

# Are You Affected by Heavy Menstrual Bleeding?

If you are avoiding social events or missing work because of heavy menstrual bleeding, a procedure called uterine ablation could be an option because it helps stop abnormally heavy uterine bleeding in 90 percent of women.

The procedure preserves the uterus but ablates the uterine lining, minimizing or eliminating menstrual flow. Uterine ablation can be done in a variety of ways, and is offered by gynecologists at Holy Family Hospital and Merrimack Valley Hospital.

## Symptoms of heavy menstrual bleeding?

Women generally begin to experience heavy bleeding when they are in their late-30s to mid-40s and approaching menopause. Heavy menstrual bleeding,

estimated to affect 20 percent of women, can interfere with daily life.

## Abnormally heavy menstrual bleeding can cause women to

- Be physically tired and nauseated
- Experience cramping
- Have headaches
- Suffer with moodiness, depression and anxiousness
- Lack confidence
- Miss work, social and athletic events

## Is uterine ablation for anyone experiencing heavy periods?

Abnormal uterine bleeding affects about one in every five women and is often due to changes in hormone levels caused by perimenopause. It can also be caused by

medical conditions such as cancer, fibroid tumors and miscarriage.

## What is perimenopause?

Perimenopause is when a woman's hormone levels and menstrual periods become irregular as she approaches menopause. Symptoms typically begin when a woman reaches her late-30s to mid-40s, and one of the symptoms can be heavy menstrual bleeding. When a woman has had no period for a year she is considered to be in menopause. The average age of menopause is 50.

## If I have uterine ablation, can I still have children?

Uterine ablation is only appropriate for women who have completed childbearing as it can cause irreversible loss of fertility.



*If heavy menstrual flow is interfering with your life, talk with your gynecologist to understand more about the uterine ablation procedure if you think it may be an option for you.*

*To identify a gynecologist in your area who offers this treatment option, please contact DoctorFinder™ at 800-488-5959.*

# Women Need Not Feel Embarrassed About Incontinence

Almost half of women who have had a baby have some degree of pelvic organ prolapse

Pelvic organ prolapse is caused by injury to the muscles or supporting tissue of the pelvic floor.

The main cause of this type of injury is having had children. Other causes of pelvic support problems are prior pelvic surgery, menopause, aging and intense physical activity. Also, factors that add more pressure on the abdomen can cause pelvic organ prolapse such as being overweight or obese, being constipated and straining to have a bowel movement, and chronic



Following a surgical procedure, Gynecologist Melinda R. Birdsall, MD, FACOG, goes over a patient chart with Kathy Renzi, RN.

coughing. Heredity is another important factor since this condition often runs in families.

“The key to effectively treating pelvic organ prolapse is making the proper diagnosis. Women should not feel embarrassed to discuss their symptoms with their health care provider. However, it can often times be difficult since many women with prolapse can also have problems with urine leakage,” said Melinda R. Birdsall, MD FACOG, an award winning gynecologist at Merrimack Valley Hospital who specializes in pelvic reconstructive surgery. “Almost one half of women who have had a baby have some degree of pelvic organ prolapse. However, pelvic support problems can also occur in women who have never had children.”

Without medical treatment or surgery, prolapse can continue farther into the vagina, and even through the vaginal opening. Pelvic organ prolapse can cause discomfort and pressure, affect sexual function, and affect bodily functions such as urination and bowel function.

## Types of pelvic organ prolapse include:

**Prolapse of the rectum** happens when the back wall of the vagina weakens and the rectal wall pushes against the vaginal wall, creating a bulge which may become noticeable during bowel movements.

**Prolapse of the bladder** happens when the front wall of the vagina prolapses. The bladder may prolapse into the vagina which can cause the urethra to prolapse as well. Urine leakage during coughing, sneezing, or exercise is a common symptom.

**Herniated small bowel** happens due to weakening of the upper vaginal supports following a hysterectomy when the front and back walls of the vagina separate, allowing the intestines to push against the vaginal skin.

**Prolapsed uterus** is caused by the weakening of ligaments at the top of the vagina, which causes the uterus to fall. Depending on the degree of weakness, the uterus can fall into the upper portion of the vagina, lower part of the vagina, the vaginal opening or protrude outside the body.

**Vaginal prolapse** occurs following removal of the uterus (hysterectomy) which provides support for the top of the vagina. The top of the vagina falls toward the vaginal opening causing the walls of the vagina to weaken. The top of the vagina may eventually protrude out of the body through the vaginal opening.

*If you have symptoms of pelvic organ prolapse you can make an appointment with Melinda R. Birdsall, MD by calling 1-800-488-5959 or by logging on to [www.Steward.org/Merrimack-Valley](http://www.Steward.org/Merrimack-Valley) and clicking on DoctorFinder™.*