







# Pharmaceutical Treatment Options for Heavy Menstrual Bleeding

Note that none of the treatments listed below will impact on future fertility.

Treatment	Description	Effect on Menstrual Bleeding	Is it a Contraceptive?	Possible Unwanted Outcomes
<b>Levonorgestrel-releasing intra-uterine system (LNG-IUS)</b> 	A small plastic device, placed in the uterus, which slowly releases progestogen	Bleeding reduced by up to 95% May not see full benefit for 6 months	Yes	<i>Common:</i> Irregular bleeding, which usually settles 3 – 6 months after insertion Hormone-related problems such as breast tenderness, acne, or headaches, which if present are generally minor and short lasting  <i>Less common:</i> Amenorrhoea (lack of periods) <i>Rare:</i> The device very rarely can go through the uterine wall
<b>Tranexamic acid</b> 	Two tablets taken orally, 3 – 4 times a day, from day 1 of the cycle for up to 4 days	Bleeding reduced by up to 58%	No	<i>Less common:</i> Heartburn, diarrhoea, headaches
<b>Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)</b> 	Tablets taken orally from day 1, or just before, until heavy blood loss has stopped	Bleeding reduced by up to 49%	No	<i>Common:</i> Heartburn, diarrhoea <i>Rare:</i> Worsening of asthma in sensitive people Peptic ulcers with possible bleeding
<b>Combined oral contraceptives (COCs)</b> 	One pill daily for 21 days, followed by a 7 day break	Bleeding reduced by 43%	Yes	<i>Common:</i> Mood changes, headaches, nausea, fluid retention, breast tenderness <i>Rare:</i> Deep vein thrombosis, stroke, heart attacks
<b>Oral progestogen (norethisterone)</b> 	Tablets, taken orally, 15 mg from day 5 to day 26 of cycle	Bleeding reduced by up to 83% in the long term	Yes	<i>Common:</i> Weight gain, bloating, breast tenderness, headaches, acne (all usually minor and short lasting) <i>Rare:</i> Depression
<b>Injected progestogen</b> 	Injected intramuscularly every 12 weeks	Bleeding is likely to stop completely	Yes	<i>Common:</i> Weight gain, irregular bleeding, amenorrhoea (lack of periods), premenstrual-like syndrome (including bloating, fluid retention, breast tenderness)  <i>Less Common:</i> Small loss of bone mineral density, largely recovered when treatment stopped

Adapted from N.I.C.E. *Heavy Menstrual Bleeding Clinical Guideline*. January 2007 - <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG44>