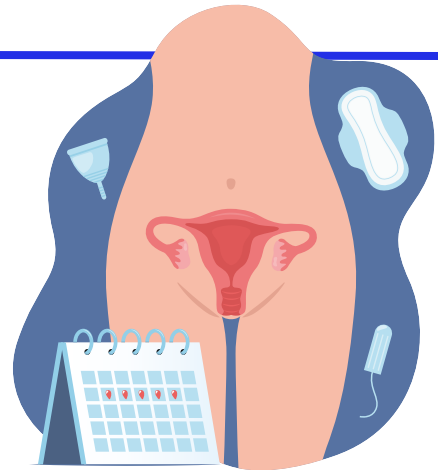


Periods

What is a period?

A period naturally happens for people with a vulva who have started puberty. A period is sometimes called menstruation. Menstruating is the same thing as having your period.



Everyone starts their period at different ages. People usually have their first period after their breasts and pubic hair have begun to grow. The scientific name for the very first period that you have is "menarche".

Why do periods happen?



Changes in hormones cause periods to happen. The hormones change to prepare the body for pregnancy. If a pregnancy happens, a period will not start. If a pregnancy does not happen, a period will start.



Hormones cause the lining of the uterus to build up or thicken. Over time, the thickened lining sheds. When the lining sheds, a small amount of blood, mucus, and cells begin to flow out of your vagina. This is your period.



Periods usually last for 3-7 days and happen about one time every month. It is normal to sometimes skip your monthly period for the first 2-3 years after having your first period.

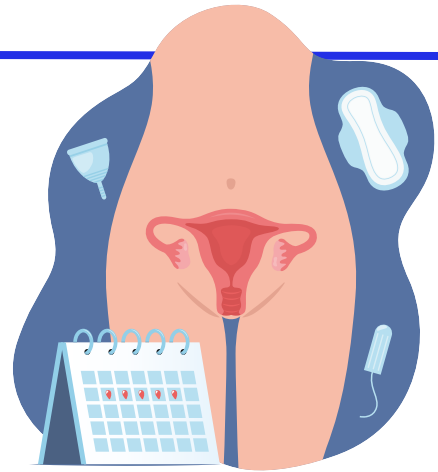
Watch this video about what a period is and why they happen: [All About Getting Your Period](#)



Periods

Symptoms of Periods

A period is a natural and healthy process. Everyone experiences periods differently, but some people have mild period symptoms.



Common Period Symptoms

- Fatigue
- Food cravings
- Cramps
- Acne
- Bloating
- Mood or behavior changes
- Joint pain
- Difficulty sleeping
- Tender breasts
- Lower back pain



Contact your doctor if you experience period symptoms that impact your participation in daily activities. The following symptoms should be reported to your doctor:

- worsening cramps
- cramps accompanied by increased menstrual flow
- pain without relief

Periods

Periods and Pain

A period is a natural and healthy process. Mild discomfort is normal during periods, but contact your doctor if your pain worsens or if you are not able to find relief for pain.

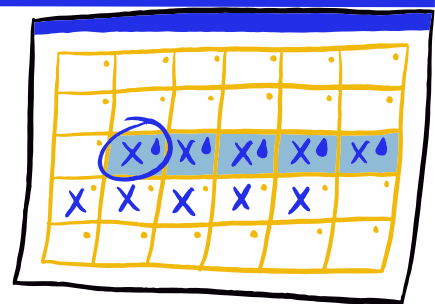


Pain Management Strategies

- **Leisure:** If tolerable, engage in normal routine or enjoyable activities to distract attention from discomfort.
- **Heat:** Applying heat to the abdomen can be soothing for menstrual cramps. The heat relaxes your muscles. You can purchase a heat pack or make a heat pack. Fill a water bottle with hot water, slip a towel over it, and place it against your skin.
- **Massage:** Gentle massage can be soothing to your nervous system and muscles. You can go to a spa for a professional massage, use massage tools on yourself at home, or ask an adult that you trust to provide gentle massage. If you are sensitive to touch, massage may not be the best option for you.
- **Gentle exercise:** Exercise can relieve stress and improve fatigue, bloating, and/or cramps. If you can tolerate exercise, try yoga or going for a walk. However, if you are in too much pain to move your body, contact your doctor and rest.
- **Deep breathing:** Deep breathing exercises can be relaxing. They calm down the body. You can use props or worksheets that help with deep breathing.
- **Over-the-counter medications:** Over-the-counter pain medications such as ibuprofen can sometimes provide pain relief.

Periods

When you are on your period, you are expected to use products that absorb the period fluid. If you do not use these products, period fluid could leak through your clothes. The best way to avoid this is to be prepared by knowing when your period will start.



Planning for Periods

- Although it is impossible to know exactly when your period will start, you can get an estimate of what day you might begin your period.
 - Periods happen every 21-35 days.
 - Your body might feel differently when you go through different phases of your menstrual cycle. It might be helpful to track or document these changes and feelings so that you know what to expect. You might like to track your:
 - symptoms
 - heaviness of flow
 - duration of period
 - successful reliefs
 - You can use a calendar or application on your smartphone to track your periods. Here is a list of free period-tracking apps:
 - Flo
 - Clue
 - MyFlo
 - MagicGirl
- If you believe that your period might be coming soon, it is a good idea to keep period hygiene products with you. You can even wear a pad or period underwear before your period has started.
- *For caregivers:* You can use nonverbal communication strategies to give your young person hints that their period is coming soon. Play soothing music, provide massage, or place period hygiene products in sight.