



Irregular Periods: Why doesn't my period come once per month?

What is a regular period?

Healthcare providers often ask if your period is "regular." Regular/normal periods come every 3 to 5 weeks. This time is determined by the FIRST day of one period to the FIRST day of another period. When your period comes it should last 7 days or less. There can be heavier bleeding at the beginning of your period. The use of 3-6 moderately soaked pads or tampons a day is normal during your period.

Ask your healthcare provider for the name of one of the many great apps for your phone that can help you track your period. Your healthcare provider can also give you a calendar to track your period.

What if my period isn't "regular"?

Some teens do not have a period every month. When periods first start, they may not come every month in the first 2-3 years. In the beginning you may have periods less than once a month or you may have periods more than once a month. These periods may last less than 7 days or can last for weeks at a time. If your period is coming more than once a month or lasting longer than a week you should talk to your healthcare provider.

Why is my period irregular?

Lots of things need to happen for you to have a period every month. Your brain needs to send a message to your ovaries to make hormones to give you a period. When you first start your period these "messages" may not work the way they are supposed to. It can take up to 2-3 years for the brain and the ovary to communicate properly so that you get a "regular" period.

What will my healthcare provider do if my periods aren't regular?

Your healthcare provider will talk to you to find out how often you have a period, how long your period lasts and how much you are bleeding. Your healthcare provider will do a physical exam that may include a breast and external genital exam. Your provider may draw blood to check your hormones and check for anemia (low iron levels). If you are having frequent or heavy periods you may become anemic from too much blood loss.

How will my healthcare provider treat my irregular periods?

If your periods are not causing you any difficulty your healthcare provider may not need to do anything. Your healthcare provider will ask you to keep track of your periods and let them know if things change. If your iron levels are low, your healthcare provider may recommend starting an iron supplement to correct this or a medication to reduce your monthly blood flow. If your periods are coming too often your healthcare provider may talk to you about using hormones to make your periods shorter, lighter and less often. These hormones usually come in the form of birth control pills and can be taken even if you are young or not having sex.

When should I talk to my healthcare provider?

If you have any questions about your periods, you should always check with your healthcare provider. You should be sure to talk to your healthcare provider if:

- Your period lasts longer than 7 days
- You are using more than 6 pads or tampons per day
- You need to change your pad or tampon every 1-2 hours
- You pass large clots or soak your bed sheets or clothing with menstrual blood
- Your period comes more than once a month
- You go more than 3 months without a period
- There is a change from your regular period pattern
- You should always let your healthcare provider know if there is a chance you could be pregnant