

## Period when boyfriend is visiting <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

My boyfriend goes to another school, and will be visiting me soon. Unfortunately, I'll get my period the day before he arrives. Is there any way to make your period shorter? I have heard about menstrual extraction, but I don't know if that's an option. If such a thing exists, is it available to anyone, or do you need a prescription? Please write soon and let me know.

Signed,  
Not in the mood for Kotex

### Answer

Dear Not in the mood for Kotex,

Two's company, but sometimes three's a crowd when Aunt Flo comes to town at the same time as your partner! For some, having their period may be annoying or cumbersome while spending time with an intimate partner for a variety of personal reasons. So, you're not alone in your interest to put it off, make it shorter, or avoid it all together. Unfortunately though, the technique that you mentioned may not be appropriate for your desired end result. While the name might seem to describe what you hope to achieve, menstrual extraction (also called menstrual aspiration) involves removing the contents of the uterus with a suction device or syringe about one to three weeks after a missed period. It's also sometimes used to rid the uterus of any remaining tissue following a miscarriage. While that might not be the best option for your needs, you can successfully address your period and the situation you're dealing with in other ways.

If what you're hoping to do is reduce or completely eliminate your menstrual periods, it can be done with a number of prescription hormonal contraceptive methods through what is called menstrual suppression. Some varieties will diminish the experience of withdrawal bleeding (the bleeding that occurs with these methods that's similar to a menstrual period) over time with regular use. The use of other methods can be done continuously, without breaks, to achieve the same effect. Currently, some of the birth control methods that can be used for this purpose include:

- **Oral contraceptives** <sup>[2]</sup>: With most monthly pill packs, skipping the placebo pills (non-

hormonal pills) in your pill pack and starting the next pack immediately can reduce the likelihood of withdrawal bleeding. There are also extended pill packs on the market that contain fewer placebo pills, further reducing the number of times you experience withdrawal bleeding over time.

- **The contraceptive patch <sup>[3]</sup> (Ortho Evra) or ring <sup>[4]</sup> (NuvaRing):** Each of these contraceptives can be used continuously, without a break (i.e., a week where no device is used) to prevent withdrawal bleeding.
- **The contraceptive injection <sup>[5]</sup> (Depo-Provera):** About 50 to 60 percent of users stop having withdrawal bleeding as a benefit of the method after the first year and about 70 percent experience no bleeding after two years of use.
- **Hormonal intrauterine device (IUD) <sup>[6]</sup>:** This method significantly reduces monthly withdrawal bleeding; about 50 percent of users stop having any withdrawal bleeding after one year.

If you're already using a hormonal method, it's recommended that you speak with your health care provider about how and if you can use it to achieve menstrual suppression. If you're not using any hormonal methods, your provider can help you decide whether any of them would be a good fit for you. Before seeking a prescription or changing up the way you use your current method though, it's good to know that using any of these methods may take some time (several months to a year typically) to effectively suppress monthly bleeding. It's also worth mentioning that there are some pros and cons associated with menstrual suppression. Benefits include reduced symptoms associated with menstruation, such as pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS), irregular periods, and acne. On the other hand, breakthrough bleeding that occurs unexpectedly (particularly in the first one to three months of use), having difficulty determining if you're pregnant, or feeling uncomfortable with suppressing menstruation (though it's considered safe) are among some of the drawbacks. These are all factors to consider as you figure out how you'd like to proceed.

If by "soon" you mean that your boyfriend's scheduled visit doesn't quite leave enough time to experience the effects of menstrual suppression from hormonal contraceptives, you may choose to think about your situation in a different light. It seems as if you feel uncomfortable with having your period when your partner is visiting. Have you explored the reasons behind why you may feel this way? Have you discussed this with your partner? If not, consider having an honest discussion where you can both share your feelings about menstruating during the upcoming visit. You both may learn something new about each other and it may help you feel a bit more comfortable about the situation. If your primary concern is about getting intimate, though, sexual contact doesn't have to be off limits while you're on your period if you're both into it. To explore this further, read [Sex with period and tampon?](#) <sup>[7]</sup> for some tips and ideas to minimize discomfort and maximize pleasure.

Depending on your timeline to address your concern, you can try either or both of these options. Whether you speak with your provider for some medical intervention or have a frank discussion with your beau, here's hoping you find a way to be as comfortable as possible and enjoy each other's company soon!

Alice!

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