



Abnormal Uterine Bleeding

Abnormal uterine bleeding may be heavy or prolonged periods or frequent irregular bleeding and spotting.

The most frequent cause of abnormal bleeding in a young woman who had prior normal periods is a complication of pregnancy. These include a miscarriage or tubal pregnancy. Abnormal bleeding in women in their 30's and 40's may be caused by benign tumors in their uterus such as fibroids or polyps. However, the most common cause of abnormal uterine bleeding in all ages is called dysfunctional uterine bleeding (DUB), which means there is no organic cause for the bleeding. Doctors sometimes call this "hormonal problems".

Most cases of DUB result from a lack of ovulation where no progesterone is produced by the ovary. Progesterone is important to have a normal period. Patients with obesity, polycystic ovaries, stress, low weight and excessive exercise may experience no ovulation and irregular bleeding.

Rarely abnormal bleeding may be due to a blood clotting disorder. The abnormal bleeding manifests itself by excessive uterine bleeding in an adolescent. The most common disorder is called von Willebrand's disease where there is abnormal blood coagulation.

To diagnosis the cause of abnormal bleeding requires blood tests to check for pregnancy hormone and a test for anemia. A transvaginal ultrasound will detect tumors and polyps and an endometrial biopsy or D & C with a hysteroscopy can detect precancerous lesions or cancer of the lining of the uterus.

The treatment is based on the cause of abnormal bleeding, the age of the woman, and their desire for future pregnancy. This may include medical treatments such as birth control pills, intermittent progesterone therapy or a Mirena IUD. Surgical treatments for removal of polyps or "fibroids" may be needed. If the woman has completed her child bearing an endometrial ablation or hysterectomy may be considered.