

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