



**Metropolitan
Pediatrics, L.L.C.**
www.metropediatrics.com

MENSTRUAL CRAMPS (DYSMENORRHEA)

DEFINITION:

Diagnostic Findings:

- Cramps during the first 1 or 2 days of a period
- Pain in lower mid-abdomen
- Pain possible radiating to the lower back or both thighs
- Associated symptoms of nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or dizziness in some girls

Cause: Menstrual cramps are experienced by more than 50% of girls and women during menstrual periods. They are caused by strong contractions (even spasms) of the muscles in the womb (uterus) as it tries to expel menstrual blood. Menstrual periods usually are not painful during the first 1 to 2 years after a girl has started having periods. However, once ovulation (the release of an egg from the ovary) begins, the level of progesterone in the bloodstream increases and leads to stronger contractions and some cramps.

Expected Course: Cramps last 2 or 3 days and usually occur with each menstrual period. There are some drugs that can keep the pain to a very mild level.

HOME CARE

Ibuprofen: Ibuprofen (Advil and Motrin are 2 brand names) is an excellent drug for menstrual cramps. It not only decreases the pain, but also decreases contractions of the uterus. Your daughter can take 2 every 6 – 8 hours. The drug should be started as soon as there is any menstrual flow or the day before, if possible. Don't wait for the onset of menstrual cramps. Ibuprofen should make your daughter feel good enough not to miss anything important.

Naproxen (Aleve) is another good medicine for menstrual pain. Take 2 pills twice a day as needed.

Local Heat: A heating pad or warm washcloth applied to the area of pain may be helpful. A 20 minute warm bath twice daily may reduce the pain.

Aggravating Factors: Any type of pain will seem more severe in people who are tired or upset. Your daughter should try to avoid exhaustion and inadequate sleep during menstrual periods. If your daughter has troubles or worries, encourage her to share them with someone.

Full Activity During Menstrual Cramps: Your daughter should not miss any school, work, or social activities because of menstrual cramps. If the pains are limiting your daughter's activities even though she is using ibuprofen or Naproxen, discuss with her physician or nurse practitioner.

Common Mistakes: A common mistake is to go to bed, but people who are busy usually notice their pain less. There are absolutely no restrictions; your daughter can go to school, take physical education classes, swim, take a shower or bath, wash her hair, go outside in bad weather, date and so on during her menstrual periods.

CALL OUR OFFICE

IMMEDIATELY if:

- The pain becomes so bad that your daughter is unable to walk normally
- An unexplained fever (over 100 F [38.7° C]) occurs
- Your daughter starts feeling very sick

(continued on reverse side)

During regular hours if:

- Ibuprofen or naproxen doesn't provide adequate pain relief
- The menstrual cramps cause your daughter to miss school or other important activities
- A vaginal discharge occurs
- The pain increases with urination or bowel movements
- The pain persists beyond the last day of menstrual flow
- You have other concerns or questions