



Fact Sheet:

15 Questions About Periods, Answered!

May 2015



Introduction

You may have heard it referred to as many codewords, such as “Crimson Wave”, “Aunt Flo”, “Cousin Red”, or “Time of the month”. But there’s no need to talk in code. It’s called menstruation, menstrual period, or period. Sometimes we feel nervous or a little shy talking about periods. So here are the answers to 15 of the most common questions girls and young women with a disability have about periods.

1. When will I get my first period?

When you go through puberty you will start getting your periods. For most girls this is between the age of 8 and 13. You should see a doctor if you have not started menstruating by the age of 15.

2. What is a period?

Getting your period is a sign that you are becoming a woman. During each month, blood builds up in your body. Then once a month your body starts getting rid of this blood. This is your period and it starts coming out your vagina.

3. How often will I get my period?

You will get your period again 3 weeks after the last one finished. Normally your period lasts for about 5 days then it will stop. Your period may or may not be the same every month.

This means you might get a lot of blood or not much blood with your period. Or your period might last a long time or only a few days. Or your period might take longer or come sooner than 3 weeks.

4. Does getting my period mean I can get pregnant?

Once you get your periods, if you have penetrative vaginal sex (a penis inside a vagina) you might get pregnant. If you have had sex and you miss your period, that could mean you are pregnant. If you have not

had your period for one month and have had sex, you should take a pregnancy test and you should go and see your doctor.

If you want to have sex and you do not want to become pregnant you can use contraception. You can learn about the different types of contraception on [Our Site](#).

5. How much blood will I lose during my period?

It might feel like you are losing a lot of blood during your period. Don't worry. It is normally less than half a cup of blood. And your body replaces it naturally.



6. What is PMS?

PMS stands for *premenstrual syndrome*. PMS is when your body makes some changes just before you get your period and makes you feel a bit weird. It is different for everyone. It might make you a bit more angry or sad. Or it might make you sleepy or sore. The feelings will normally go when your period starts.

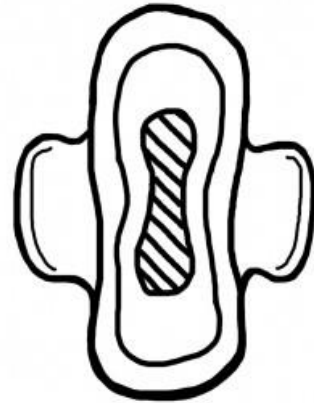
7. Will everyone know when I have my period?

Your period is private. Nobody else will know you have it unless you want to tell. When you first get your period you should tell your mum, your doctor, or an adult you trust so they can teach you more about dealing with your period.

You will need to learn how to look after yourself when you have your period. There are lots of books and movies you can borrow, or videos online you can watch to learn more about periods. The most common ways to manage periods are by using a pad, a tampon, or a menstrual cup.

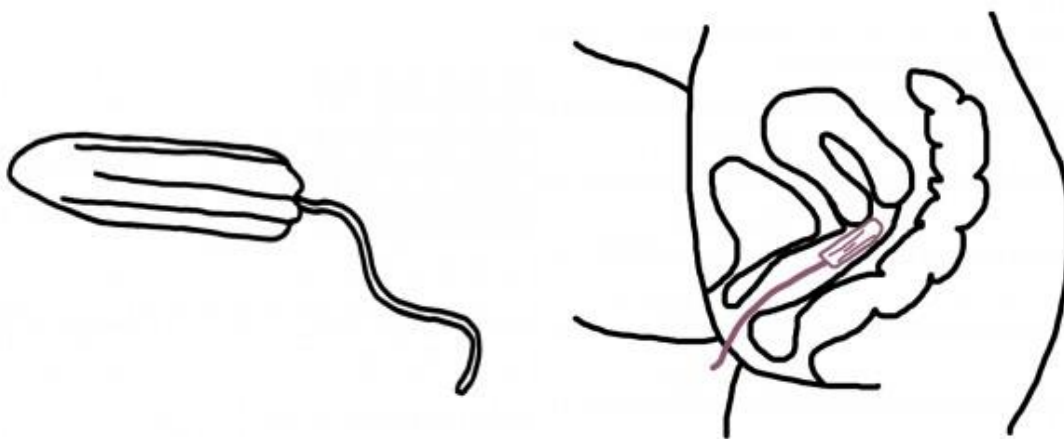
8. What is a pad?

A pad sticks inside your underwear and soaks up your period blood. A sticky strip on the back holds it in place on your underwear. During daytime change them every 4 to 6 hours. At night use a thick or 'night time' pad so it will last longer. If you want to go swimming when you have your period do not wear a pad. Try using a tampon instead.



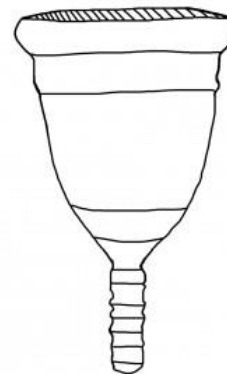
9. What is a tampon?

A tampon goes inside your vagina to soak up the period blood before it leaves your body. All tampons have a string at the end to help you take the tampon out when it needs to be changed. Tampons need to be changed every 4-6 hours. At night use a thick pad instead of a tampon.



10. What is a menstrual cup?

A menstrual cup or Mooncup is an environmentally friendly option to the pad or tampon. Mooncups made of rubber and can be reused. They are worn internally like a tampon. The cup collects the period blood instead of absorbing it. Every 6-8 hours it must be removed, emptied and washed. The cup can be worn overnight or if you go swimming.



11. What are the most common problems girls get with periods?

Most women get the same troubles when they have their period. There are three main ones you will probably get. One is cramps, which are pains in your tummy, back, or legs. The second is pimples, which you might get more of before and during your period. The third is a strange smell coming from your vagina that is called 'menstrual odour'.

12. What can I do about these problems?

For cramps you should try having a warm bath. Or put a heat pack on the area that hurts. The pimples you can't do much about but when you are older they won't be as bad. Just make sure you wash your hands a lot and try not to touch your face too much. For the smell (menstrual

odour) just make sure you change your pad or tampon often and have a shower every day.



other should I see a doctor for?

13. What problems

If your period suddenly stops for more than 60 days you should see a doctor.

If you are bleeding for more than 7 days during your period.

If your periods are heavier than usual.

If you are having very bad pain or headaches during your period. There is medicine that can help with this.

If you suddenly get a fever, vomit, or feel quite sick.

If you have epilepsy, you might have seizures during your period. You should talk to your doctor if this happens.

14. Are there medical options to control my period?

If you are having problems with your period, you should go and see your doctor. The doctor might suggest treatment to control or non-permanently stop your period. These options include the contraceptive pill, hormone injections, or a hormonal intrauterine device (IUD).

In cases of major health problems, a woman may consider an operation to permanently stop her period. This is called *sterilisation*. Sterilisation means you will never be able to have children. This is a serious operation and you must be fully educated and informed on what will happen. You must be sure that this is the best option for you before choosing to have it done.

15. What if I need help handling my period?

Some women need assistance managing their period. If you need help changing pads or tampons make sure your support person does it in a private, clean place. Make sure they treat you with respect and use good hygiene. Make sure you are informed and comfortable with the management of your period. Make sure there is no extra touching that makes you upset, sad, or scared. It is your body! You need to feel safe!