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A woman in military camouflage is climbing a horizontal bar. She is looking down with a focused expression. The background is a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image in white boxes with black text.

**Ever
considered life
without a
monthly
period?**

It's possible!

Menstrual Suppression

for Service Women

Active duty women play a critical role in the United States military. **Female service members have unique health and logistic considerations** when it comes to menstrual health. For some women, **menstrual suppression** may cause less frequent or lighter periods. Some women may not have any period at all. There are many **myths about menstruation**, and women should discuss any concerns with healthcare providers. This pamphlet aims to **provide accurate information about menstrual suppression** so that service women may better understand the options and decide if it is right for them.



1) What is menstrual suppression?

Menstrual suppression involves using methods of **hormonal contraception to alter a women's menstrual cycle**. It may include bleeding for fewer days, lighter bleeding, fewer side effects of menstruation, or no period at all. Suppression can be used due to personal preference or **to ease menstrual symptoms**, such as heavy bleeding leading to anemia, severe cramping, or mood symptoms.



2) Who is a candidate?

Women are candidates for menstrual suppression if they have **bothersome symptoms** or a **personal preference** to decrease or stop their cycle. **Certain health issues may exclude women** from using some forms of menstrual suppression. For example, someone who has migraines with aura or a history of blood clots may not be a candidate for suppression options containing estrogen.



3) What are the risks?

When a period is suppressed with medication (like hormonal birth control), **there is no risk to not having your period each month.** Each hormonal method has its own risk profile which you should discuss with your health care provider. **It is safe to skip periods for years.**



4) What are the side effects?

A common side effect of menstrual suppression is **irregular, unscheduled bleeding or “breakthrough bleeding.”** Because it is irregular and unscheduled, it is difficult to prepare for breakthrough bleeding. Over time, the rate of unscheduled bleeding decreases. For many forms of menstrual suppression, there are options to troubleshoot bleeding patterns.



5) How will I know I'm not pregnant without a regular period?

The methods used to achieve menstrual suppression **also work as birth control**. If you are using your method correctly and consistently, **rates of pregnancy are low** (how low depends on your method). If you are concerned about being pregnant (breast tenderness, nausea/vomiting, fatigue) you should take a pregnancy test.

CONDITIONS IMPROVED BY MENSTRUAL SUPPRESSION

The following medical conditions may improve with menstrual suppression:

DYSMENORRHEA: Painful periods

HEAVY MENSTRUAL BLEEDING: Heavy periods that may lead to anemia (low blood count)

CHRONIC PELVIC PAIN: Pain in the lower abdomen and pelvis lasting greater than 6 months

ENDOMETRIOSIS: A medical condition resulting in painful intercourse, abdominal pain, and infertility

IRREGULAR BLEEDING OR RARE PERIODS: Such as with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)

PREMENSTRUAL DYSPHORIC DISORDER (PMDD): A severe form of premenstrual syndrome (PMS) that may interfere with work, social activities, and relationships

MENSTRUAL MOLIMINA: Symptoms before your period such as breast pain, headaches, or nausea/vomiting

MENSTRUAL SUPPRESSION METHODS

The likelihood of being able to skip periods differs between methods.

Oral Contraceptive Pills

Oral contraceptive pills can help regulate periods. To suppress or potentially skip your period entirely, skip the hormone free “reminder” pills and proceed to the next pack.

Hormonal Intrauterine Devices (IUDs)

Hormonal IUDs have various impacts on menstrual cycles. You may experience irregular periods, lighter periods, or no period at all.

NEXPLANON®

The NEXPLANON® implant causes periods to change or stop. Most people have off-and-on spotting.

Depo-Provera Shot

The Depo-Provera shot is administered by a provider every 3 months. It makes periods shorter and lighter (but can make periods irregular at initiation of use).

NuvaRing®

The NuvaRing® makes periods shorter and lighter. To skip periods, insert a new NuvaRing® after three weeks instead of leaving out the ring during the fourth week.



Want more information?

Make an appointment to discuss with your health care provider. Discussions about reproductive health can be uncomfortable to start. Here are some helpful ways to start the conversation with your provider.

“I was reading that there are options to decrease the severity of my period. Can we discuss the options?”

“I read that I may be able to stop my period in the pamphlet on menstrual suppression. Can you help me decide if this is the right decision for me?”

“When I was thinking about all the stressors of deployment, I was thinking about decreasing the stress of dealing with my period.”



Remember to talk to your provider to pick the menstrual suppression method that is right for you and your deployment environment!