Period and Menstrual Cycle Health

As a woman, your menstrual health is something you should always be concerned about. When you are between 11 and 14 (on average), you will get your first period, which then starts your regular menstrual cycles. If you are currently an older woman, you are well aware of how this works, but might not be aware that what you are experiencing is abnormal.

**A Normal Menstrual Cycle**

The term ‘normal’ is a little subjective when it comes to your menstrual cycle because it can vary between different women. What you are really looking for is your own patterns, and whether they change suddenly or not. Many people like to say a menstrual cycle is 28 days long, but it is not unusual for it to be considerably longer or shorter. The important thing is to look at changes that happen suddenly, such as missing a period completely or having several months where the length keeps changing dramatically. In a ‘normal’ menstrual cycle, you should ovulate around the same time each month and have the same type of flow.

**Healthy Menstrual Period**

When you get your period, there are more things to look at to ensure it is a healthy menstrual period. Typically, you will bleed for 4-6 days, but again, this can vary. However, if you have a month where the flow is shorter or less overall than usual, you might want to tell your gynecologist. Some common issues that might warrant a visit to your doctor include a lighter or heavier flow, blood that is much darker than it typically is, blood clots, and excessive pain when you did not experience it before.

**Don’t Ignore PMS Symptoms**

PMS, or premenstrual syndrome, can also vary based on the woman. Some women start experiencing PMS symptoms around the time they get their period, while others have it worse on random months. This latter is what you are looking for. If you have always gotten a little moody and headaches before your period, it is nothing to be concerned about. However, if you are suddenly getting severe cramps, extreme mood swings, aches and pains, and migraine headaches when you never did before, that is something to tell your doctor. These PMS symptoms might be from hormonal changes, stress, and other factors that need to be addressed. PMS changes are also signs that your menstrual cycle may change as well.