UTERINE HEALTH

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Overview of Common Conditions

These conditions, when present, may be asymptomatic or may appear with some but not all symptoms, varying from individual to individual.

Endometriosis

Growth of endometrial tissue outside the uterus

Common symptoms:

- Chronic pelvic pain, especially just before and during the menstrual bleeding
- Acute pain: during sex, bowel movements, urination
- Heavy menstrual bleeding or spotting between cycles
- Difficulty getting pregnant

Uterine Fibroids

Non-cancerous growths that form in or around the uterine lining

Common symptoms:

- Changes in menstrual patterns: longer, more frequent, heavier
- Menstrual pain (abdomen, back), abdominal cramps, pain during intercourse
- Enlarged abdomen or abdominal pressure
- Difficulty urinating, more frequent urination, or pain during urination
- Constipation, rectal pain, or difficult bowel movements
- Multiple miscarriages or infertility

Uterine Cancer

Endometrial cancer most common type of gynecologic cancer

Common symptoms:

- Abnormal vaginal bleeding
- Pelvic pain and/or pressure

Polycytic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

Dysregulation of reproductive hormones that lead to elevated androgen levels and formation of cysts on ovaries

Common symptoms:

- Menstrual cycle irregularities (light or no menstrual bleeding)
- Weight gain (particularly around the abdomen)
- Difficut to treat acne
- Hirsutism (hair growth on face, chest, other regions)
- Infertility

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)

Bacterial infection

Common symptoms:

- Pelvic pain (lower abdomen)
- Irregular vaginal discharge
- Fever

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MENSTRUAL CYCLE

Normal Menstrual Bleeding

- **Onset:** Between 10 to 15 years with 12 years the average age
- **Frequency:** Usual bleeding occurs every 25 to 30 days (median: 28 days)
- **Regularity:** Cycle length: 7 to 9 days
- **Duration:** Typically 3 to 8 days
- **Flow volume:** Usually change pad about every 3-4 hours and tampon every 4-8 hours

Menstrual History:

Age at menarche, menstrual cycle pattern, associated symptoms, and any recent change in menstrual bleeding.

Evaluate for abnormal bleeding:

- Have you experienced bleeding between menstrual cycles, or earlier or later in your cycle than expected?
- Does menstrual bleeding interrupt or negatively impact daily activities?
- How often do you change your pad or tampon during peak days?
- About how many times do you tend to change your pad/tampon in a day?
- Do you regularly wake up at night to change your pad or tampon?
- Have you noticed any clots when bleeding? If yes, how big are they?
- Have you ever been told you have anemia?
- Has there been a recent life event or change in your health (ie, weight change, stress, other)?

Possible signs of abnormal heavy bleeding:

- Bleeding through more than 1 pad or tampon every hour for several hours in a row.
- Needing double pad/tampon protection to control menstrual flow.
- Getting up at night to change a pad or tampon.
- Bleeding regularly for longer than a week.
- Noticing blood clots larger than a quarter.
- Avoidance of events, work, school, or exercise due to heavy flow.
- Feeling unusually tired or short of breath.

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MENSTRUAL BLEEDING

STAGES OF THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

Normal Menstruation

A change in hormone levels produced by the pituitary gland and the ovaries that regulate the monthly menstrual cycle.

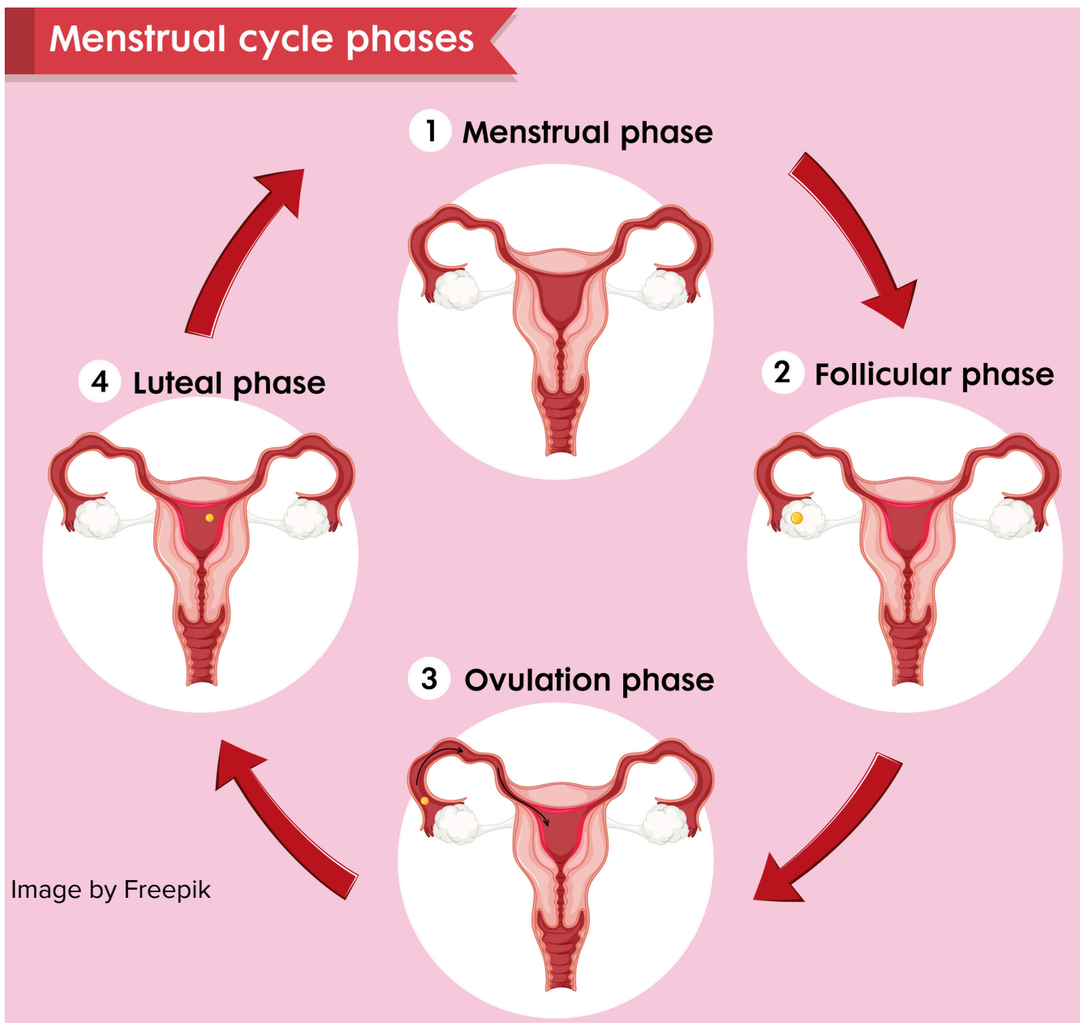
- Day 1 is marked by the initiation of bleeding.
- The menstrual cycle is divided into 2 main phases:
  - **Follicular phase**
  - **Luteal phase**

Follicular Phase

- Begins on the first day of menstruation, and continues until ovulation.
- The pituitary gland releases follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) and luteinizing hormone (LH).
- Usually one follicle matures into an egg and is released.

Luteal Phase

- After ovulation, progesterone is released to build the uterine lining.
- When fertilization of the egg does not occur, the uterine lining is shed, beginning a new menstrual cycle.



Sources
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Menstrual Health and Hygiene.
UpToDate. Normal Menstrual Cycle.

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