

Periods are a natural part of being born female, but it's important they don't become a burden.

What are periods and why do they happen?

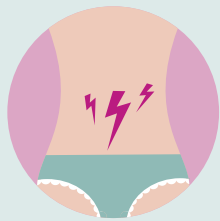
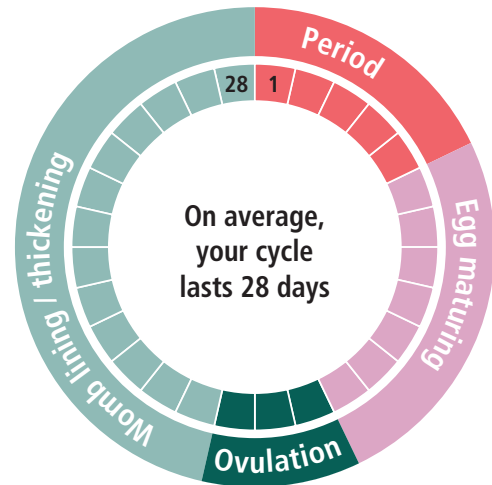
- The period (menstrual cycle) is a monthly series of changes a woman's body goes through in preparation for a possible pregnancy.
- Each month, one of the ovaries releases an egg — a process called ovulation.
- At the same time, hormonal changes prepare the uterus (womb) for pregnancy.
- If there's no pregnancy, the womb lining is shed, producing a period.

How often do they happen?

- Periods run from the first day of one period to the first day of the next and they aren't the same for every woman.
- They usually occur every 21 to 35 days and the period lasts for 2-7 days.
- Bleeding is often heaviest on day two.
- It is useful to keep track of your cycle, including the start and end dates, how long it lasts, and any changes in flow or symptoms.

Common symptoms:

Symptoms like **cramps**, **bloating**, **mood changes**, **tender breasts** and **fatigue** are common. They can be helped by lifestyle changes, pain management techniques, or seeking medical advice if symptoms are severe. Some types of hormonal contraception can reduce or stop periods.



Period pain

- Stomach cramps are a normal part of periods, caused by the muscles in your uterus contracting.
- This pain can extend to other areas such as your lower back and thighs.
- These cramps vary from a dull ache to something more intense and you might need painkillers.
- The combined contraceptive pill can also help, but if pain is severe, you should always seek help as it could be something more serious.

Mental Health:

Emotional symptoms are common before or during a period. The hormonal changes during the menstrual cycle can affect mental health, causing mood swings, irritability, emotional sensitivity, anxiety, and depression. Practising self-care, or engaging in stress management techniques can help, but it's important to seek help if symptoms become overwhelming.

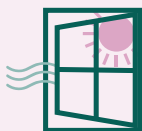


SELF-CARE DURING YOUR PERIOD

Nutrition and physical activity can impact menstrual health. A balanced diet, regular exercise, and maintaining a healthy weight can help regulate your cycles and reduce symptoms like pain and heavy bleeding.



Keep your fluids up



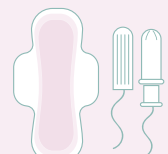
Get fresh air or go outdoors, if you can



Moderate exercise can help



Wear comfy clothes



Find a sanitary product that works for you



Have a shower or bath



Take painkillers or use a hot water bottle if you have one



Try reading or meditation to clear your mind



Get plenty of sleep and rest

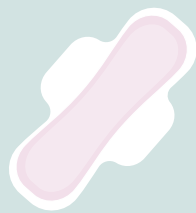


Choose healthy food options where available from the servery or canteen

PERIOD PRODUCTS

Having access to affordable and safe sanitary products is part of good period (menstrual) health. If you are having trouble obtaining sanitary products, talk to healthcare.

There are several different options. The most commonly used are pads and tampons, which are available for free from healthcare.



Disposable sanitary pads:

- These are made of absorbent materials and have an adhesive backing that sticks to the underwear
- They come in various sizes and absorbency levels to suit individual needs



Tampons:

- These are cylindrical devices made of absorbent materials like cotton or rayon
- They are inserted into the vagina to absorb menstrual flow
- Tampons come in different sizes and absorbency levels and can be used with or without an applicator

Pads and tampons come in different sizes for different levels of bleeding (flow) e.g. light, heavy



Other products can be bought from the canteen, pharmacists or online include menstrual discs, disposable menstrual underwear and reusable cloth pads and sponges, but they may not be available where you are.

Menstrual cups:

- These are reusable bell-shaped cups made of medical-grade silicone, latex, or rubber
- They are inserted into the vagina to collect blood
- Menstrual cups can be emptied, washed, and reused for multiple periods



Period pants:

- These are specially designed underwear with built-in absorbent layers to prevent leakage
- They can be reusable or disposable and offer varying levels of absorbency



Period Hygiene:

- Use appropriate sanitary products to absorb or collect blood
- Change pads and tampons every few hours, washing regularly
- Ensure proper disposal of used menstrual products in designated sanitary bins or containers to maintain cleanliness and prevent environmental pollution
- **Do not flush them down the toilet**

Blood flow

You should not need to change your pad or tampon more often than every 3 to 4 hours. If you are having to change them more frequently, experience flooding or leaking through protection or you need to use more than one product at a time, speak to healthcare.



REMEMBER: You can still get pregnant whilst you are on your period.

Period Disorders:

- These include conditions like periods stopping (amenorrhea), painful periods (dysmenorrhea), very heavy periods (menorrhagia) and PMS (premenstrual syndrome)
- If you experience these conditions, it's important to speak to healthcare

Menopause: Menopause is when your periods stop altogether and usually occurs between ages 45 and 55. If you are over 45 and noticing changes in your periods, you could be perimenopausal. There is a separate fact sheet about this.

WHEN TO SEEK ADVICE

Put in an application to speak to healthcare or to an officer if you are experiencing irregular menstrual cycles, severe pain, excessive bleeding, prolonged periods, or any other concerns related to your menstrual health.