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9 Causes Of Longer Periods & When You Need To Worry

By Carina Wolff | August 8, 2016



Periods are annoying enough as they are, but it can be worrisome when they're suddenly really long. A heavier or lengthy period isn't always cause for alarm, as there are a number of causes for longer periods, and not all of them are harmful. Knowing when to worry and when you're just experiencing a normal change in your body can help you relax when it comes to your menstrual cycle.

"A women usually experiences a variation in her cycle due to a hormone flux, which can be attributed to travel, stress, diet, medications, and other changes to her physiological state," fertility specialist [Dr. Hal Danzer](#) says to Bustle over email.

Most periods last three to five days, but even two to seven is normal. If your period is always seven-days long, you likely don't have to worry, but if your period suddenly jumps from four to nine, you may want to go get it checked out. "Generally speaking, you should only be concerned if your cycle pattern changes," says Danzer. "This is usually due to nutrition changes or any change to the woman's physiological state."

A number of factors can affect the length of your period, and while some indicate other health issues, many are no big deal. Here are nine causes of longer periods — and when you need to worry about them.

1. Change In Hormone Levels

"The most common cause of a longer period or change to a woman's cycle is a hormone variation," says Danzer. "When hormone levels change, the length of the period may also change. This is usually not something to worry about, and if generally normal."

2. Thyroid Gland Changes

"A third of women in their late 30s to 40 experience thyroid gland changes, which can cause heavier or longer periods," says Danzer. "This is not something to worry about, but you should visit your gynecologist."

3. Polyps

Polyps are abnormal growths of tissue that can occur in any organ, including the uterus. "When women have polyps in their uterus, they may experience staining before and after their period, which may make them seem longer. They may also experience spotting in-between periods." Polyps are usually benign, but they can be cancerous, so it's important to get them checked out.

4. Clotting

"A less common cause of longer periods may be attributed to clotting," says Danzer. "This is generally only something to worry about if a girl experiences heavy and long periods from the time she starts her first period."

5. Changing Birth Control Pills

Certain birth control pills can impact frequency, duration, and flow levels of menstrual periods, according to Everyday Health. Changing your birth control can influence menstrual bleeding, which is a normal part of adjustment.

6. Sexually Transmitted Infections

Unusually long or painful periods or spotting between menstrual periods can be a symptom of an STI, according to American University. This bleeding may appear as one long period, but it could mean you have something like gonorrhea or chlamydia, which can be treated, especially if caught early.

7. Miscarriages

A single, heavy, late period may be due to a miscarriage, says Mayo Clinic. If it occurs at the time of your regular period, it's unlikely that a miscarriage is the case, but if you've recently had sex, this could be the reason.

8. Ovarian Cysts

Ovarian cysts are common, and can cause irregularly long menstrual bleeding during your cycle, according to the Center of Menstrual Disorders and Reproductive Choice. However, there's no reason to panic. Most are benign and they rarely are cancerous, but the larger ones can disrupt

your normal flow. They usually disappear on their own, but go see your doctor, who can help assure you that your cyst is benign.

9. Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) is an endocrine system disorder that can lead to heavy and irregular periods, according to Mayo Clinic. PCOS can lead to infertility later on, so it's important to diagnose it early so you can help treat it.

If your period is suddenly abnormally long, don't panic. Just see your doctor, who can help find the root of your lengthy menstruation.

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