



Health Professionals  
Committed to the  
Reproductive Needs of  
Children and Adolescents

## Menstrual Suppression for Girls with Special Needs

### Do you have to have a period every month?

No. For girls with special needs, some parents may choose to make periods stop. This is known as menstrual suppression and is a common request from parents for their daughters with special needs.

### Why would you want to make a period go away?

Some parents choose to stop monthly periods because they are very painful or because there is a lot of bleeding. For a girl that is unable to care for herself or is in diapers, it can be especially difficult when she has her period. Other parents may find that their daughter has mood changes, behavior changes or even seizures with her period. Girls with special needs may also be at risk for abuse and the medicines used to stop periods can also protect against an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy.

### Is there any risk to stopping periods?

There is no evidence that stopping periods by using hormones is harmful to a girl's long-term health. However, most healthcare providers will want a girl to start menstrual cycles on her own before they initiate menstrual suppression.

### How can a provider stop periods?

The only medical way to stop periods is to use hormones. These hormones usually come in the form of birth control. Birth control pills that contain estrogen and progesterone can be taken daily to allow a period to come anywhere from every month to not at all. This period will be predictable and should be light and without cramping. A healthcare provider can explain how to take the pills to extend a cycle so that periods are not coming monthly. The hormones can also be delivered through a patch. This type of birth control (pill/patch) is not an option for girls that are at risk for blood clots.

A birth control injection can be given every 12 weeks to stop periods. In some girls, this injection can cause weight gain and long-term use can affect the bones, although these changes are reversible when the medication is stopped. These are risks parents can review with a health care provider.

An intrauterine device (IUD) that contains progesterone can be put inside the uterus to stop periods and provide birth control. For most girls with special needs this can be done by a specialist with sedation or anesthesia.

A healthcare provider can talk with parents about what is the most appropriate treatment plan. All birth control methods are safe but there are certain girls for whom some types of birth control are safer than others.

### Will the period stop immediately?

Any hormones that are used to stop periods will not work immediately. There may be quite a bit of spotting or vaginal bleeding when these hormones are first started. This is normal. The body needs to shed the blood already in the uterus so that there is not a monthly period. Over time the bleeding should lessen and stop. If the bleeding seems significant or does not stop, speak to a healthcare provider about treatment options or the need to switch methods.