

# My First Period



she can  
initiative



Let's get this  
out of the  
way – getting  
your period is  
nothing to be  
ashamed of.

It's a completely natural part of life.

The average cycle lasts around 28 to 30 days, but it can range from around 21 to 35 days. Within each cycle, the period will last for a few days at a time, but its length will vary from person to person. Remember, every period is different, and that's totally **okay**.

Getting your period is one sign that your reproductive system is functioning properly.

# First Period Indicators

There are a few signs that will help you determine if you're about to get your period for the first time.

Hair growth under your arms and around your pubic area

**White vaginal discharge**

(it's like milky-white water coming out of your vagina – nothing to worry about!)

Feeling bloated and having some pain in your stomach area or lower back; these pains are called “menstrual cramps” (or just “cramps”)

Emotional changes ranging from irritability to sadness

# A guide to a typical 28-day menstrual cycle:



Your period is considered the beginning of your menstrual cycle.



One of your ovaries will release an egg, and the uterus will begin to rebuild its lining.



If the egg isn't fertilized, the uterus wall will continue to thicken until there is a sudden drop in hormone levels. The lining will then break down and another period will begin.

## Menstrual-Cycle Symptoms

A few days before your period starts, you might notice that your breasts feel a little sore or that your stomach is achy. You may get acne, feel tired, or go to the bathroom more frequently. That is all caused by your menstrual flow. But you might also feel the same as you usually do.

It doesn't sound glamorous or fun – but having periods means you can create **life**.

# Dictionary

**Menstruation:** Also referred to as “having a period.” The vaginal bleeding that occurs as part of the monthly cycle.

**Menstrual Cycle:** The regular and natural change in the reproductive system that makes pregnancy possible.

**Uterus:** Also known as the “womb.” Where a fertilized egg will become a fetus.

**Ovary:** Where eggs (also known as “ova”) develop. Eggs are released from the ovaries and travel down the fallopian tubes into the uterus.

**Ovum:** Also known as an “egg.” A reproductive cell that will develop into a fetus if it is fertilized by a sperm. One ovum is released each month during your menstrual cycle. Fertilization usually happens only with unprotected sex. **FYI:** The plural for ovum is “ova.”



# Puberty

Between the ages of about 10 and 14, you will begin to notice changes in your body. Or you might just feel different. That's puberty - everyone goes through it. There are many different signs that suggest you may be going through puberty. Some of the changes your body experiences will be more exciting than others - but they're all part of becoming an adult.

## Signs of Puberty in Girls:

Increased tiredness

Height and weight increasing

Breasts getting bigger

Sexual curiosity and attraction developing

A need for independence from parents

Emotional changes -

(e.g., loneliness, crushes, wanting to be independent, self-consciousness)

Acne

Hips widening and body becoming more curvy

Hair beginning to grow in your armpits and pubic region

Sweat and body odor becoming more noticeable



# Managing your period.

Self-care is always important, but especially when you have your period.

Bathe regularly and gently wash the genital area with water.

Avoid using soap as it will irritate the sensitive skin.

Use a product that will absorb or collect your period blood.

Remember to change your product at the recommended time to avoid staining, odor, and bacteria buildup.



# Period Products

The product you choose is totally up to you; different people prefer different products. And you might use a variety of products depending on the occasion. It's your decision. Just make sure you feel comfortable and confident with the products you choose.

## Pads

Pads are the most used period product, and there are many different kinds. Pads vary in thickness, absorbency, and length, but all adhere to your underwear to stay in place while they absorb period blood.

### Overnight Pads:

These are the longest and most absorbent pads. They extend longer in the back for extra protection when you lie down.

It's recommended that you change your pad every five to six hours, but it really depends on how heavy your flow is.

### Liners:

These pads are much smaller and thinner than overnight pads. They are a great option for when the menstrual flow is weaker, towards the end of your period, or for regular daily discharge. **Frequency of change:** Recommended every three to four hours, depending on your flow.

## Tampons

Tampons are designed to absorb period blood by being inserted into the vagina. Just as pads do, they come in different sizes. The choice of product size is related to your blood flow and has nothing to do with the size of the vagina. Doctors recommend using the lowest-absorbency tampon that will meet your personal needs and changing the tampon regularly. **Frequency of change:** Recommended every five to six hours.

## Reusable Period-Proof Underwear

Period-proof underwear is a reusable period product that is made up of multiple layers of a special type of fabric that keeps period blood from leaking onto your other clothes. **Frequency of change:** Recommended every five to six hours.

## Menstrual Cups

A menstrual cup is a reusable period product made of rubber or silicon. It's a small, flexible, funnel-shaped cup that is inserted into the vagina to catch and collect period fluid. **Depending on how heavy your flow is, you can leave a menstrual cup in for up to 12 hours.**



## Is menstrual blood different from regular blood?

Menstrual blood isn't different from regular blood. It's just regular blood that flows from the vagina.

## Can stress delay your period?

Really serious emotional or physical stress can delay your period.

## Can having a cold delay your period?

A cold by itself won't delay your period, but serious illness can disrupt your cycle.

## Can you go swimming when you have your period?

Yes, go swimming – just use a tampon! The tampon won't fall out as long as it's inserted properly. And no, sharks will NOT attack you just because you have your period while you are swimming in the ocean. (That's an old myth about periods.)

## Is it true that you can't take medicine when you have your period?

If you have your period and you need to take medicine, you should always check with your doctor.

# FAQ

## Will you lose your virginity if you use a tampon?

Nope!

## Does your period stop when you're in the bath?

Your period doesn't stop when you're in the bath – the water may dilute the blood flow, but your period continues.

## Will other people know when you have your period?

There's absolutely no way for others to know unless you decide to tell someone.

## Can you pee with a tampon in?

Yes, you can pee with a tampon in. The urine comes through the urethra, and the tampon is inserted into the vagina – two separate parts of your body.

## How much blood will you lose?

During an average period, you will lose two to six tablespoons of blood, depending on your flow. This amount of blood loss is **not** dangerous.

## Are you allowed to exercise when you have your period?

Go for it! Exercise will actually help relieve any cramps.

## Is there a normal length of time your period should last?

The length of everyone's period is different – the average is five days, but it could range from about two days to about seven days.

# Changing Perceptions

Don't assume someone has their period just because they are

- **Angry**
- **Anxious**
- **Sad**

Moods actually change throughout the whole menstrual cycle. So, instead of judging someone, let's support, encourage, and empower them.

## Did you know?

Globally, among teens who get their period:

**58%** have heard jokes about being emotional because they're having their periods.

**51%** have experienced comments about being helpless because of their periods.

**59%** have heard jokes about being angry or irrational because they're having their periods.

**58%** have been told to avoid physical or social activity because of their periods.





# Talking About Your Period

It might be uncomfortable to talk with your parents or caregivers about getting your period, but it's nothing to be ashamed of. The adults in your life won't be surprised when you tell them; they know it's coming.

Your period is personal, so make sure you tell them in a way that makes you feel comfortable.

