

Menstruation

For World Menopause Day
NHS Staff 19/10/23

Dr Caroline A Taylor BM, FFSRH

Associate Specialist and Clinical lead SRH

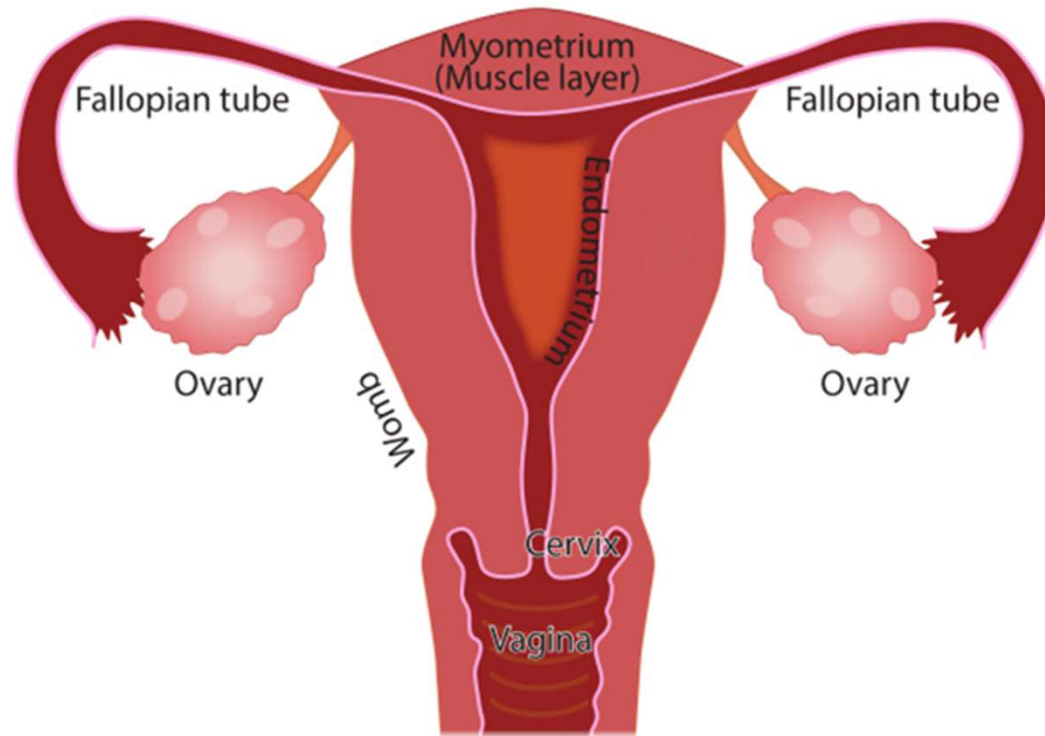
Specialist interest in Contraception, Menopause and Vasectomy

Solent Sexual health service

Covering

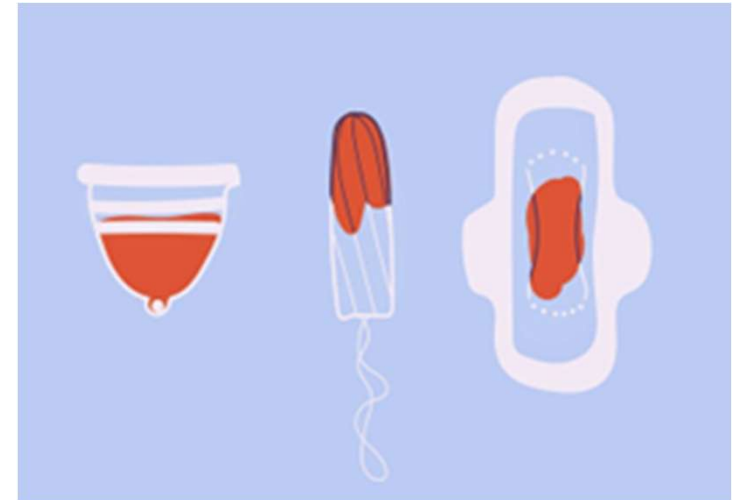
- Anatomy of female reproductive tract
- Definitions
- Menstrual cycle
- Symptoms associated with periods
- Period problems
- What affects periods?
- Specific problems
 - Polycystic ovarian syndrome
 - Fibroids
 - Endometriosis
 - Premenstrual syndrome

Anatomy



Menstruation

- A woman's monthly bleeding, often called a “period.”
- Body discards the monthly build-up of the lining of uterus (womb).
- Menstrual blood and tissue flow from the uterus through the small opening in the cervix and pass out of the body through the vagina.
- Usually lasts for 3-7 days



Definitions:



Menarche – first menstrual period

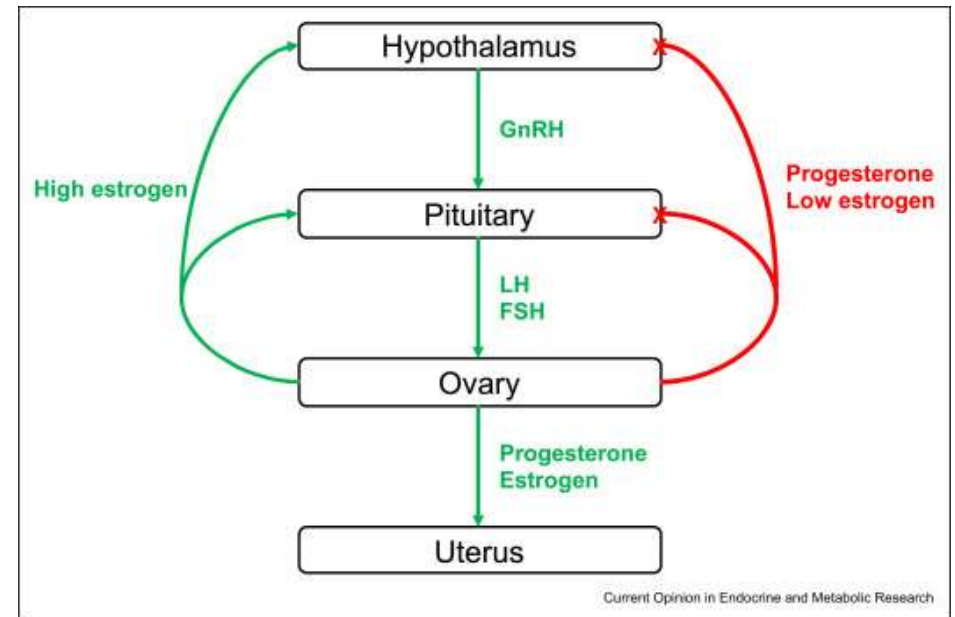
- Average age 12 years (8 - 16 years is normal)

Menopause - Last menstrual period – defined retrospectively

- Perimenopause - time leading up to last menstrual period and including 1st year after LMP
- Post menopause – any time after 12 months after LMP.

Menstrual cycle

- From the first day of one period to first day of the next period
- Usually quoted as 28 days but “normal” is 21 – 35 days
- 4 phases of cycle due to changing levels of hormones which come from the pituitary gland.



4 phases of menstrual cycle

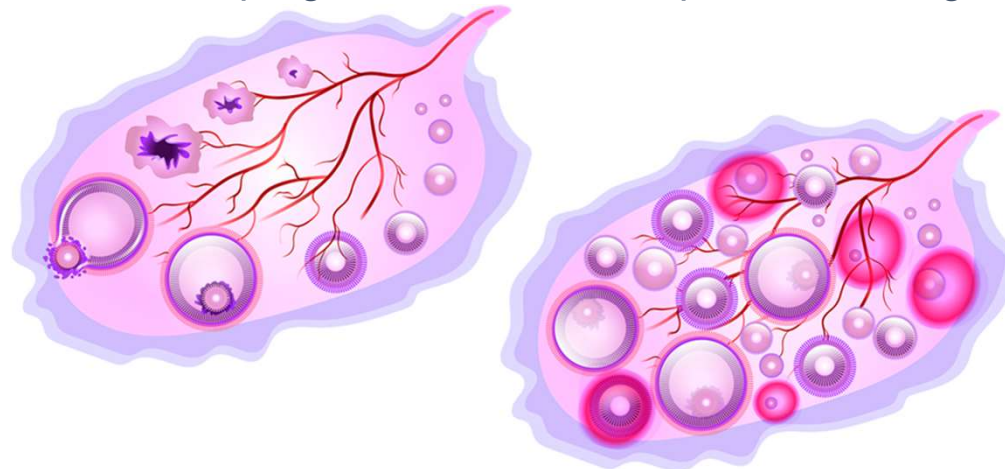
1. **Menstruation:** shedding of uterine lining if pregnancy has not occurred
2. **Follicular phase:** rise in Follicle Stimulating hormone (FSH) levels causes follicles to develop in the ovary – follicular cells produce oestrogen – this level rises causing lining of womb to grow and thicken

One follicle will become dominant and have a fully mature egg (ovum).

1. **Ovulation:** A sudden increase in Luteinizing hormone (LH) causes the ovary to release its egg.
2. **Luteal:** Lasts 14 days. The egg leaves the ovary and travels through the fallopian tubes to the uterus. The remains of the follicle in the ovary becomes a corpus luteum and produces progesterone which alters the line of the womb to prepare it for pregnancy

If the egg gets fertilised, it attaches to the uterine lining (implantation) and pregnancy occurs.

If the egg remains unfertilised, the progesterone levels drop and the lining of the womb sheds.



Symptoms associated with periods

- Mood changes.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Headache.
- Food cravings.
- Bloating.
- Breast tenderness.
- Acne
- Cramps



Period problems

- Irregular periods
 - Periods that occur less than 21 days or more than 35 days apart.
- Oligomenorrhoea
 - Infrequent periods
- Amenorrhoea
 - Not having a period for three months (or 90 days).
- Menorrhagia
 - Menstrual flow that's much longer or heavier than usual.
- Dysmenorrhoea
 - Periods that are accompanied by severe pain, cramping, nausea or vomiting.

Period problems

- Intermenstrual bleeding
 - Bleeding or spotting that happens between periods.
- Post coital bleeding
 - Bleeding after sex
- Pre menstrual syndrome (PMS/ PMT / PMDD)
 - Exacerbation of symptoms before period

What affects periods

- Pregnancy
- Hormones
 - Contraceptive pills (combined and progestogen only)
 - Contraceptive implant
 - Contraceptive injections
 - Hormonal Coil
 - Copper coil
 - Hormone replacement therapy (HRT)



Polycystic ovarian syndrome PCOS

- Features
 - irregular periods
 - Excess androgens
 - Polycystic ovaries
- Causes
 - Unknown
 - Insulin resistance
 - Abnormal levels of hormones in body inc insulin
- Treatment
 - Lifestyle changes: 5% weight loss
 - Medication
 - Fertility treatment



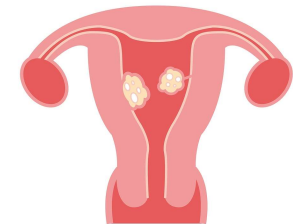
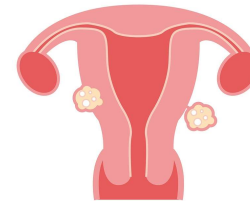
Premenstrual Syndrome PMS

- Symptoms suffered for few days before period starts and settle once period starts
 - bloating
 - breast tenderness
 - mood swings and irritability
 - Acne
- Causes: hormonal changes before period
- PMDD – Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder
 - Symptoms severely affect quality of life
 - Hormonal levels normal but body's response to these levels is exacerbated
 - Treatment – hormonal



Fibroids

- Non-cancerous growths in or around the womb (uterus)
 - muscle and fibrous tissue- uterine myomas or leiomyomas
- Variable in size
 - Tend to shrink after menopause
- Often asymptomatic
- Possible symptoms:
 - heavy periods or painful periods
 - tummy (abdominal) pain
 - lower back pain
 - a frequent need to urinate
 - constipation
 - pain or discomfort during sex
- Rarely cause infertility or affect pregnancy
- Treatment only if causing problems



Endometriosis

- Tissue similar to the lining of the womb grows in other places The cause of endometriosis is not known.
- Cause
 - Theories – none have been proven
 - genetics
 - Problem with the immune system
 - Endometrial cells spread through the body in the blood or lymph or retrograde menstruation
- Can affect any age
- Symptoms – variable
 - Lower tummy/back – can be worse during period
 - period pain that stops you doing your normal activities
 - pain during or after sex
 - pain when peeing or pooing during your period
 - feeling sick, constipation, diarrhoea, or blood in your pee or poo during your period
 - difficulty getting pregnant
 - heavy periods.



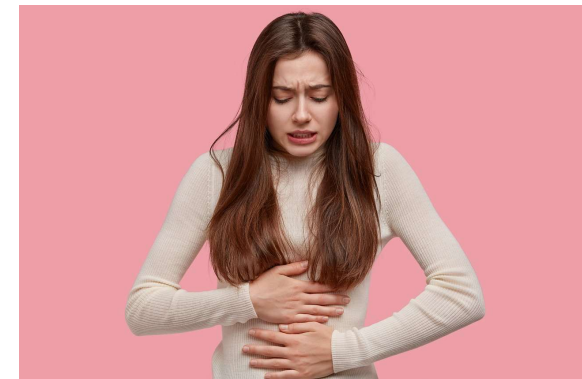
Endometriosis

- Diagnosis
 - Laparoscopy, USS (?), MRI
- Treatment
 - Painkillers
 - Hormones:
 - combined pill/ patch/ implant/injection, hormonal coil
 - gonadotrophin-releasing hormone (GnRH) analogues
 - With addback HRT
 - surgery to remove endometriosis tissue
 - surgery to remove parts affected



When should you seek help

- Positive pregnancy test and abdominal pain
- Bleeding in between periods and/or after sex
- Bleeding after the menopause
- Painful periods not relieved by simple OTC painkillers
 - paracetamol, ibuprofen, aspirin
- Heavy periods:
 - needing change of sanitary wear more than every 1-2 hrs
 - needing to use pads and tampons at the same time
 - needing to take time off work or school during periods
 - clots >10p size
 - bleeding onto clothes / bedding
 - periods lasting >10 days
 - tiredness / shortness of breath



Questions??

Thank you