

5 Exercise and diet

Move more and eat more fruit and vegetables! Not just when you have your period, but every day of the month. Exercise can relax and tone your muscles, promote circulation and reduce stress. Try walking, running, sports, dancing or yoga.

Eating fruit and vegetables gives you fibre and vitamins B, A and C. Some studies have shown that people with cramps don't get enough of these vitamins. Vitamin supplements may help. They should be taken daily, not just when you have cramps.

Speak with your doctor, pharmacist or health care provider.

6 Keep a diary – a period diary

Use the chart on the right to keep a record of your periods – when you get them and on which days you get cramps.

Use a “P” for period and a “C” for cramps. You can also write down other symptoms like headache, bloating or vomiting. Take your diary with you when you see your doctor or health care provider. He or she will look at it to learn more about your periods and see if there’s a pattern.

Hurray!

Now you can do something about the pain.

Charting Your Period – Calendar

Days of the Month

Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
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Cramps!

And what to do about them

Do you get bad cramps with your period?

You are not alone.

Cramps are a pain in the ... uterus.

What causes cramps?

Cramps are caused by the uterus when it squeezes out menstrual fluid during your period.

The amount of pain depends on a hormone called prostaglandin, which is made in your body. The more prostaglandin – the worse the pain.

What do they feel like?

You might feel painful cramping in your lower belly, lower back or even in your thighs. For some the feeling is uncomfortable; for others it hurts so much they can't function at all.

Cramps usually start on the first day of your period but may start a day or two earlier. You may also have diarrhea or constipation, vomiting, headache, fatigue, dizziness or bloating.

What can I do about them?

6 Tips ...

1 Use heat

Use a hot water bottle or heating pad on your belly or back, or soak in a warm bath. Warm moist heat relaxes muscles and eases menstrual cramps. If the heat makes the pain feel worse, call your doctor immediately.

2 Try massage

Massage your lower belly or have a friend give you a back rub. Massage improves circulation and relaxes muscles. It also just feels good.

3 Try acupressure

You can do this on yourself.

Use your thumb to press:

- the inside of your ankle behind the ankle bone
or
- the spot 3 finger widths below the kneecap
on the outside of your shin bone.

Hold for 10 seconds and release.

1 Take medication

Talk with an adult about medication. If your pain is really bad, you may need to start taking medication. Some medications are much better than others.

Here are some examples:

NSAIDs*: They lower the amount of prostaglandin that your body makes. Look for Ibuprofen, Advil or Motrin in the drug store. Follow the directions on the bottle. Take the pills as soon as you start to feel cramps. If these don't work, speak to your doctor about a prescription for a stronger NSAID. Your doctor will also examine you to rule out other reasons for your pain.

Oral contraceptives (birth control pills): Some doctors prescribe these pills for young women who regularly suffer from severe cramps. The hormones in the pill prevent the body from making the prostaglandins that cause the cramps. They can reduce cramps for up to 90% of girls.

*NSAID: Non Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug