Self Care for Dysmenorrhea
(Menstrual Cramps)

Description
Painful menstrual cramps.

Frequent signs and symptoms
- Severity of symptoms varies from woman to woman and from one time to the next in the same woman.
- Cramping and, sometimes, sharp pains in the lower abdomen, lower back, and thighs.
- The pain usually begins with your period and lasts for hours to days.
- The pain may begin a week or more before your period and last for a few days after it stops.

Causes
Menstrual pain is a result of strong contractions of the muscles of the uterus.

Treatment (General Measures)
- Initial treatment aims are to relieve pain.
- Heat helps relieve pain. Use a heating pad or hot water bottle on the abdomen or back. Take warm baths.
- Try to stop smoking and decrease alcohol use.

Medication (if not allergic)
For minor discomfort, use non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen or naproxen. Take these medicines with food and use as directed on package insert.

Activity
Exercise reduces the discomfort of menstrual cramps.

Diet
- Avoid drinking caffeine-containing beverages.
- Herbal teas may help reduce symptoms for some.

Notify Health Services if:
You have symptoms of dysmenorrhea/menstrual cramps that cannot be relieved with above treatments.

Health Services ~ Division of Student Life ~ Winthrop University

Adapted from “Griffith’s Instructions for Patients”, 7th Edition
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