

Iron supplements improve anemia, quality of life for women with heavy periods

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This photo is of lead author Dr. Peuranpää, Hyvinkää Hospital. Credit: Dr. Peuranpää

A study by researchers from Finland found that diagnosis and treatment of anemia is important to improve quality of life among women with

heavy periods. Findings published in *Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica*, a journal of the Nordic Federation of Societies of Obstetrics and Gynecology, suggest clinicians screen for anemia and recommend iron supplementation to women with heavy menstrual bleeding (menorrhagia).

One of the common causes of [iron deficiency](#) and [anemia](#) is heavy bleeding during menstruation. Over time monthly menstrual [iron](#) loss without adequate dietary [iron supplementation](#) can reduce iron stores in the body. Previous studies have found that [iron deficiency anemia](#) may impact women's physical performance, cognitive function, mood, and overall quality of life.

Led by Dr. Pirkko Peuranpää from the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Hyvinkää Hospital in Finland, this prospective study assessed the impact of anemia and iron deficiency on health-related quality of life in 236 women treated for heavy [menstrual bleeding](#). The participants were randomized to either hysterectomy or treatment with a levonorgestrel-releasing intrauterine system such as Mirena®.

The team separated the participants into two groups. Women with hemoglobin—the oxygen-carrying proteins in the red blood cells—levels less than 120 g/L were defined as anemic and those with levels greater than 120 g/L were in the non-anemic group. Researchers also measured levels of ferritin in the blood to assess iron stores in both groups.

Results show that at the start of the study, 27% of women were anemic and 60% were severely iron deficient with ferritin levels less than 15 µg/L. In those women who were anemic only 8% took an iron supplement. One year following treatment hemoglobin levels had increased in both groups, but women who were initially anemic still had significantly lower levels compared to those in the non-anemic group.

One year after treatment women in the anemic group had a significant increase in energy, along with physical and social function, and a decrease in anxiety and depression compared to the non-anemic group. It took five years for the iron stores to reach normal levels. "The quality of life of women with heavy periods is plural, but the treatment of anemia is important to get good results," concludes Dr. Peuranpää. "Our findings suggest that clinicians should screen for anemia in [women](#) with heavy menstrual bleeding and recommend early iron supplementation as part of the treatment process."

More information: "Effects of Anemia and Iron Deficiency on Quality of Life in Women With Heavy Menstrual Bleeding." Pirkko Peuranpää, Satu Heliövaara-Peippo, Ian Fraser, Jorma Paavonen And Ritva Hurskainen *Acta Obstetricia et Gynecologica Scandinavica*; Published online: June 9, 2014 [DOI: 10.1111/aogs.12394](https://doi.org/10.1111/aogs.12394)

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