



Long and Irregular Cycles

By : Teresa Kenney, APRN, CFCP

Many girls when they are young have episodes of long and irregular cycles. It can be difficult to know what to do in this situation. First, let us think about the fertility system and how it begins to work.

Most girls start menses between the ages of 9 and 15 years. The average age of puberty is 12 years with 98% of girls starting by 15 years. When a girl has not started by 15 years, it is called primary amenorrhea and should be evaluated by a doctor. When a young girl starts having menstrual cycles, many times they do not have a period every month. In fact, it can take up to six years for the fertility system to fully mature, so much of the irregularity that occurs for young girls is a result of the body fully maturing and getting everything in synch. However, there are medical reasons that can cause long and irregular cycles.

cycle is considered *short* if it is less than 24 days and *long* if it is greater than 35 days. Most menstrual cycles by the time a girl is three years past her first period will be within the range of 21 to 35 days. When a girl goes greater than 90 days without having another period, it should be evaluated by a doctor. We call this condition secondary amenorrhea, which means that the menses is coming very infrequently.

There are many things that can cause irregular periods including pregnancy, medicines, stress, and medical conditions that disrupt the hypothalamic-pituitary endocrine system (a long word that refers to the pacemaker of the fertility system). Just like your heart has a pacemaker, your reproductive system also has a pacemaker system in the brain made up of the hypothalamus and pituitary gland. This system sends messages to your reproductive organs through the secretion of two hormones: FSH (follicle stimulating hormone) and LH (lutening hormone). Your reproductive organs, like the ovaries and cervix, respond to FSH and LH by secreting their own hormones—estrogen and progesterone, which guide the process of ovulation and menstruation.

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DID YOU KNOW????

Long and irregular cycles

- Long menstrual cycles are generally defined as cycles that are consistently longer than 38 days in duration
- When charting the cycle (NaProTracking) with the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System, these women will notice long stretches of dry days (no mucus) and “patches” of mucus days.
- An ultrasound series of the ovaries is difficult in long and irregular cycles because of the unpredictability of the occurrence of ovulation. Therefore, it is better for a physician to evaluate your health by performing specific hormone testing, a pelvic ultrasound, and a blood test for the body’s response to sugar (glucose).

From: Hilgers TW: The Medical & Surgical Practice of NaProTechnology, Pope Paul VI Institute Press, Omaha, NE, 2004

A newsletter dedicated to helping young women

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One condition that frequently can be missed with irregular cycles is called polycystic ovarian disease (PCOD). The hallmark of a woman with polycystic ovaries is a woman who has long and irregular menstrual cycles. PCOD is caused most likely from the over-secretion of certain hormones. This leads to an imbalance in the endocrine system, which manifests itself in the dysfunction of the menstrual cycle. PCOD causes an overproduction of something called androgens (otherwise known as male hormones), which cause symptoms in a young woman such as acne, excess hair growth and weight gain. However, you may not have all of these symptoms and still have polycystic ovaries. Polycystic ovaries can be diagnosed through blood tests, ultrasound and laparoscopy. Usually treatment in young girls is aimed at balancing the hormones and symptom management.

Another cause of irregular cycles is thyroid disorders. The thyroid is a gland that regulates growth, metabolism and

energy. You can have an underactive thyroid or overactive thyroid. This can be determined easily by a blood test and treated with medicine you take daily.

A third cause of long and irregular cycles is hypopituitary ovarian

dysfunction. This long word means that the brain is not signaling to ovaries to create an ovulation cycle. There are multiple causes of this phenomenon. One cause is stress, both acute and chronic. If a girl, for example, loses her grandfather and attends the funeral, dealing with the emotional stress is difficult. This could cause her pituitary gland to stop sending signals to the ovaries to release an egg. It is a protective mechanism that occurs that can be explained by saying that the body is trying to prevent a pregnancy during a stressful or physically difficult time.

In order to evaluate irregular cycles, a girl needs to track the menstrual cycle. This involves putting down on paper what is happening in her body. If the girl is fairly young, a mom could help her put down the basics on a calendar, such as the days of bleeding and any vaginal discharge. It also can be a place to chart cramping, pelvic pain, premenstrual symptoms, headaches, and fatigue. Or, if the girl has been having abnormal periods and other symptoms, having her chart using the Creighton Model Fertility Care System is very useful. A doctor trained in reading these charts can use the Creighton Model chart to evaluate, diagnose, and treat many women's health problems throughout an entire procreative life. For more information about the Creighton Model System and how it is being used to treat women's health problems or to find a medical consultant trained in NaProTechnology, visit www.fertilitycare.org.

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In essence,
Christian joy
is the spiritual
sharing in the
unfathomable
joy,
both divine
and human,
which is
in the heart of
Jesus Christ
glorified.

— Pope Paul VI, May 1975
Gaudete in Domino
(On Christian Joy)

To the youth of the world... (Pope Paul VI)

The Church looks to you with confidence and with love. Rich with a long past ever living in her, and marching on toward human perfection in time and the ultimate destinies of history and of life, the Church is the real youth of the world. She possesses what constitutes the strength and the charm of youth, that is to say the ability to rejoice with what is beginning, to give oneself unreservedly, to renew one's self and to set out again for new conquests. Look upon the Church and you will find in her the face of Christ, the genuine, humble and wise Hero, the prophet of truth and love, the companion and friend of youth. It is in the name of Christ that we salute you, that we exhort and bless you.

A Reflection on Abortion

By: Teresa Kenney, APRN, CFCP

There is
no place for
selfishness—
and no place
for fear!

Do not be afraid,
then, when
love makes
demands.

Do not be
afraid when
love requires
sacrifice.

— Venerable John Paul II

Her name was Jenny and when she was a senior in college she got pregnant and had an abortion.

Jenny was on my soccer team. She was high-spirited and fast. When I heard through another teammate that she was pregnant and had scheduled to have an abortion in my hometown that Saturday I did not know what to do. When I was in high school, my mom and I used to go to the abortion mill and pray the rosary on Saturday mornings. I would watch as young women went into a dark place looking scared as the clinic security wipped them inside so they would not have to see or confront the pro-life people outside. I decided to go home that weekend and pray in front of the abortion clinic hoping to see Jenny and to try to stop her from doing something that I knew was so wrong.


We stood outside praying for a long time. Then, I saw her. I could not believe she was actually there to destroy her baby. So, I yelled out to her “Jenny...”. I know she saw me because for a moment our eyes met and I saw her surprise and humiliation. Then, before I could say anything else, I was surrounded by the clinic security and pressed away. I began to cry feeling helpless. I cried for her baby who would never see the beauty of this earth and the face of her mother. I cried for Jenny who would carry the burden of knowing she ended her own flesh and blood and how it would haunt her throughout her life.

When we got back to college I could not look or speak to Jenny. Then she graduated and so for a while I forgot about the abortion.

Until one day, when I was a senior, Jenny showed up at one of our soccer games at college. She was holding a baby boy about nine months old. She walked up to me on the sideline and said, “Hello, Teresa. I want you to meet my son Zachary.” She even put the baby in my arms and looked at me in a way that let me know that she had this child because she knew it was the right thing to do. It was as if she wanted to say sorry and show that this child did not meet the same fate as her first. Maybe being there that day helped make the difference.

I finally felt the peace of knowing there was something good that came out of that horrible day at the abortion clinic. Maybe we couldn’t save that baby, but we saved another. Maybe a heart was converted to believing that life is a precious gift and it is never our choice to destroy it.

We need to reach out to women who get pregnant and feel desperate and alone. Women deserve better than to be sent to a place where life is forcibly ripped from them only to have guilt and shame follow. Life is never easy. We all have suffering in this world, but Jesus showed us that suffering is the way to Resurrection and Life. He did not promise a life free of pain but a life of great love and joy for those who seek His Truth. God asks us to seek the good of the other, to reach out in love to all our brothers and sisters but especially to the most vulnerable. We can make a difference in stopping abortion if we reach out in compassion and love to help women in situations like Jenny’s. We must speak out for those tiny babies who have no voice.



“O Lord, thou hast searched
me and known me! Thou
knowest when I sit down and
when I rise up; thou discernest
my thoughts from afar.”

— From Psalm 139



Resources

www.popepaulvi.com

www.DrHilgers.com

www.fertilitycare.org

<http://www.chastity.com>

<http://vocation-network.org>

www.onemoresoul.com

www.ewtn.com

Blessed Dina Bélanger (1897-1929)

(Compiled from texts by Léonard Bélanger, SJ, Montréal, September 20, 2004 (translated by Normand A. Léveillé, distant cousin of Dina, November 2004) and by Bob and Penny Lord.)

MARIE DINA MARGUERITE BELANGER (Soeur Marie-Sainte-Cécile de Rome) — Blessed Dina Bélanger was born and baptized on 30 April 1897 in St-Roch, Québec, the daughter of Olivier Octave Bélanger and Séraphia Matte, who were married at Neuville, Portneuf County, Québec on 23 June 1896. Her parents lived at 168 Notre Dame des Anges in the Parish of Jacques Cartier, Portneuf County. Dina was baptized at St. Roch, Québec, a church that was in the working man's section, on the same day that she was born. Dina had a brother who died at the age of 3 months. She was named Marie (after our Lady) Dina (after her father's mother) Marguerite (after St. Margaret Mary Alacoque). Dina's father was an auditor and her grandfather operated a grocery store in the St Malo district of Québec. Her ancestors all came from Charlesbourg.

This young girl was educated at Saint-Roch, then at the College of Bellevue directed by the Ladies of the Congregation. From 1916 to 1918, Dina studied piano at the Conservatory of Music in New York, and she planned to become a concert pianist. Between 1918 and 1921, Dina performed in concert for charitable works. While studying in New York, Dina lived with the Religious of Jesus-Mary.

She returned home and decided to enter religious life in the Congregation of Jésus-Marie at Sillery, where the nuns had their mother house. She entered the convent at age 24, in August 1921. She entered the order of Jésus-Marie in February 1922 and received the name Sister Marie Sainte-Cécile of Rome. She took her first vows on 25 August 1923.

As a nun, Dina Bélanger taught music. On two occasions the sisters sent her to teach at Saint-Michel of Bellechasse but both times, illness brought her back to Sillery where she stayed (teaching music) until her death. She could have taught in many areas as she had excelled in all her studies but due to her having shown such great talent in music at a young age and her continued education at the Conservatory of New York from 1916 to 1918, her superiors judged her best qualified to teach music.



She pronounced her perpetual vows in 1928. Less than a year later, afflicted with a pulmonary disease, she went into the convent infirmary and died there on 4 Septembre 1929.

Dina died on 4 Sept in the Couvent de Jésus-Marie, Sillery and was buried on 7 Sept 1929 at age 32, in St-Colomb de Sillery, Québec.

Despite her brief existence, Dina was renowned as a great mystic. She was raised to terrific heights in the areas of enlightenment and divine love. In 1951 her body was exhumed and placed in a lead sarcophagus in the Convent of Jésus-Marie in Sillery, where, today, many kneel to pray. On March 20, 1993, at ceremonies in Rome, Dina Bélanger became the first native of Québec to be Beatified by the Church. The day after the beatification, Pope John Paul II said, "All ages and all walks of life will find in Dina Bélanger a model of fidelity to the call of the Lord ..." (p.6) The quiet life of this talented young woman, who has been compared to St. Thérèse of Lisieux, is the subject of her autobiography which has been translated into several languages. Her canonisation process has already been placed in the hands of the Holy See.

As she prepared for her profession, she wished to offer Jesus a gift and began to prepare her symbolic "wedding basket": I desire to offer to Jesus, on the day of my Profession, a basket of purest gold adorned with pearls and rubies which are to be purchased by my acts of poverty. In the center of the basket, I wish to put the monogram of "Jesus-Marie" [the coat of arms of the Congregation] wrought in brilliant diamonds by the perfection of my actions. In the basket, there must be lilies, the beautiful virtue of chastity; red roses, acts of love; white roses, acts of charity towards my neighbor; lilies of the valley, acts of humility. For verdure [greenery], there will be ferns, represented by my acts of obedience and mortification."

"Heaven means possessing God; God is living in me, I possess him; thus I am enjoying heaven on earth." (p. 121)

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