Abnormal Uterine Bleeding

One-third of women experience abnormal uterine bleeding (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/vaginalbleeding) (AUB) in their lifetimes. AUB is bleeding from the uterus that is irregular, is more than normal, happens more frequently than normal, or lasts longer than normal in women who are not pregnant. Causes of AUB can be either structural or nonstructural. Nonstructural causes, such as blood coagulation disorders and dysfunction of the ovaries, cannot be diagnosed with imaging.

Structural causes include fibroids (noncancerous growths), adenomyosis (endometrial tissue growing into the uterine muscle wall), and cancer in the uterus (endometrial or myometrial). Structural cause can be evaluated with imaging.

To evaluate AUB, the doctor performs an assessment including taking a woman’s history, performing a physical examination, and ordering laboratory and imaging tests. Duplex Doppler ultrasound of the pelvis (an ultrasound technique that evaluates blood flow), transabdominal ultrasound (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/abdominus), or transvaginal ultrasound (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/pelvus) (from inside the vagina) is usually appropriate as the first imaging test. These tests are complementary and are often done together.

If initial imaging tests are not conclusive or the findings need further evaluation, ultrasound sonohysterography (ultrasound after injecting fluid into the uterus to better define the inside of the uterus) or pelvic MRI with and without intravenous contrast is usually appropriate.

After initial imaging tests, if surveillance is recommended, Doppler ultrasound of the pelvis, transabdominal ultrasound, transvaginal ultrasound, ultrasound sonohysterography (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/hysterosono), and pelvic MRI (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/mri-abdomen-pelvis) with and without intravenous contrast are usually appropriate. These tests are complementary and are often done together.

For more information, see the Abnormal Vaginal Bleeding (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/vaginalbleeding) page.

— By Samantha Greben, BA and Ryan K. Lee, MD, MBA. This information originally appeared in the Journal of the American College of Radiology.

Disclaimer

This information is copied from the RadiologyInfo Web site (http://www.radiologyinfo.org) which is dedicated to providing the highest quality information. To ensure that, each section is reviewed by a physician with expertise in the area presented. All information contained in the Web site is further reviewed by an ACR (American College of Radiology) - RSNA (Radiological Society of North America) committee, comprising physicians with expertise in several radiologic areas.

However, it is not possible to assure that this Web site contains complete, up-to-date information on any particular subject. Therefore, ACR and RSNA make no representations or warranties about the suitability of this information for use for any particular purpose. All information is provided “as is” without express or implied warranty.

Please visit the RadiologyInfo Web site at http://www.radiologyinfo.org to view or download the latest information.

Note: Images may be shown for illustrative purposes. Do not attempt to draw conclusions or make diagnoses by comparing these images to other medical images, particularly your own. Only qualified physicians should interpret images; the radiologist is the physician expert trained in medical imaging.