

## Post-menopausal Bleeding

Menopause is defined as the absence of menses for one full year. For most women, this occurs between ages 45-55, with the average being 51 years old. Bleeding after menopause is never normal and should always be reported to your healthcare provider. In 95% of cases, the cause of bleeding is non-cancerous; however, postmenopausal bleeding is sometimes the first symptom of uterine cancer. Some causes of bleeding include the following:

- **Endometrial or vaginal atrophy:** This is when the lining of the uterus or vagina become so thin from lack of estrogen that it gets irritated and bleeds
- **Endometrial polyp:** This is a non-cancerous growth that develops from tissue similar to the lining of the uterus. It can be attached to the uterus or in the cervix.
- **Fibroids:** If there is a fibroid (a benign overgrowth of the uterine muscle) that grows into the lining of the uterus, then bleeding could occur.
- **Hormonal effects:** Use of estrogen with progesterone hormone replacement can sometimes lead to abnormal bleeding.
- **Endometrial hyperplasia:** This is an abnormal thickening of the uterine lining usually due to an excess of estrogen. This lining can sometimes become abnormal and eventually lead to cancer.
- **Endometrial cancer:** Cancer of the endometrial lining

Anyone with postmenopausal bleeding should have an evaluation. Besides a pelvic exam, you can expect one or more of the following:

- **Transvaginal Ultrasound:** Used to evaluate the uterus and ovaries.
- **Endometrial Biopsy:** A small sample of the lining of the uterus is taken using a small catheter (like a very thin straw) that is inserted through the cervix into the uterus. The sample is then sent to the lab for review by a pathologist.
- **Saline infused sonohysterogram:** This is a special ultrasound where saline is injected in the uterus through a small tube to get an even clearer picture of the lining of the uterus.

Treatment of your abnormal bleeding is dependent on the cause and will be discussed by your healthcare provider.