

Why have I been referred to the menstrual disorder clinic?

Your doctor has referred you to this clinic to investigate the cause of your period problems. We aim to treat your period problems at the first clinical appointment, where possible. This clinic appointment will ensure that you have investigations and treatment at the first visit rather than having to come back a second time.

What will happen on my first visit?

You may have some investigations (tests) during your visit. The number of tests you have will depend upon your symptoms. These tests often give reassurance or may allow a prompt diagnosis and treatment.

Either a specialist doctor or nurse will examine you and perform any tests. You are welcome to bring a friend or relative to keep you company during the consultation. We ensure your privacy, dignity and confidentiality during the visit. A changing area will be provided and a nurse will remain with you during your consultation and examination.

We would advise you to take simple pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen 1-2 hours before your appointment. This is to help reduce any crampy 'period' type pain that you may experience during the procedure.

You may be asked for some or all of the following information at your appointment, so please bring to the clinic if possible:

- Details of your past medical history, including drug allergies
- Details and dates of any operations or treatments you have had
- List of any medication you are currently taking, including doses
- Date of your last menstrual period and cervical smear test.

Further investigations or additional treatments required which cannot be carried out in this clinic will be discussed with you and arranged. (Your diary may be useful if you need to book further appointments)

What tests might I have?

Depending on your symptoms, you may have some of the following tests:

- **Ultrasound scan**

This may be performed at your first visit or a further appointment arranged. You may have a transvaginal (internal) ultrasound scan. The scan probe is placed inside the vagina bringing it closer to the pelvic organs being examined. It is used to assess uterine (womb) size, the thickness of the lining of the womb cavity (endometrium), the ovaries and surrounding structures. Fibroids and ovarian cysts can sometimes be identified.

- **Swabs.**

We may need to perform High Vaginal and Chlamydia swabs to exclude any possible infection.

- **Endometrial biopsy**

Depending on your bleeding symptoms and ultrasound scan result you may require an outpatient endometrial biopsy. This may be combined with a procedure called "hysteroscopy" (see below). A thin plastic tube is inserted through the vagina and cervix, into the uterine (womb) cavity and a sample taken from the lining (endometrial tissue). This is sent to the laboratory for detailed microscopic examination. The procedure takes a few minutes and can cause a period-type discomfort. You may have slight vaginal bleeding afterwards and will need to use a sanitary pad or panty liner for a day or two.

- **Out-patient hysteroscopy**

A fine, narrow telescope called a "hysteroscope" is sometimes used to look inside the womb. A trained nurse or doctor will perform this procedure, which takes about 15 minutes. Local anaesthetic is given to minimise discomfort. We will be able to identify any abnormality within the womb, although in many cases no serious cause for bleeding is found.

Some women experience period-type abdominal cramps during the procedure, but this will pass quickly, once the procedure is completed.

The most common findings are:

- Thickened endometrium – this is the lining of the womb cavity
- Polyps – these are growths of glandular tissue inside your womb cavity or on the cervix, which are usually benign (not cancerous)
- Fibroids – these are muscular lumps (usually benign) in the womb wall

Thickened endometrium will be biopsied. Findings such as polyps and fibroids may also be dealt with at the time of your procedure

- **Colposcopy**

If you have a problem that is associated with your cervix you may require a colposcopy examination. The cervix is closely examined using a magnifying lens (colposcope). A doctor or nurse who is trained as a colposcopist will perform this examination. By applying different solutions to the cervix we are able to detect any abnormality. We may need to take a small piece of tissue (biopsy) from the cervix and send this to the laboratory for detailed examination.

- **Blood tests**

We may need to take some blood tests to assess possible anaemia.

What If I am due a period or have a period at the time of the appointment?

It is sometimes difficult to perform certain tests while you are bleeding heavily as the view of the inside of the uterus may not be very clear.

If your periods are regular and predictable and the appointment coincides with **your period**, please telephone and we will rearrange the appointment. However if your bleeding is light or spotting or you are at the end of a period we may still be able to do the test. If your bleeding is unpredictable and there is no pattern to your cycle, please do not change your appointment, as we may still be able to see you in clinic and do some tests and discuss treatment.

The following are options of treatment that will be discussed or may be initiated at your visit.

- **Medical treatment**

Discuss and/or commence non-hormonal or hormonal medications.

- **Mirena IUS**

This is a small, plastic T- shaped device which is inserted into the womb and slowly releases the hormone progestogen; this thins the lining of the womb and gradually reduces bleeding. This may be performed at your visit under local anaesthetic. This is also an effective contraceptive device.

- **Endometrial Ablation**

This is a procedure to remove the lining of the womb and can be performed under a local or general anaesthetic. Following this procedure most women will experience a noticeable reduction in their periods and, in some cases, periods stop altogether. This will be discussed in more detail at your visit.

- **Surgical procedures**

To discuss surgical treatment to remove Polyps or fibroids or hysterectomy if all other options of treatment have failed.

What will happen at the end of my clinic visit?

- Following any procedure you will be given an explanation of what was found.
- You may be offered refreshments and asked to stay for 10-15 minutes to make sure you are well after colposcopy or hysteroscopy
- A nurse will give you verbal and written advice and discharge information if any tests have been performed.
- Test results may take up to 4 weeks to be available. Your results, and whether you need another appointment, will be communicated to you and your GP by letter.

If you have any questions or anxieties in relation to your test or treatment, please contact:

Menstrual Disorder Clinic:

- Bishop Auckland 01388 455184
- Chester Le Street 0191 3876433

If you have any queries about your appointment, please contact the secretary on 01388 455184 or **0191 3332939**

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To investigate the cause of period problems