Irregular and Postmenopausal Bleeding: When to Contact Your Doctor

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Irregular menstrual bleeding (irregular periods) can come in many forms. It is defined as any type of bleeding that is abnormal when compared to the last few periods. It can include heavy bleeding, spotting, light periods, or periods that start early or come late. It also includes periods that are less than 21 days or greater than 35 days apart.

WHAT CAUSES IRREGULAR MENSTRUAL BLEEDING?
There are many causes of irregular bleeding. Non-threatening causes include polyps or overgrowth of tissue within the womb. Occasionally, cancers can cause irregular bleeding. Factors like stress, diet, birth control pills, thyroid imbalance, and pregnancy can have an effect on your period.

Call your doctor if you are suffering from any of the following:
• Heavy bleeding: soaking more than 1-2 pads or tampons per hour
• Bleeding that lasts for more than 7 days
• Periods that occur more frequently than every 21 days or less frequently than once every 35 days
• Heavy and heavy are associated with excessive bruising or a family history of bleeding disorders
• If you are dizzy or lightheaded after bleeding for some time

POSTMENOPAUSAL BLEEDING:
Menopause is the natural ending of periods that usually occurs for women between the ages of 45 and 55. The average age for women is 51. You are considered postmenopausal once you have not had any bleeding for 12 months in a row.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR:
Any vaginal/uterine bleeding that occurs after a woman has achieved menopause should be discussed with your doctor in order to rule out cancer as a potential cause.

MEDICAL CARE AND TREATMENT OPTIONS:
If you develop postmenopausal bleeding or irregular menstrual bleeding, please call your Osteopathic Family Physician. Most causes of irregular menstrual bleeding are not life threatening and can be resolved with medication, or they may resolve on their own. However, if you have heavy bleeding or bleeding after going through menopause, it is important to be evaluated right away. In case of any emergency, you should call your doctor or 911 right away.

MEDICAL ATTENTION:
WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION:
Remember that good nutrition is needed for proper growth. If your child is not gaining weight or is not growing as expected, consult your medical provider. Signs of hunger in a baby (which can be applied to formula fed babies as well) include tongue sucking, hands in mouth and rooting reflex. Look for these signs before feeding your baby and continue to check for fullness as you are feeding.

BEGIN nutritous solid foods between 4 and 6 months of age. Look for your baby's ability to control their neck and head movements as well as interest in starting foods. You may choose to start with a simple cereal, but a gradual introduction of a variety of foods, flavors, and textures is recommended. Try adding fruits and vegetables first, including applesauce, avocado, sweet potato, carrots, peas, beans, etc. By 8 to 10 months, you should aim to feed your baby mashed versions of the same foods you would feed yourself or older children, and coordinate a feeding schedule that corresponds with family mealtimes. Feed your baby only when hungry and stick to portions of 2-3 tablespoons. Never force-feed your baby. Remember that in the first year of life the majority of calories still comes from mom’s milk or formula.

WHAT TO AVOID AND WHAT TO SUPPLEMENT:
Many medications (including drugs and alcohol) can be passed in breast milk. If you choose to drink alcohol, you should limit what you drink and breastfeed at least two hours after the last drink.

If you take medications, the online resource LactMed will provide information about safety of use in breastfeeding moms. LactMed: toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/newtoxnet/lactmed.html

Breast milk provides enough calories, protein, fat, and every essential vitamin except Vitamin D. If you are exclusively breastfeeding, your physician will prescribe a Vitamin D supplement to give your newborn. Avoid cow's milk until 12 months of age, because it does not contain the recommended nutrition for proper growth and development. Avoid honey for the first year of life, due to an increased risk of botulism.