

# Periods 101

Every month, the lining of the womb, or uterus, thickens to prepare to receive a fertilised egg. When the egg is not fertilised, a menstrual period occurs.

About halfway through the menstrual cycle, hormones send signals to one of the ovaries to release a mature egg – a process that is called ovulation. Once the egg leaves the ovary, it moves along the fallopian tube towards the uterus. The lining of the uterus thickens so that it is ready for the egg to attach to it if it is fertilised, but if the egg is not fertilised, the thick lining is not needed, so the body breaks it down, and it comes out of the body through the vagina. That is how a period works!

A period usually lasts between 3 and 6 days, but can be longer or shorter. This process happens around every 28 days, but it may not be regular in the beginning. Sometimes things like stress and illness and not getting enough to eat can affect a person's period.

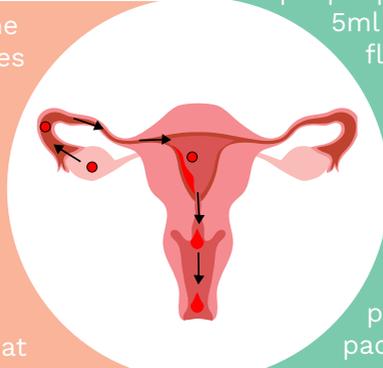
Most people who have uteruses, vaginas, fallopian tubes and ovaries get periods.

Everyone is different, but most people produce anything from 5ml to 80ml of menstrual fluid over 2-7 days.

Periods can start from about 9 years of age, but they can also start earlier or later.

You can manage your period by using menstrual pads, tampons, menstrual cups, or if none of those are available, you can use clean strips of material which can soak up liquid (like an old cut up t-shirt) – these will need to be folded into a pad-like shape and placed inside the panties to soak up menstrual fluid.

You can make a cloth pad by sewing layers of clean material together in the shape of a pad. Be sure to wash any material pads or strips with soap and cold water, and if possible, iron them when dry to kill any germs.



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## Turn over to find out how to make your own cloth pads

# Hygiene during menstruation

Make sure to change your pad or tampon every 4-6 hours (cloth pads may need to be changed more often), or empty your menstrual cup at least every 12 hours.

Dispose of sanitary wear properly – don't flush any sanitary wear down a toilet – wrap them in toilet paper or plastic and put them into a bin.

Make sure to wash your hands with soap and water before and after changing your sanitary wear.

Wash your body every day – a period is not dirty, but most bodily fluids can become smelly when exposed to air for a while.

## OUCH! Why does my period hurt sometimes?

Sometimes, people may have cramps during the first few days of their period. This is caused by chemicals in the body that make the muscle in the uterus contract. These pains can be dull or sharp and intense and can affect different people in different ways.

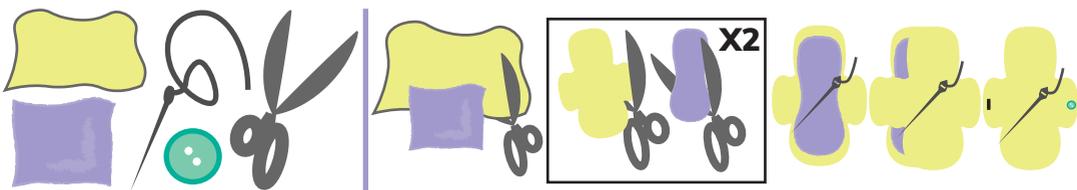
## These things can help with pain:

A hot water bottle (or bottle filled with warm water), wrapped in a soft cloth, towel or t-shirt, and placed over the sore area.

Ibuprofen helps with pain and swelling, however, you will need to ask a parent or guardian for help with this, as it is medicine which may require specialised doses for your age, or may not be appropriate for you to take.

Stay hydrated by drinking lots of liquids – things like ginger tea and chamomile tea can also help reduce pain and inflammation.

Remember: Each person is different, and something that works for one person's pain relief may not work the same way for another person.



**You will need:** 1 piece cotton material (a t-shirt works well), 1 facecloth, a button, a pair of scissors, a needle and thread.

**Instructions:** Cut 2x pad shapes with wings out of the cotton material. Cut 2x pad shapes without wings out of the face cloth. Sew the pad shapes without wings together securely, then securely sew them onto the bottom pad section with wings, followed by the top section, covering the face-cloth sections. Sew in a button hole on one wing, and a button on the other. Wash in water with soap, dry in the sun, and iron when dry (if possible). For heavy flow days, you can make pads with more towelling inside.

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