

Fertility Outpatient Clinic

Examination for an irregular menstrual cycle

You have indicated that you have an irregular menstrual cycle or no periods. Your GP has referred you to the Fertility Outpatient Clinic for further testing.

This leaflet provides more information about the tests that may be performed. You will also receive an explanation about these tests at the first appointment with your doctor.

What happens during a menstrual cycle?

One follicle grows in the ovaries every month. This is also called an egg sac. The follicle has several functions:

- A follicle contains an egg. When the follicle is big enough, it bursts and releases the egg. This is called ovulation.
- A follicle produces the female hormone oestrogen. This hormone ensures the growth of the mucous membrane (the inner lining) in the uterus. After ovulation, the ruptured egg sac stops producing oestrogen.
- After ovulation, the ruptured follicle produces progesterone. Progesterone is another important female hormone. This hormone ripens the thick lining in the uterus. The ruptured follicle stops producing progesterone after about two weeks, causing the thickened lining in the uterus to shed. The lining is released through the vagina in the form of menstrual blood. This is your menstruation (or period). After menstruation, the cycle restarts with the growth of a new follicle.

What is regular menstruation?

Regular menstruation occurs every three to five weeks. You calculate this by counting from the **FIRST** day of one menstruation to the **FIRST** day of the next. Your menstrual cycle is considered irregular if it is shorter than three weeks or longer than five weeks.

Gynaecological examination

The uterus and ovaries can be seen through a vaginal (internal) ultrasound using an ultrasound probe. An ultrasound probe is a thin, elongated transducer that is lubricated and inserted into the vagina. This allows the doctor to see the inside of the abdominal cavity. The doctor will use a speculum (spreader) to examine the cervix.

The doctor will also perform an internal examination by inserting two fingers into the vagina and applying pressure to the lower abdomen with the other hand. This is to assess the position and size of the uterus and ovaries.

The information in this brochure is general in nature and is intended to give you an idea of the care and guidance you can expect. In your own situation, other advice or procedures may apply. This brochure is therefore only an addition to the specific (verbal) information from your specialist or practitioner.

Blood tests

The doctor can assess whether you produce enough hormones using a blood test.

Blood tests can only be done by appointment. Go to www.MMC.nl/bloedprikken or your patient portal on MijnMMC.

If you have a menstrual cycle, please have blood drawn on the third day of the next cycle. The start of the blood loss is the first day of the cycle. If the third day falls on a weekend or public holiday, make an appointment for the nearest workday.

If you have no menstrual cycle or if you menstruate only a few times a year, then it is not necessary to wait for day 3. You can perform the blood test on any day.

Appointment with your doctor

There are several causes of an irregular menstrual cycle. The doctor will discuss the reason for your irregular cycle at the follow-up appointment, as well as the most suitable treatment for you.

Questions

If you have any questions, please contact the Máxima MC Fertility Outpatient Clinic:

Telephone number: +31 40 888 95 58

(Monday to Friday 08:30–17:00)