

Fertility & Midwifery Care Center



Dysmenorrhea (Painful Periods)

What is dysmenorrhea?

Dysmenorrhea is recurrent, crampy, lower abdominal pain that occurs during your period. It is very common, affecting 50-90% of women at some point in their lives, usually in their teens and twenties. It typically begins 1 or 2 days before or with the start of a period and improves over the 2nd and 3rd day of bleeding. It is common to experience mild nausea, diarrhea, back pain, headache, and/or dizziness along with the pain.

What can I do to reduce this pain?

The first things to try are:

- Applying heating pad/heat pack applied to lower abdomen
- Exercising
- Staying very well hydrated (women need about 9 cups or 2.2 liters of fluids a day)
- Ibuprofen 400mg-600mg by mouth every 4-6 hours starting a day or two before you anticipate your period will begin and continue until pain resolves.
- Magnesium 250mg by mouth at bedtime starting a day or two before you anticipate your period and continuing until pain resolves
- Begin taking a daily Fish Oil supplement (Barlean's brand recommended)

If these conservative measures are not helping, discuss the following options with your provider:

- Prescription strength NSAIDS (ibuprofen-like medicine) called Ponstel
- Progesterone support during the luteal phase of the cycle (the part of your cycle after ovulation occurs until your period begins)
- Low-dose Naltrexone which is a medicine that is considered more experimental for treating painful periods, but shows some promise with few side effects
- Proceeding with a diagnostic laparoscopy to look for problems with the anatomy of the pelvis, especially endometriosis (a disease of the female pelvis that can only be officially diagnosed with surgery).

Please visit <http://obgyn.slu.edu/index.php?page=endometriosis-diet-for-adults> for information on dietary considerations for patients with endometriosis/inflammatory conditions.