression, acne, headaches, nausea, weight gain and hair loss^{14,15} Other potential side effects include abdominal pain, infection, and difficulty inserting the device, requiring cervical dilation¹⁶ May take up to 6 months before it starts working¹⁷ 42 per cent of women require surgery within 5 years¹⁰ |

1. Mayo Clinic. Tranexamic Acid. Available at www.mayoclinic.org/drugs-supplements/tranexamic-acid-oral-route/description/drg-20073517. Accessed February 2016. 2. Panesar K. "Managing Menorrhagia", US Pharmacist. 2011;36(9):56-61. 3. PubMed Health, Informed Health Online. Treatment options for heavy periods, June 2013. Available at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0072477/. Accessed February 2016. 4. Mayo Clinic. Menorrhagia (heavy menstrual bleeding). Available at www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/menorrhagia/basics/treatment/con-20021959. Accessed February 2016. 5. Munro M G. Abnormal Uterine Bleeding, Cambridge University Press. First published 2010. ISBN 978-0-521-72183-7. 6. Cooper J, Gimpelson R, Laberge P, et al. A Randomized, Multicenter Trial of Safety and Efficacy of the NovaSure® System in the Treatment of menorrhagia. J Am Assoc Gynecol Laparosc. 2002;9(4):418-428. 7. NovaSure® Instructions for Use. Bedford, MA: Hologic, Inc. 8. Gallinat A. An Impedance-Controlled System for Endometrial Ablation: Five-Year Follow-up of 107 Patients. J Reprod Med. 2007;52(6):467-472. 9. Cooper KG, et al. A randomised comparison of medical and hysteroscopic management in women consulting a gynaecologist for treatment of heavy menstrual loss. Br J Obstet Gynecol 1997;104:1360-66. 10. Hurskainen R, et al. Clinical outcomes and costs with the levonorgestrel-releasing intra-uterine system of hysterectomy for treatment of menorrhagia: randomized trial 5-year follow-up. JAMA 2004; 291:1456-1463. 11. ACOG Committee on Practice Bulletins. ACOG Practice Bulletin: Endometrial Ablation. Obstet Gynecol 2007;109(5):1233-48. 12. Yasmin Prescribing Information. Wayne, NJ: Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals Inc.; 2007. 13. Cooper KG, Jack SA, Parkin DE, Grant AM. Five-Year Follow-up of Women Randomised to Medical Management or Transcervical Resection of the Endometrium for Heavy Menstrual Loss: Clinical and Quality of Life Outcomes. Br J Obstet Gynaecol. 2001;108(12):1222-1228. 14. Backman T, et al. Length of use and symptoms associated with premature removal of levonorgestrel intrauterine system: a nation-wide study of 17,360 users. BJOG 2000;107:335-9. 15. Mirena Prescribing Information. Wayne, NJ: Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals Inc.; 2007. 16. Istre O, et al. Treatment of menorrhagia with levonorgestrel intrauterine system versus endometrial resection. Fertil Steril 2001. 17. Busfield RA, Faruqar CM, Sowter MC, et al. A Randomised Trial Comparing the Levonorgestrel Intrauterine System and Thermal Balloon Ablation for Heavy Menstrual Bleeding. BJOG. 2006;113(3):257-263. 18. Decherney AH, et al. Current Obstetric & Gynecologic Diagnosis & Treatment, ninth edition. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Medical; 2003.