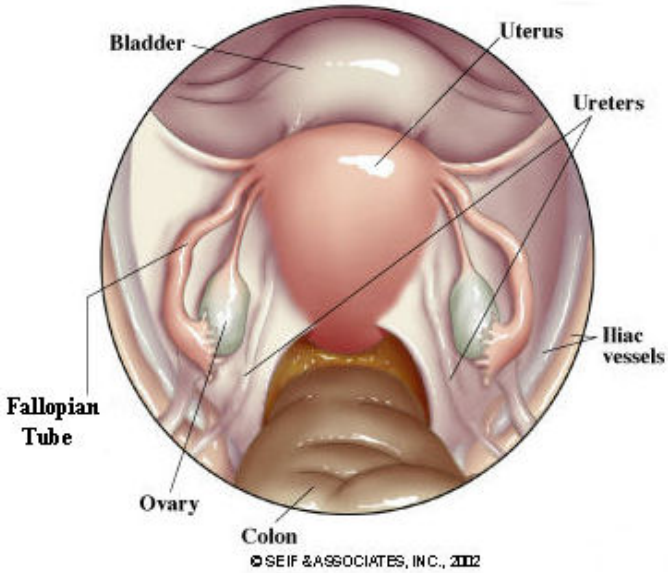
Mittelschmertz
(Pain in the Middle of the Menstrual Cycle)

Mittelschmertz is a German word that means "middle pain." It refers to the lower belly (*abdominal*) pain. This pain happens between menstrual periods. It may occur before, during or after ovulation. Mittelschmertz is usually on the side of the ovary that is passing the egg. It is sharp and short-lived. Mittelschmertz usually causes a slight increase in the body temperature and often lasts only a few hours. The pain is usually not too bad or harmful.



CAUSES

- Inflammation (*irritation*) of the inside of the abdomen. This is caused by the little blood or fluid that may come from producing the egg.
- Pressure from when the sac that holds the egg stretches the covering of the ovary.
- Ovarian cysts.
- The uterine lining tissue grows outside of the uterus (*endometriosis*).
- Endometriomas. These are cysts that are due to endometriosis.

SYMPTOMS

- One sided pain unless both ovaries are ovulating at the same time. In this case, there may be pain on both sides. This pain is often repeated every month. At times, there may be a month or two with no pain.
- Pain is present about 14 days before your menstrual period starts.
- The pain is usually dull, but can sometimes be sharp or cramping. It is rarely severe.
- The pain may last for a few minutes and up to 24 hours.
- Pain with bowel movements, diarrhea, and pain with intercourse.
- Sometimes, a slight amount of vaginal bleeding will occur with the pain.

DIAGNOSIS

- Your caregiver will take a history and do a physical exam. Additional testing may be needed if the problem continues, becomes worse, or does not respond to the usual conservative treatment. This would include blood tests and an abdominal ultrasound.
- Your caregiver may suggest a laparoscopy if the pain gets worse or does not go away. This is a test where an instrument that looks like a small pencil sized telescope is used to look into the abdomen.
- Sometimes, birth control pills or hormone therapy is prescribed for a few months to see if this will take care of the problem.
- Together, you and your caregiver can decide which course of treatment is best for you.

TREATMENT

- Usually, no treatment is needed.
- Pain pills may be prescribed, if necessary.
- Contraceptive medication, birth control pills, patches, vaginal ring or hormone injections may be used to stop ovulation. They can also be used to prevent the pain from coming on every month.
- Endometriomas require either medical or surgical treatment.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver. **Do not** use aspirin. Aspirin may increase bleeding.
- Write down when the pain comes on in relation to your menstrual period, how bad it is, if you have a fever with the pain and how long it lasts.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your pain increases and is not controlled with medications.
- The pain is on both sides of your abdomen.
- You develop vaginal bleeding (more than just spotting) with the pain.
- You begin to run an unexplained temperature that is not controlled with medication.
- You feel sick to your stomach (*nausea*) or start vomiting.
- You feel light-headed or faint.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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