Women With Obesity Are More Likely to Experience Heavier Periods

As women gain weight, they may lose more blood during menstruation.

April 12, 2021 By Alicia Green

New findings published in the Journal of Endocrinology suggest that women with obesity face a greater risk of experiencing heavier periods, defined as a woman needing to change a tampon or pad after less than two hours and/or passing large blood clots, reports HealthDay.

For the study, researchers measured the body mass index (BMI)—a ratio of weight to height—and menstrual blood loss of 121 women with regular menstrual cycles. Results showed that menstrual blood loss rose as individuals' BMI increased. (Scientists explained that after controlling for other factors, the relationship, though weak, was statistically significant, meaning it is unlikely to have been the result of chance.)

The scientists conducted a similar study in mice to further understand why a higher BMI might cause heavier periods. Researchers noted that mice on a high-fat diet had a much higher body weight and exhibited delayed healing of the uterine lining—which stops post-menstrual bleeding—compared with those on a normal diet. (The mice with obesity also had more markers of inflammation than their counterparts.)

Scientists suggested that losing weight and taking anti-inflammatory medications might help reduce heavy periods in women with obesity. "A commonsense approach would be to offer weight loss support to women experiencing heavy menstrual bleeding with a high BMI as part of their treatment," said Jacqueline Maybin, PhD, a researcher at the MRC Centre for Reproductive Health at the University of Edinburgh, and the study's author.

However, Maybin stressed that doctors should consider the fact that other factors—such as bleeding disorders and fibroids and other abnormal growths in the uterus—may cause heavy periods.

For related coverage, read "Study Sheds Light on Menstruation Around the World" and "Women With Erratic Menstrual Cycles Face Higher Mortality Rates."

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.