

That Time of the Month

Ultimate Guide to Starting Your Period

A period is when blood comes out of a girl's vagina. This is a completely natural and healthy process. The bleeding, which is also known as menstruation, occurs every month and lasts for around 2-7 days. It is important to talk openly about periods and ask lots of questions, so you know what to expect when you get yours.

When will I start?

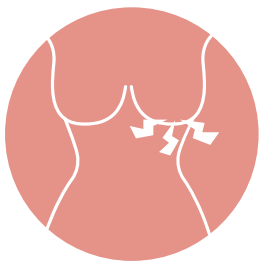
Periods usually begin around the ages of 11-15. Everyone is different, so some of your friends will have them before you and some later than you. This is perfectly normal.

How will I know it's coming?

Some girls will notice a change in vaginal discharge (fluid or mucus that comes from the vagina) before their period. Cramping in the lower part of your tummy is another sign that your period might be coming.

Hormones can also cause mood or emotional changes. You might find that you feel sad, angry, or low before your period. It is important to talk to friends and family about any mood changes so they can support you.

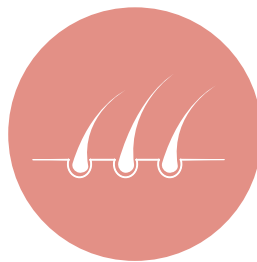
Starting your period is a sign that puberty is coming to an end and you are developing into a woman. **Other signs of puberty are:**



Tender breasts



Mood swings



Hair growth between your legs and under your arms



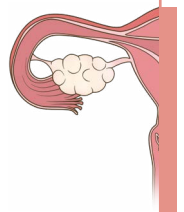
Discharge from your vagina



Larger breasts

Here's the science bit!

A period happens because of a change in hormones. These hormones cause the lining of the womb (uterus) to build up and become thick and soft. This is in preparation for pregnancy. However, if the woman does not get pregnant, this lining breaks down and bleeds. This process repeats every month, and that's what a period is!



How long will I have periods?

You will have periods until around the age of 45-55. After this age, they stop forever, and this is called menopause. Also, pregnant women do not have periods; they start again after the baby is born.

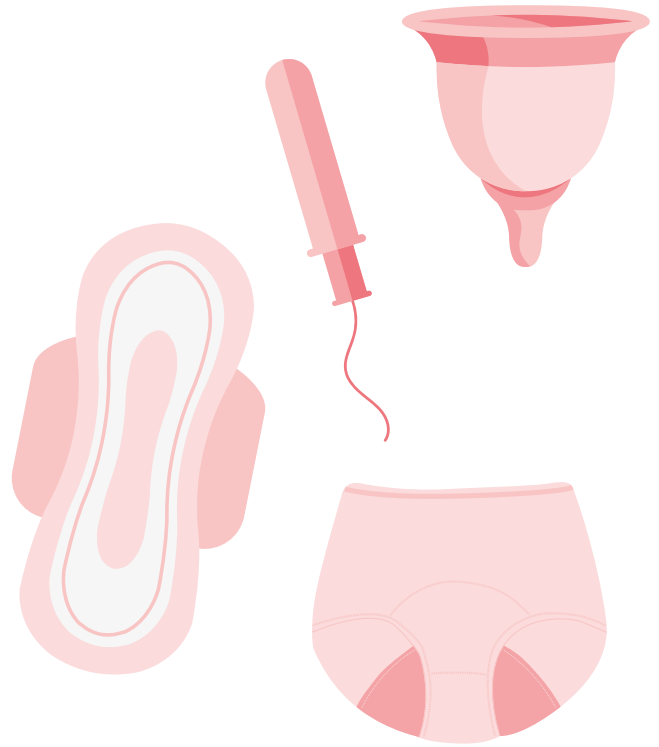
I'm embarrassed! What if it goes through my school clothes?

If this happens, speak to your teacher or the school nurse. They will be able to help! Your school will have lots of spare supplies of pads and tampons.

What do I need to wear/have?

There are lots of different ways to deal with period blood. Experimenting with different options will help you find the one that suits you best. Most girls begin by using sanitary pads as they are simple and easy to use.

- Sanitary pads – a thin pad made from absorbent material. You place them on your underwear, and they have sticky straps that attach to the side. They come in different sizes and thickness. You should change the pad every 4-8 hours.
- Tampons – a small, soft cylinder made from absorbent material. You insert it gently into your vagina and should change the tampon every 4-6 hours. They come in different sizes.
- Menstrual cup – a reusable funnel-shaped cup made from a silicone material. You place it into your vagina, just like a tampon. However, instead of absorbing the blood, it catches and collects it. When the cup fills with blood, you need to empty and wash it out before re-inserting it into your vagina.
- Period pants – pants designed to soak up period blood with absorbent material.



Will it hurt?

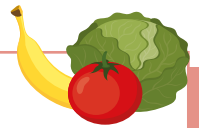
Some girls may experience pain before or during their periods. This is usually a cramping pain in the lower tummy or back. Other girls might have no pain at all! It is always useful to have pain relief like paracetamol and a hot water bottle available, just in case.

What can I do to help myself?

Eating lots of healthy foods and staying hydrated are particularly important during your period. Foods like leafy green vegetables, nuts and seeds are a great source of iron – a mineral found naturally within our bodies. During your period, iron can decrease due to blood loss, and this is why eating iron-rich food is so important. Remember to always speak with an adult you trust if you feel overly tired.

Exercise is a great way to help with tummy cramps. It is also very important for your mental wellbeing! Try going for a walk or practising an activity like yoga.

Keep a calendar and mark when your period starts so you can expect it around 28 days later. However, during the first 12 months, be aware that your periods might be irregular and take time to settle.



Top tips!

- Don't compare your periods to your friends and peers – everyone is different.
- Talk to family, friends or someone you trust about how you are feeling and any concerns you may have.
- Be prepared. Stock up on sanitary products (pads, tampons, or menstrual cups) and have a hot water bottle or pain relief available.
- Try not to feel embarrassed. Periods are a healthy part of development and shouldn't get in the way of having fun, studying or exercising.

Period Tracker

Key	
Light	
Medium	
Heavy	
Spotting	
Cramps	
Tired	
Acne	
Headache	
Fatigue	
Sex	

Length of cycle	
January	
February	
March	
April	
May	
June	
July	
August	
September	
October	
November	
December	

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
9												
10												
11												
12												
13												
14												
15												
16												
17												
18												
19												
20												
21												
22												
23												
24												
25												
26												
27												
28												
29												
30												
31												