



WHAT TO EXPECT

Your Guide to Cramps

Primary dysmenorrhea is another name for common menstrual cramps. Cramps usually begin one to two years after a woman starts getting her period. Pain usually is felt in the lower abdomen or back and can be mild to severe. Common menstrual cramps often start shortly before or at the onset of the period and last for one to three days. They usually become less painful as a woman ages and may stop entirely after the woman has a baby.

What Are the Symptoms of Menstrual Cramps?

The symptoms of menstrual cramps include:

- Aching pain in the abdomen (Pain can be severe at times.)
- Feeling of pressure in the abdomen
- Pain in the hips, lower back, and inner thighs

What Causes Common Menstrual Cramps?

Menstrual cramps are caused by contractions in the uterus, which is a muscle. The uterus, the hollow, pear-shaped organ where a baby grows, contracts throughout a woman's menstrual cycle. If the uterus contracts too strongly, it can press against nearby blood vessels, cutting off the supply of oxygen to the muscle tissue of the uterus. Pain results when part of a muscle briefly loses its supply of oxygen.



Taking aspirin or another pain reliever, such as Pamprin, can help relieve mild menstrual cramps.

How Can I Relieve Mild Menstrual Cramps?

To relieve mild menstrual cramps:

- Take aspirin or another pain reliever, such as Pamprin.
- Place a heating pad or hot water bottle on your lower back or abdomen. Taking a warm bath may also provide some relief.
- Women who exercise regularly often have less menstrual pain. To help prevent cramps, make exercise a part of your weekly routine.



How Do I Know If My Cramps Are Normal?

If you have severe or unusual menstrual cramps, or cramping that last for more than two or three days, contact your doctor. Menstrual cramps, whatever the cause, can be treated, so it's important to get checked.

For more information see: (1) <http://women.webmd.com/pms/premenstrual-syndrome-pms-topic-overview>; (2) <http://www.4women.gov/FAQ/pms.htm>; (3) www.menopause.org. This information is not intended to replace the advice of a doctor. Chattem disclaims any liability for the decisions you make based on this information.

