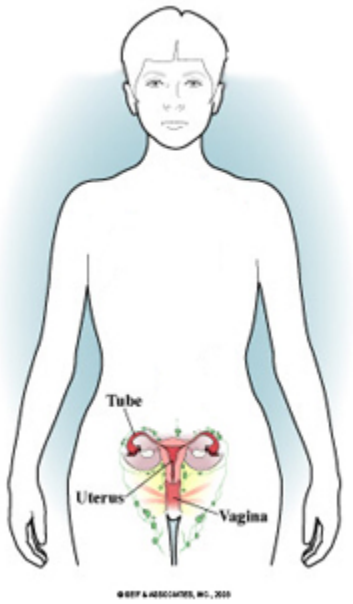
Abnormal Uterine Bleeding

Abnormal uterine bleeding can have many causes. Some cases are simply treated, while others are more serious. There are several kinds of bleeding that is considered abnormal, including:

- Bleeding between periods.
- Bleeding after sexual intercourse.
- Spotting anytime in the menstrual cycle.
- Bleeding heavier or more than normal.
- Bleeding after menopause.



CAUSES

There are many causes of abnormal uterine bleeding. It can be present in teenagers, pregnant women, women during their reproductive years, and women who have reached menopause. Your caregiver will look for the more common causes depending on your age, signs, symptoms and your particular circumstance. Most cases are not serious and can be treated. Even the more serious causes, like cancer of the female organs, can be treated adequately if found in the early stages. That is why all types of bleeding should be evaluated and treated as soon as possible.

DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosing the cause may take several kinds of tests. Your caregiver may:

- Take a complete history of the type of bleeding.
- Perform a complete physical exam and Pap smear.
- Take an ultrasound on the abdomen showing a picture of the female organs and the pelvis.
- Inject dye into the uterus and Fallopian tubes and X-ray them (*hysterosalpingogram*).
- Place fluid in the uterus and do an ultrasound (*sonohysterogrqphy*).
- Take a CT scan to examine the female organs and pelvis.
- Take an MRI to examine the female organs and pelvis. There is no X-ray involved with this procedure.
- Look inside the uterus with a telescope that has a light at the end (*hysteroscopy*).
- Scrap the inside of the uterus to get tissue to examine (*Dilatation and Curettage, D&C*).
- Look into the pelvis with a telescope that has a light at the end (*laparoscopy*). This is done through a very small cut (*incision*) in the abdomen.

TREATMENT

Treatment will depend on the cause of the abnormal bleeding. It can include:

- Doing nothing to allow the problem to take care of itself over time.
- Hormone treatment.
- Birth control pills.
- Treating the medical condition causing the problem.
- Laparoscopy.
- Major or minor surgery
- Destroying the lining of the uterus with electrical currant, laser, freezing or heat (*uterine ablation*).

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Follow your caregiver's recommendation on how to treat your problem.
- See your caregiver if you missed a menstrual period and think you may be pregnant.
- If you are bleeding heavily, count the number of pads/tampons you use and how often you have to change them. Tell this to your caregiver.
- Avoid sexual intercourse until the problem is controlled.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have any kind of abnormal bleeding mentioned above.
- You feel dizzy at times.
- You are 16 years old and have not had a menstrual period yet.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You pass out.
- You are changing pads/tampons every 15 to 30 minutes.
- You have belly (*abdominal*) pain.
- You have a temperature of 100º F (37.8º C) or higher.
- You become sweaty or weak.
- You are passing large blood clots from the vagina.
- You start to feel sick to your stomach (*nauseous*) and throw up (*vomit*).

Document Released: 12/18/2006 Document Re-Released: 10/15/2010
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.