# Retrograde Menstruation

During menstruation, most of the blood shed with the lining of the womb (*uterus*) is passed out through the opening to the womb (*cervix*) and the birth canal (*vagina*). During a menstrual period, there is often a little blood that goes backward (*retrograde* flow of the blood) up through the *fallopian tubes.* These are the tubes that carry eggs from the ovary to the uterus. This blood may get on the lining of the pelvis and belly (*abdomen*). This can cause pain and may also cause endometriosis. Endometriosis is a condition where the lining of the uterus gets attached to the pelvis and internal female organs.

Retrograde menstruation is normal for many young women. You should not feel abnormal if your friends do not have this problem. Generally, this gets better as you get older.

## TREATMENT

Teenage girls often have some pain with their periods. Often times, mild over-the-counter (OTC) pain relievers are helpful. If this does not work, you may need to see your caregiver. Caregivers may be able to avoid giving a pelvic exam to young teenagers by using ultrasound. Using an ultrasound picture to show that the womb and ovaries appear normal and healthy can provide reassurance. Stronger pain relievers or mild hormone treatment may be considered. The hormone treatments include progestogens. Hormone treatments may also include one of the combined oral contraceptive pills.

## HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver. **Only use these if your caregiver has not given medications that interfere**.
- See your caregiver if the problems get worse.
- Regular exercise can help the pain.
- Taking calcium 500mg two times a day may help the pain, or as your caregiver suggests.
- Avoiding drinks with caffeine before and during your menstrual period may help the pain.

## SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You need a prescription for pain medication because the OTC medication is not helping.
- You start having cramps with your menstrual period and never had cramps before.
- Your cramps continue after your menstrual period is over.
- You have pain with sexual intercourse since you developed cramps with your menstrual period.

## SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have menstrual cramps and pass out.
- You develop a fever of 100º F (37.8º C) or higher with your menstrual cramps.
- You have menstrual cramps and are bleeding more than your normal menstrual period.

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