

[Return to Web version](#)

Dysmenorrhea: Painful Menstrual Periods

Why do some women have painful periods?

Most women have some pain with their periods. The pain can start just before your period or at the beginning of your period. It can last 1 to 3 days. The pain can be bad enough to keep you from doing your normal activities.

Painful periods, or dysmenorrhea (say: “dis-men-oh-ree-ah”), are not usually serious. However, sometimes painful periods can be caused by an infection or by [ovarian cysts](#) (fluid-filled sacs in the ovary). Pain also can be caused by [endometriosis](#) (say: “en-doe-me-tree-oh-sis”). This is a problem with the lining of the uterus.

[Return to top](#)

How are painful periods treated?

You can try using heating pads or taking a warm bath. You can buy medicines without a prescription to help with the symptoms of PMS. These medicines usually combine aspirin or acetaminophen with caffeine, antihistamines or diuretics. Some brand names include Midol, Pamprin and Premsyn PMS.

Over-the-counter pain relievers can also help with the pain. These include ibuprofen (brand names: Advil, Motrin), ketoprofen (brand name: Orudis KT) and naproxen (brand name: Aleve). These medicines work well for mild or moderate pain. If these don't help, you can talk to your doctor about a stronger pain reliever.

Your doctor might want you to try using birth control pills or a birth control shot. These medicines can make your periods less painful.

[Return to top](#)

What if these treatments don't work?

If none of these treatments work, your doctor might want to check for ovarian cysts or endometriosis. An ultrasound test lets your doctor see if you have ovarian cysts. A minor surgery called a laparoscopy (say: “lap-ah-ross-ca-pee”) is used to check for endometriosis. This is a way of looking inside your uterus by making a small cut in your skin and putting a thin tube inside.

[Return to top](#)

How can I tell if I have a more serious problem?

Talk to your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Painful periods that started later in life
- Pain at times other than the first couple of days of your period
- Unusual vaginal discharge or bleeding
- Pain that doesn't go away when you take medicine to relieve it

[Return to top](#)

Source

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