

There are no stupid questions.

Women's Health: An Overview

Our expert women's health team is here to answer your commonly asked questions about women's gynecologic health.



Women's Health

Your health should be one of your biggest priorities. Unfortunately, with jobs and families to care for, women often don't take care of themselves as well as they take care of others. Because women's health covers many different topics, our doctors answer frequently asked questions for women's gynecologic health. This isn't a substitute for seeing your doctor, but will hopefully help you know more about your body and when it might be time to schedule an appointment.

1. My periods have never been regular. Is this something I should be concerned about?

Dr. Sandgren: If a woman misses her period for 3 months in a row multiple times and she's not on birth control, then she should she should talk to her doctor. Of course, this could be a sign of pregnancy, but it could also indicate something more serious.

2. I seem to get yeast infections frequently. What can I do to prevent them?

Dr. Hostetler: There is some evidence that taking a probiotic (*restoring the body's natural bacteria*) can be helpful. Avoiding douching, pantliners, and pantyhose makes a difference for some women as well. Sometimes changing birth control methods can help. It's not uncommon to get yeast infections after oral antibiotics, so only take those antibiotics when they're absolutely necessary (*not for colds or other viral infections*). A healthy diet is also helpful. If a woman has diabetes, making sure her blood sugar is well controlled can help prevent yeast infections as well.

3. What if I forget a few days of my birth control pill?

Dr. Raichle: The birth control pill is most effective when taken at about the same time every day. It works by stopping you from ovulating and thickening the mucous within the cervix which prevents sperm from getting to the egg. Birth control effectiveness is lowered when pills are missed because ovulation might occur and the cervical mucous might not be an effective barrier. If you forget to take the pill, do not panic. The chance of pregnancy is still lower than if you were never on birth control in the first place. If you forget to take some of the pills in a pack, do not have unprotected intercourse and call your local OB/GYN office for assistance. If this occurs, here is my advice:

1. Use back up protection.
2. Resume the pill pack and expect some breakthrough bleeding from the missed pills.
3. Finish the pill pack and start the next pack on the following Sunday just as you would have if you had not missed any pills (i.e. shorter fourth week for menstrual cycle).
4. Take a pregnancy test when it's been about two weeks after unprotected intercourse. It takes about two weeks for a test to turn positive after conception.

If you have had unprotected intercourse during the month in which you forgot to take your pills, immediately call your local OB/GYN provider. They will guide you through the process of determining your risk of pregnancy and whether or not you are a candidate for emergency contraception.

4. Can I have a pelvic exam even when I'm having my period?

Dr. Sandgren: Most definitely! We can check for STDs, get a pap smear, insert an IUD, and examine the pelvic organs all while a woman is on her period.

5. Why does it hurt to have sex?

Dr. Sandgren: Sexual dysfunction such as pain with intercourse is more common than you think, and you are not alone. **Unfortunately, studies have shown that only about 1 in 4 women ever bring this to the attention of their health care provider.** In our OB/GYN clinics, this is a common complaint, and we feel that it is necessary to address this, as it is such an important part of your lives. The good news is that a cause will be identified in most cases. The bad news is that there are a lot of reasons why this might occur.

In many cases the cause will depend on your age and whether you are pre-menopausal or post-menopausal. Here is a list of what would be addressed during a visit with an OB/GYN:

1. Location of the pain – superficial or deep
2. Source of the pain – skin, muscle or nerve
3. Inspection of the skin for changes associated with pain
4. Evaluate for vaginal or bladder infections
5. Evaluate the uterus and ovaries for abnormalities (fibroids, cysts)
6. Possible surgical evaluation for a condition called Endometriosis
7. Evaluate menopausal status and possible lack of estrogen

I encourage you to not silently suffer through your discomfort. OB/GYNs, in particular, are enthusiastic about helping you to work through this problem.



Conversation Starters

It's not always easy to discuss these things, but that's what your doctor is here for! The more open and honest you are with your doctor, the more he or she can help you live your healthiest life! Try these conversation starters to get things moving:

- *My friend said that my painful periods were not normal. What can I do?*
- *The pill doesn't seem to fit with my lifestyle. What other options can we talk about?*
- *I am having a hard time enjoying sex. Is it normal for it to hurt?*

Although managing your work and family life is important, taking care of yourself is necessary too! The friendly team of doctors at Upland Hills Health is here to help you.

Meet the Experts

UHH Women's Health Team



Dr. Barbara Hostetler
OBGYN



Dr. Timothy Raichle
OBGYN



Dr. Maria Sandgren
OBGYN

Doctors Barbara Hostetler, Timothy Raichle and Maria Sandgren make up the exceptional team of women's health specialists at Upland Hills Health. They are dedicated to providing you the highest quality in health and wellness care.

Call to schedule an appointment:

Dr. Hostetler
608.930.7115
Dodgeville

Dr. Raichle
608.930.7115
Dodgeville

Dr. Sandgren
608.930.7115
Dodgeville

608.437.8033
Mount Horeb

608.437.8033
Mount Horeb

Visit us online at uplandhillshealth.org/womenshealth to learn more about women's health at Upland Hills Health.