

periods for hope

Facilitator's Manual

Menstrual and Sexual Health

These materials have been produced by Periods for Hope in partnership with CoolPlay. Periods for Hope is a Non-Profit Organisation that focuses on addressing issues around menstruation, gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy and period poverty. We aim to educate boys and girls about sexual and reproductive health as well as empower girls and young women to be agents of their bodies. This manual may be used for non-commercial purposes provided acknowledgement is given to Periods for Hope.

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What is this manual?

This is designed as a resource to aid facilitators who work with adolescents and young adults to guide discussions around menstruation, sexual health and gender. This manual can be used as a reference for information or a toolkit for engagement; there is no right or wrong way to use it, and you are encouraged to add to it during your work.

To facilitate conversations and support young adolescents, especially girls, it is important that you yourself are familiarised with the content and facts. If required, this manual can easily be adapted should you have limited time, space or other constraints (for example, doing the training virtually instead). Build on the experience of your participants and incorporate their input as training content: they provide a rich pool of knowledge and ideas that can add value to the discussions.

Facilitation Basics

The content of this guide and these discussions can be uncomfortable or difficult to discuss at times. It is important to create a safe, welcoming space with participants, where shared information can be guaranteed to be kept confidential if required. It is important to establish some basic ground rules for engagement that uphold respect and dignity. Some examples of this include:

- Participants are free to use the language they are most comfortable with.
- Participants will be tolerant, participate fully and share their experiences and views for the benefit of all.
- Participants will raise concerns or problems with the facilitator directly as they arise
- Participants will not criticise or judge what someone else has said or done; rather ask ourselves 'What can I learn from this?' and offer alternative views or approaches.
- Consult with participants if there are any other 'rules' they would like to add.

Breaking the ice

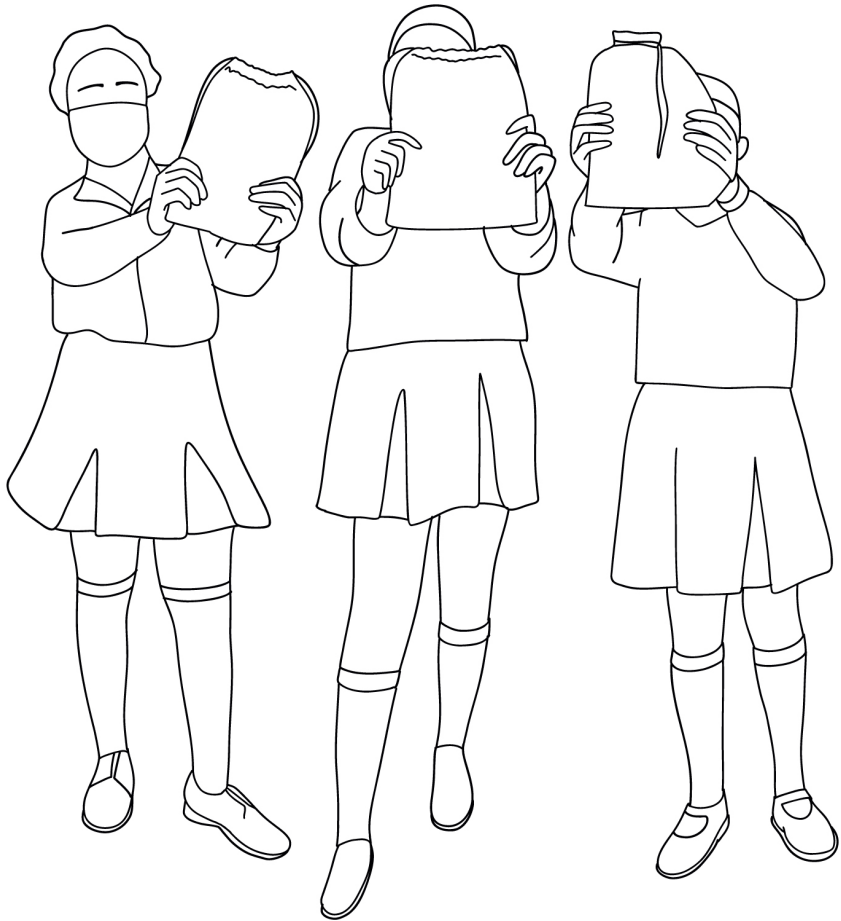
How do we introduce a workshop or conversation about menstruation, and even sex? In a more formal setting, where there is a larger group of people together, it is important that everyone introduces themselves and that you, as facilitator, know participants' names.

Ask everyone to introduce themselves, providing their name, grade, sport they play. In addition, ask participants to share ONE WORD or ONE SENTENCE that sums up what they expect and want to learn during the training. This can also guide your expectations as a facilitator so tailor the workshop/conversation according to the groups' needs and expectations.

This is a guideline, but remember that you can add individual touches according to the group's needs. For example, choose ice breakers – or invite participants to propose ice-breakers – that are appropriate to the needs and circumstances of the group and that everyone can participate in.

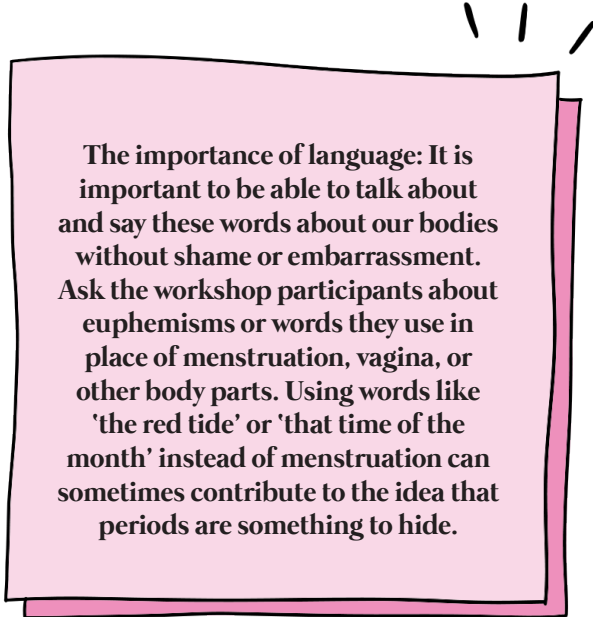
This manual will cover

- Basic anatomy: how do all the parts fit together?
- Puberty
- The menstrual cycle
- How your period changes as you age
- Managing your period
- Menstrual hygiene and keeping clean
- What's normal and what's not?
- Period FAQs
- How does contraception affect my period? Sexual health: period sex, contraception and how it affects your period
- How do we support people during their period?
- Menstruation, gender, and gender-based violence
- Breaking the stigma: period myths to bust
- Important numbers and hotlines and where to get more information



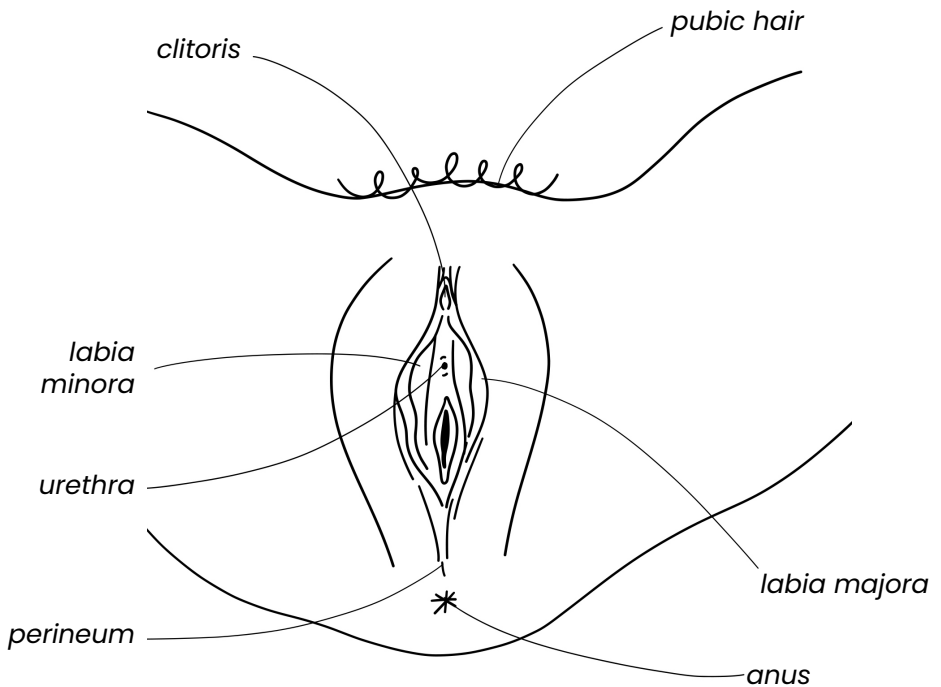
Basic Anatomy: How do all the parts fit together?

Every female has the following organs inside their body. These organs work together, but they all have unique jobs that help our bodies to be healthy.



Suggested Activity:
Activity 1 | Get to know your anatomy



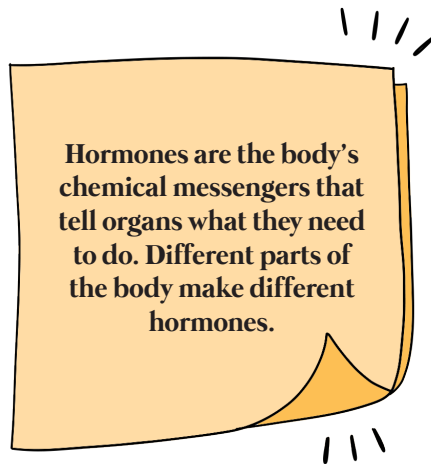


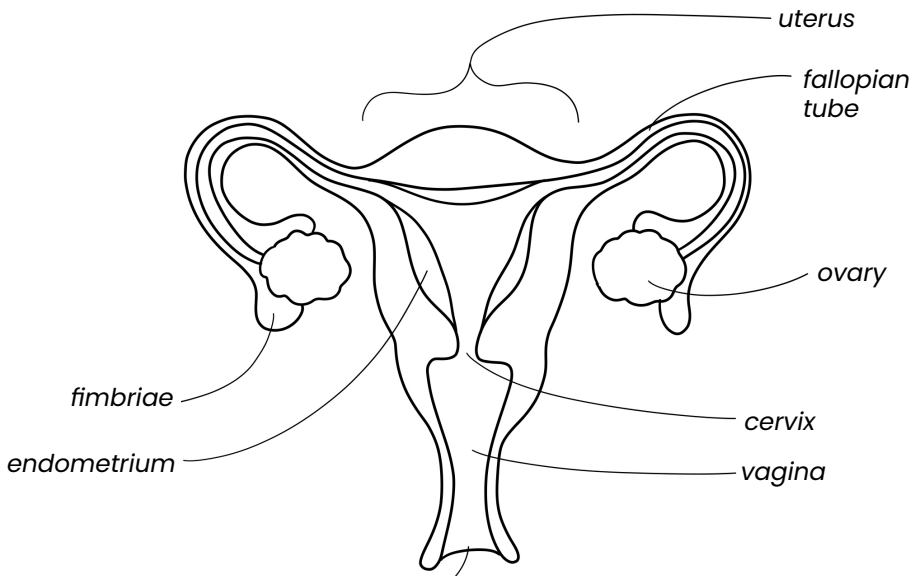
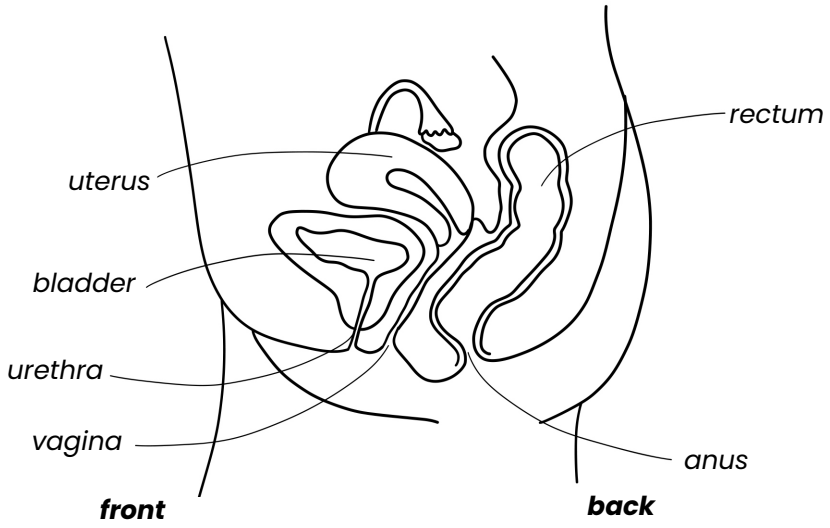
Internal Female Reproductive Organs

The vagina is a channel that opens up to the inside reproductive organs.

- At the end of the vaginal canal, there is an organ that acts as the mouth of the womb. This is called the **cervix**. It is the opening to the womb, which is also called the **uterus**. Your cervix will be closed normally, but when you are pregnant, it opens up to allow for the baby to leave the womb and enter the outside world through the vagina.

- The uterus is where one day, a baby can grow inside of you. But it also has many other functions than that - this is where your blood in your period comes from.
- Next to the uterus are two tubes (called fallopian tubes) that connect the uterus to the ovaries. Each tube acts as a channel for the eggs made in the ovaries to move through. Every girl has two ovaries and two tubes.
- The ovary is where eggs are made every month. These eggs move from the ovary, into the fallopian tubes and into the uterus, where a baby can grow if it is joined by a sperm (from a male). The ovary also makes hormones that make you look and feel like a girl. These are called progesterone and oestrogen. Males have higher levels of testosterone, whereas females have higher levels of progesterone and oestrogen.





Puberty

As mentioned above, every female has these organs inside their body from when they are a baby! But when females reach about 11 or 12 years old - these organs really start to work hard and take on new functions. This is called puberty. Puberty starts when extra amounts of hormones begin to be produced in the body which lead to changes in the body. These changes include:

1. Females begin to produce eggs (in their ovaries) and males begin to produce sperm (in their testes).

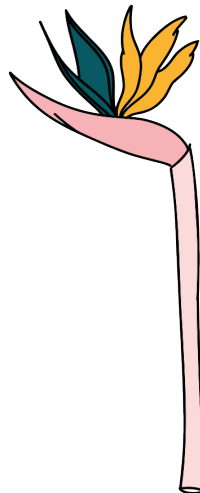
2. Girls start to look a different way and boys start to look a different way.

Girls...

- develop pubic hair and under arm hair
- begin breast development
- will develop broader (wider) hips
- will start getting pimples (due to changes levels of hormones)

3. Females will experience a period. This is called menstruation.

Because of all these hormones that your ovary is now making - your body starts to function in a cycle. This means that at some times in the month, there are different amounts of each hormone. That is why you may have different emotions or feelings or symptoms throughout the month. Towards the end of your personal cycle, your body will start preparing for menstruation. This is when the **lining of the uterus comes out**, along with blood, through the vagina.



Before this happens, you may have feelings of tummy cramps, a lot of emotions or tender breasts. This is normal and you learn to understand your body and the messages it sends you. Bleeding usually lasts for two to seven days (but can last longer) as everyone is different.

Everyone's cycle is also different so some people might get their period every 28 days, where others might get theirs every 35 days. When you are starting your period, your cycle is still figuring itself out, so be patient with it if it is not perfectly regular, it may need some time to settle. Also remember everyone is different, so if you haven't started your period yet that is also okay, your body might have started puberty a bit later, but be patient, it is normal to get your period as late as 16!

I got my first period when I was 10; I was the first one in my class. I had to make a makeshift pad out of toilet paper because I didn't know who to ask. When school was over I told my mum and we bought pads.



The Menstrual Cycle

The menstrual cycle consists of four different stages:

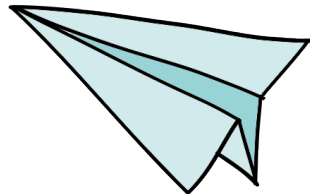
1. An egg will begin to develop in the ovary. The lining of the uterus, called the **endometrium**, will start to thicken. This is called the **follicular phase**.
2. The ovary will then release the egg into the fallopian tube. The endometrium will continue to thicken to prepare for pregnancy. This is called the **ovulatory phase**.
3. The egg moves to the uterus, and if it is not fertilised, the endometrium will begin to break down and disintegrate. This is called the **luteal phase**.
4. The endometrium is then shed through the vagina as blood, tissue and mucous. This is a '**period**', which is the **bleeding phase** of the menstrual cycle, and will usually last between 2 and 7 days.



Between 20 and 40 ml of blood will be lost during each cycle (this is about three tablespoons!).

Managing Your Period

You may feel scared the first time you receive your period, so it is important that you receive guidance and support from your family members. Try approaching a family member or friend you trust when first getting your period or any time after that.



Your First Period

- Talk to other girls and women, such as your mother, sister, aunt, grandmother, female friend or an older woman in your community.
- Don't be afraid. It can be scary to see the blood on your underwear, but it is normal and natural!
- If you are at school, tell a female teacher or a fellow student.
- Feel proud! Your body is developing into that of a young woman.

I was so excited for it to happen, as I hit puberty late and all my friends seemed to already have their period and constantly spoke about it. It was something I couldn't wait for. When it finally happened, I felt like "that's it, I'm a woman now".



How do I manage my period at home?

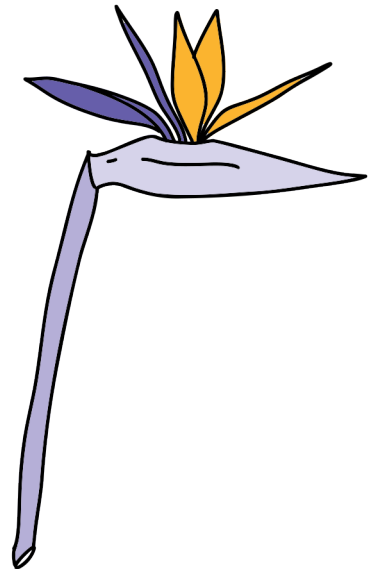
- Shower, bath or wash regularly to help remain clean
- Every day, wash your outer (external) genitals with soap and water. Your vagina cleans itself naturally, and there is no need to wash it inside.
- Keep unused cloths and pads clean (wrapped in tissue or plastic bag).
- Pat the area dry with a cloth, and put a fresh cloth, pad, cotton or tissue on your underwear.
- Always wipe from front to back after going to the bathroom!

It is essential that you are able to manage your period appropriately, as it becomes a regular part of your life. This is so that we keep our bodies healthy and cope with the menstrual cycle easily.

How do I manage period pain?

Period pain is no joke, and cramps are normal (Remember, your uterus is getting rid of its lining!). If possible, use a hot water bottle for those lower stomach cramps, or something warm to place on your stomach. Sometimes these symptoms will come before your period and is your body's way of letting you know that your period is on its way (this is also known as premenstrual syndrome, or PMS, which we will cover a bit later)

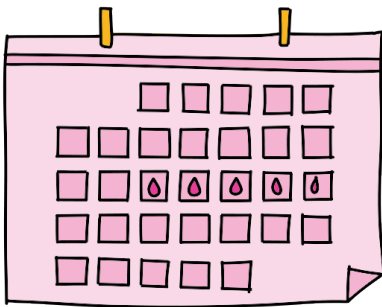
Try to keep your body active by doing small exercises such as stretching. You can still do sport on your period, as long as you are comfortable!



Tracking your period

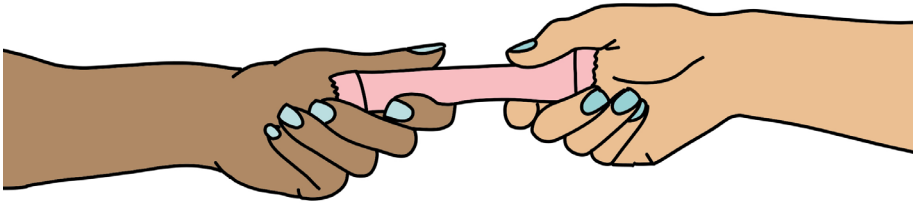
Track your period by marking days in your diary, or monitor it on a period tracker (there are some mobile apps for this!) It is normal for your period to be irregular at first, but it is important to monitor your cycle so that you can pick up if anything is wrong!

- Begin by marking down the first day your period starts and when it stops.
- Throughout your period, mark down the spotting [S] as well as indicate on your calendar if bleeding is:
 - Very light [O]
 - Heavy [+]
 - Normal [X]
- To figure out the “length” of your cycle, begin counting on the first day of bleeding (which is also called cycle day 1) until the first day of your next period.
- The average menstrual cycle is about 28 days, but this can vary between women and girls.
- Keep a separate notebook to record any feelings and symptoms (such as headaches and backache) that you may have during your period or cycle. Also include a rating of your day (good, bad or average).



Managing your period at school or work

- Be prepared: carry sanitary pads, tampons and whatever you use to manage your period in a small bag with you at all times, just in case.
- Talk to your teacher if you trust them, especially if it is the first time you are getting your period.
- Bring spare underwear to school or work.
- Help your friends out, be supportive to each other

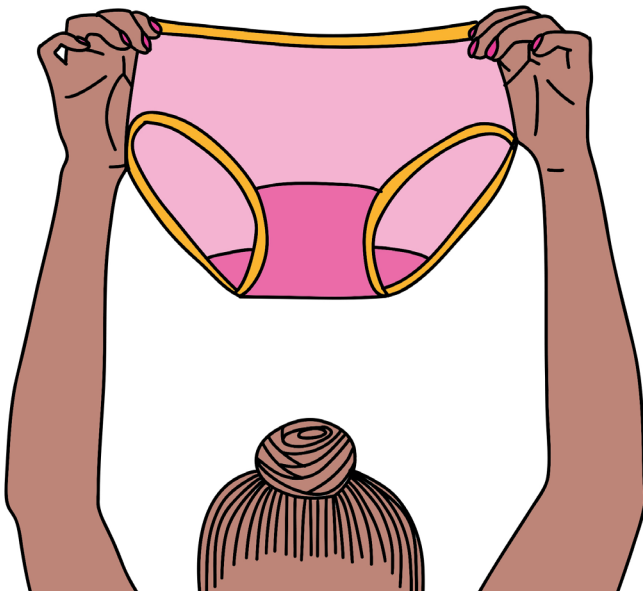
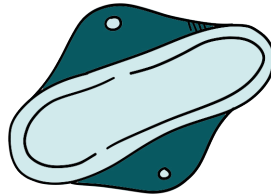
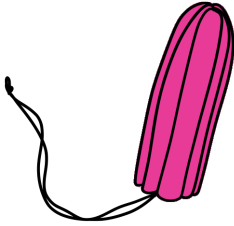


Sanitary Products

The choice of sanitary protection is a personal decision based on what you think is acceptable and what works best for you! There is no right or wrong way.

Options that girls and women use during their period include:

- Strips of cloth
- Tampons (with or without applicators): inserted into the vagina to soak up period blood, thrown away after use
- Disposable pads: placed in the panty and thrown away
- Menstrual cups: a small silicone cup inserted into the vagina
- Reusable pads: worn the same way as a disposable pad, and can last for up to 5 years!
- Period panties: similar to reusable pads, are washable and now available at places like Cotton On and Mr Price.



It is important to wash your hands well before and after inserting products like tampons and menstrual cups. Try and find a comfortable position to insert these products... it may take a few tries to get it right!



Hygiene

Hygiene is an essential aspect of menstruation management. Ensure to do the following when managing your period:

- Keep unused cloths and pads clean (wrapped in tissue or plastic bag) to use later
- **Be prepared:** keep spare cloths or pads in case you get your period during the day or at school.
- **Remember:** during menstruation, you can do everything that you usually do including, daily baths or showers, exercising and playing sports, daily routine, work and attending school.



Did you know? It is false that women and girls cannot bath or swim while on their period. If accessible, tampons and cups are ideal for managing a period while swimming.

Physical Well-Being

It is vital to ensure you look after your body during menstruation. If possible, ensure to eat healthily and sleep well. If you experience pain during your period, try to reduce this pain by doing the following:

- Placing a hot water bottle on the lower stomach area
- Taking a warm bath or drinking a hot beverage
- Taking a walk, stretching and/or exercising
- Rubbing or massaging the lower stomach area.
- Eating foods that are high in magnesium and iron is important to reduce cramps and prevent iron deficiency.



Did you know? Sometimes period pain or cramps (also known as Dysmenorrhea) that are very intense can signal a problem. If you experience pain that occurs earlier in your cycle and lasts longer than normal period cramps, then it may be necessary to seek medical advice.

What is PMS?

PMS refers to 'Premenstrual Syndrome', and consists of normal physical and emotional symptoms experienced leading up to a period. These symptoms differ for everyone and can also change throughout life.

Symptoms may include:

- Swollen or sensitive breasts
- Headache or backache
- Constipation or diarrhoea
- Bloating
- Cramps
- Irritability
- Feeling tired
- Problems sleeping
- Cravings or changes in appetite



Did you know? PMS is normal with over 90% of women experiencing it.

When women have their period, it is normal to feel:

- Stomach cramps
- Nauseous or faint
- Sore and tender breasts
- Headaches and tiredness
- Backache
- General discomfort
- Emotional and psychological changes such as sadness, irritability or anger. This is due to changing hormones.

What's normal and what's not?

Your period will change over the years, just like you do. When you're a teenager, it might be a bit unpredictable. As a young adult, it will become more regular. By the time you get to middle-age (50) and reach what is called menopause, you will eventually stop getting your period.

It is important to remember that everyone is different, and no two vaginas are the same; what is 'normal' for someone else might not be normal for you.

Vaginal discharge is a way of the body keeping the vagina clean, and its colour and texture changes at different stages of the menstrual cycle, between clear to milky-white-ish. An infection and some medications (such as antibiotics) can change the colour and smell of discharge.

What does the colour of my discharge mean?

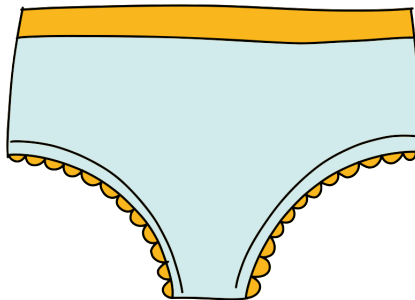
Bloody/brown discharge (in between periods) usually indicates irregular menstrual cycles.

Yellow, green, cloudy discharge with a bad smell indicates an infection, like a sexually transmitted infection (STI)

Pink discharge is normal just before and after giving birth

Thick, white, cheesy discharge could indicate a yeast infection

Grey or yellow discharge with a bad smell and burning, itching or swelling could indicate an infection



What is 'normal' period blood?

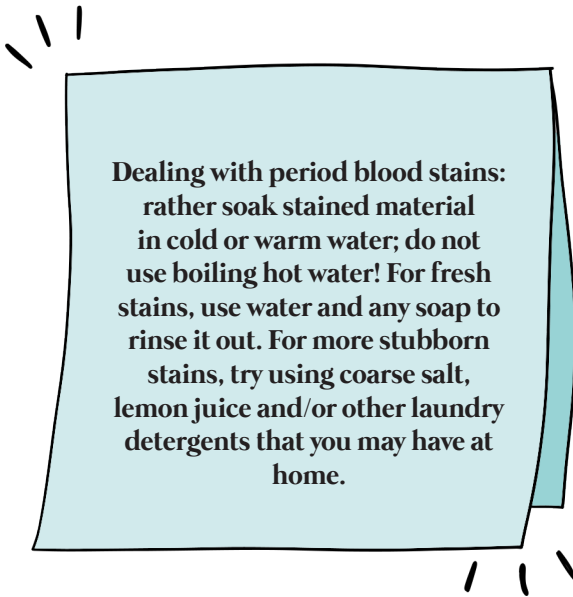
Period blood can be a range of colours:

Older blood can be black/grey, brown, purple or dark red

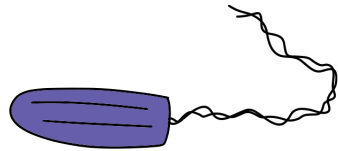
Fresh blood is a brighter red

A light bleed can have pink or even yellow blood.

Bright orange blood might indicate an infection.



Normal period blood is made up of clots, jelly-like substance and mucous and blood. Usually lighter flow is watery and thin, whereas a heavy flow is thicker with lots of clots.



*Suggested Activity:
Activity 2 | Flow diary
Activity 3 | A letter to your period*



Is there such a thing as abnormal bleeding?

Abnormal uterine bleeding is a set of symptoms that may include: no bleeding/absent period; very irregular periods; vaginal bleeding between cycles; heavy bleeding that lasts longer than eight days. If you experience these symptoms, it is a good idea to seek professional advice.

Reasons for having abnormal periods:

- Stress and inadequate food intake
- Use of specific medication (including contraception)
- First two years after girls and women start their periods
- During pregnancy
- During frequent breastfeeding
- Menopause

What do I need to worry about?

- Severe pelvic and lower stomach pain before and during periods
- Pain during sex and/or bleeding during sex
- Excessive bleeding between periods
- Fishy vaginal smell
- Vaginal itching
- Burning while peeing
- Fatigue
- Abnormal discharge, with a fever

How does contraception affect my period?



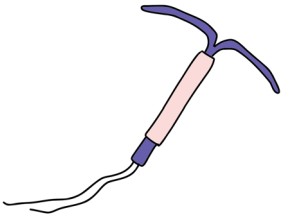
Birth Control Pills

During the first few months of using the pill, you will probably experience irregular spotting. The bleeding you experience while on the pill is called a 'withdrawal bleed': it is not actually a period, because the pill interrupts your menstrual cycle. The bleed is due to changing hormone levels.



Contraceptive Injection and Implant

This contraception can cause irregular, unpredictable bleeding. Sometimes it will stop bleeding completely.



Intrauterine Devices (IUD)

Copper IUDs can cause spotting between periods and heavier, longer periods for the first few months. Over time, periods will become normal again. Hormonal IUDs can cause spotting between periods and will cause periods to be lighter or stop completely.



Emergency Contraception

Taking the morning-after pill may delay your period, or make it come a bit earlier: it depends what stage in your cycle you are at when you take it. It could also make your period last longer than usual. There may also be some spotting between periods.

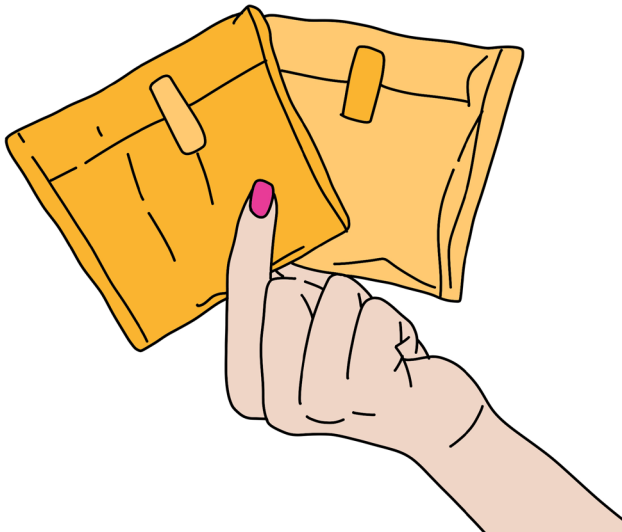


Teachers and sports coaches can help by keeping a small supply of sanitary items on them.

How do we support people during their period?

Men and boys have roles to play in supporting their wives, female relatives, friends and colleagues by:

- Challenging negative attitudes (and not being scared to talk about or listen to matters about menstruation)
- Share information on good hygiene practices,
- Ensure girls and women can afford sanitary products
- Respecting women and girls
- Being supportive and understanding.



Breaking the Stigma: Period Myths to Bust

There are many myths relating to periods/menstruation. A myth is a common misbelief about something and is usually not based on evidence. Spreading myths about periods make it become a stigmatised topic and taboo which means that not a lot of people want to talk about it. If nobody talks openly about the topic, then we compromise the health of women and girls. This creates a negative cycle that often leaves girls and women feeling alone and insecure, and also means that they may face health risks because of the misinformation.

Some common period myths:

You can't get pregnant until you get your first period.

This is not necessarily true although getting your period does signal the ability to become pregnant, it is still possible to get pregnant before your first period and engagement in any sexual activity should use protection.

Other people can tell when I am on my period.

Even though your body odour can change slightly during your menstrual cycle, generally no one can tell when you are menstruating.

Girls should not cook during menstruation

Periods are not unclean or dirty; girls and women can participate in daily activities, as usual. Menstruation is a sign of healthy development and menstruation blood is the same as any other blood in the body. Thus, it cannot be dirty.

Tampons can get stuck in the vagina

While a tampon can get stuck (it is possible but rare) it can certainly not get lost. This is because the vagina is not nearly as deep as perceived.

Can you think of any other myths you've heard? Ask participants and discuss.

The Trouble with Gender

After having learned about menstruation and understanding the biological characteristics behind being 'female', we can now begin to focus on gender, sex and sexuality. Gender is associated with specific roles and expectations around behaviour. These might seem like they are based on biological facts, but they are not. Girls and women face these expectations and roles when transitioning into puberty, and they may feel pressure to live up to specific standards. In South Africa, menstruating girls experience discrimination because of these standards. They can experience lower self-confidence and health risks because of inadequate access to products to manage their periods. This means that many girls are forced to miss school or work because products are also unaffordable, adding to the shame and stigma of menstruation already experienced. We need to be open to discussions around periods, as well as gender roles, norms and beliefs.



Did you know? 'Sex' refers to the biological characteristics of being female or male. 'Gender' refers to the roles and attributes assigned to people by society based on their sex. The difference between sexes is based on nature, while differences based on gender are nurture. It is important to note that not all people who menstruate are ciswomen, which means that people might not identify as a girl or woman even though they have female reproductive anatomy.

Gender Roles

As stated above, 'gender' is a social construct which means that these roles are based on cultural and social norms and beliefs. Some of these roles might seem as if they link to biological differences, such as a mother taking care of children, but they are not. Gender roles can have a significant influence on girls and women too, especially while menstruating. It can lead to the exclusion of women and girls from social opportunities, such as education and employment. It can also cause an unequal burden of responsibilities such as more household work. Practices like gender-based violence (GBV) are also linked to gender roles.

What is Gender-Based Violence?

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to the psychological, emotional, sexual or economic violence that occurs as a result of unequal power relationships between genders in society. It occurs because of perceived ideas of gender roles, norms and expectations.



There are various forms of GBV:

- **Violence against women and girls (VAWG)**
 - Violence that is directed specifically onto women and girls.
- **Violence against LGBTQI+ people**
 - Violence directed onto people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or intersex people
- **Intimate partner violence (IPV)**
 - Physical, emotional and sexual violence by a partner.
- **Domestic violence (DV)**
 - Physical, emotional and sexual violence by a family member. This violence could be sexual assault, coercion and sexual harassment.
- **Sexual violence (SV)**
 - Various sexual acts that are unwanted or forced upon someone else. This may involve rape, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation or sex trafficking.

The impact of GBV

Gender-based violence is detrimental to a victim's life - meaning that it results in effects that are physical, behavioural and psychological.

The effects of GBV include:

Physical

- HIV/AIDS and/or other Sexually Transmitted Infections
- Unwanted pregnancies
- Miscarriages
- Injury and/or death

Behavioural

- Low self-esteem, shame and guilt
- Substance abuse
- Living in fear
- Suicidal ideations

Psychological

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety and depressive disorders
- Shock and fear
- Complex trauma

What is Sexual Harassment?

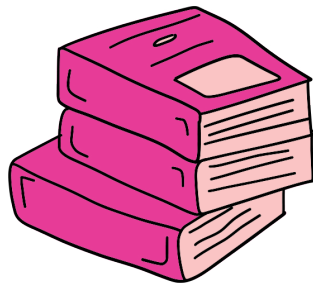
Sexual harassment is a form of 'gender-based violence' and is defined as unwanted sexual behaviour from another person that is both psychologically and physically harmful.

Examples of sexual harassment:

- Making sexual propositions, such as, "How about it, babe?"
- Spreading rumours like, "She'll do it with anyone."
- Sending unsolicited sexual messages or pictures to a cellphone.
- Chasing and/or cornering women and girls to grab and kiss them, flip-up their skirts etc.
- Persistent unwelcome sexual advances.

How do we define sexual harassment?

The most important aspect of defining sexual harassment is how behaviour makes the victim feel. If the sexual act makes the victim feel uncomfortable and fearful, then it can constitute sexual harassment. The intention of sexual harassment is where one person often harasses to exert their power over another. This is aimed to make the victim feel insulted, intimidated and threatened. This is why it is vital that people feel safe in their relationships and to be able to set boundaries when they do not want to do certain things.



Respectful Relationships

What is a healthy relationship?

A healthy relationship forms on three basic principles; freedom, love and respect.

Freedom

A healthy relationship allows both people to see their family and friends, go out with other people, make their own decisions, follow their own set of beliefs, religion or practices and be themselves.

Love

A healthy relationship is not abusive. It allows the two people to communicate with respect and honesty and two people feel safe in the relationship. People in healthy relationships have boundaries and can say 'NO' to things they do not want to do, such as sexual intercourse or risky activities.

Respect

A healthy relationship has its grounding in respect where two people can listen to each other's feelings and opinions, can celebrate achievements, are not jealous, do not insult or abuse each other and do not control or manipulate each other.

It is important to note that all relationships can go through a hard time and we can disagree and feel unhappy in relationships that are not abusive. This makes it difficult to understand what is normal and not abusive.



Warning signs of an abusive relationship:

- Try to control you
- Pressure you
- Deliberately hurt you
- Express extreme jealousy
- Break you down
- Threaten you

Another important aspect of healthy relationships is the idea of 'consent'.

What is consent?

Consent is a mutual agreement based on a shared desire for sexual activities. It is an ongoing verbal interaction that involves honesty, respect and trust. Important to note: consent is not related to power or coercing the other person into saying 'yes' to sexual activity.

What consent does look like:

- Communicating at all times and checking that either partner is comfortable.
- Respecting when a partner says "no" or "maybe".
- Not making comments or acting aggressively to coerce someone into saying "yes".

What consent does **not** look like:

- Assuming certain clothes or flirting is giving consent;
- Giving consent under the influence of alcohol or drugs;
- Giving consent because someone is pressured.

Seeking Help and Helping Others

As mentioned earlier, sexual harassment and other forms of GBV have a detrimental impact on the victim. Due to this, it is vital that you know what to do in case you or someone you care about experiences it. It is also important to remember that there is no 'right' way to handle sexual harassment because each situation is unique.

If you're being harassed:

Don't blame yourself

If you are being harassed, do not ever blame yourself despite what the perpetrator says. Under no circumstance, is anyone allowed to sexually harass someone else – it is illegal and is never the victim's fault.

Report

Although reporting sexual harassment may cause feelings of fear and bewilderment, it is always best to report sexual harassment to an adult you trust. If someone does not believe you at first, you may have to approach someone else. In most cases, it is better to tell someone sooner than later otherwise the sexual harassment may worsen.

Keep record

Keep a record of all events that have happened to you in a journal. Save any offensive pictures, texts, etc, so that you have evidence of the sexual harassment.

Seek medical care

It is always vital to seek medical care immediately after a traumatic event has happened, especially if it involves rape. This is because rape may require medical attention in terms of a physical examination. In cases of recurring events or single events, it is also important that once you have reported the incidence(s), you seek psychological and professional assistance. This is because being sexually harassed has a detrimental impact on your mind too.

Thuthuzela Care Centres are one-stop government facilities for medical, legal and psychological support after rape. Find out where your nearest TCC is – there are currently 6 in the Western Cape.

Suggested Activity

Activity 4 | Happy Thoughts



How can we help those who experience violence?

Listen and believe

Hear what your friend has to say and try not to interrupt. Let them talk at their own pace. Show them that you are listening by making eye contact and nodding. Try not to overdo the questions, as this can make it seem like you doubt them. Your friend must see that you're on their side and that you support them.

Validate

Tell your friend that what they're feeling is right. Let them know you think their feelings are real and normal, by repeating the feeling word they've used (e.g. 'it's OK that you feel scared'). Acknowledge that you have feelings about it too but try to keep the focus on your friend.

Don't blame

In our society, it's common for victims to be blamed for their experience of violence. Try to avoid questions such as 'Why did you go there?' and 'Why did you go out with them?' because they might make your friend think they're responsible for what happened.

Ask

If you feel a bit helpless, ask your friend what sort of help they'd like from you. They're not expecting you to solve the problem, and you've already helped just by listening. Asking will also help your friend think about what to do next.

Confidentiality

It is important that your friend trusts you and feels like they're in control of the story. If you think someone else needs to know (e.g. a trusted adult like a teacher or your parent), first ask your friend for permission to discuss this with a third person. Preferably encourage



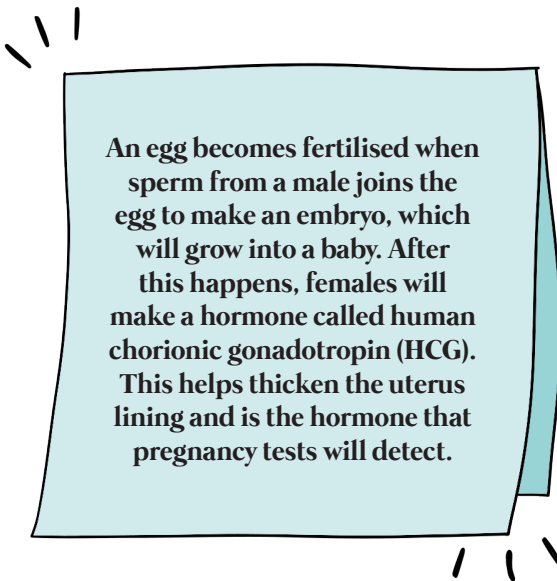
your friend to go to the adult, but if you two would prefer that you did, you can think together about who can be trusted and don't tell the adult until your friend is okay with it.

Get help

Talk with your friend about what would help stop the violence (if it is still happening), or what they feel they want. Encourage your friend to tell a trusted adult who can do something about it, such as a relative, a teacher or a school counsellor.

Pregnancy During Adolescence

We cannot talk about menstruation and reproductive health without talking about pregnancy. Having a baby is a major life event, whether you are 15 or 30, and whether your pregnancy is planned or not. In South Africa, as many as 1 in 5 pregnancies are unplanned. All the changes in self-image, body and relationships that are normal during pregnancy are often felt strongly in teenagers.



When you discover that you are pregnant, you have a few options to consider:

- You can carry the pregnancy to full-term and raise the child;
- You can continue with the pregnancy and place the child for adoption or in foster care
- You can choose to have an abortion to terminate the pregnancy.

You should take the time to consider all of your options and discuss the issue with your partner, a friend or a family member (if you feel safe and comfortable doing so). Ultimately the decision of whether or not to continue with the pregnancy should be yours.

When you discover that you are pregnant, you may feel alone, scared and worried for many different reasons: you may be scared to tell your parents, friends and family; you may be scared of pregnancy, birth and becoming a mother. It is usually helpful to tell someone sooner rather than later, so that you can get the care and support you need as soon as possible so that you feel less overwhelmed. When you have the support of someone or people you trust, it is easier to make decisions and plan for your future. If you decide to keep your baby, you will need this support as you adjust to becoming a mother during your pregnancy. It is also important to book an appointment for antenatal care (care during pregnancy) as soon as possible at a midwife and obstetric unit (MOU) or the closest maternity hospital.

Sometimes the physical changes young women experience during pregnancy can feel unbearable as their bodies are changing and growing during adolescence. During pregnancy, you will not get your period.

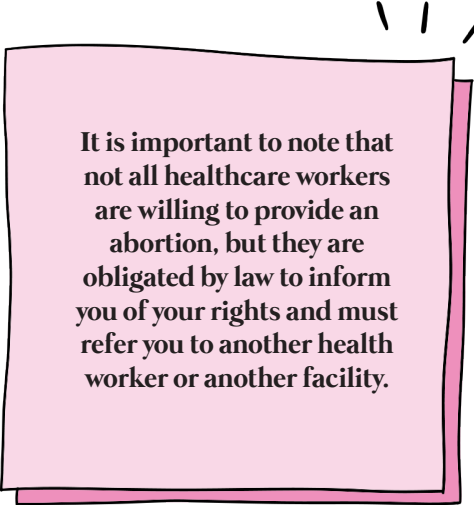
Physical changes experienced during pregnancy include:

- Growing breasts that may be more sensitive
- Morning sickness: nausea/vomiting
- Peeing frequently
- Swelling in hands and feet
- Back ache
- Constipation, heartburn or stomach ache

Termination of pregnancy/abortion

Abortions (also called termination of pregnancy) are legal for anyone in South Africa up to 12 weeks of pregnancy and can be performed by a midwife, nurse or a doctor at a clinic, community centre or hospital. For pregnancies up to 20 weeks, terminations can be done by a doctor at a hospital. After 20 weeks, termination can only be done in special cases (for example, if the life of the mother is threatened by the pregnancy).

You can have a safe and legal abortion at government hospitals, designated private doctors and gynaecologists, and non-profit providers like Marie Stopes centres. To have a free abortion, the request must be made at a primary healthcare clinic, where the pregnancy will be confirmed, counselling provided, an appointment made, and a referral letter is given to a facility where the procedure can be performed. You will be asked to sign an informed consent form giving permission for the abortion to be done.



It is important to note that not all healthcare workers are willing to provide an abortion, but they are obligated by law to inform you of your rights and must refer you to another health worker or another facility.

Suggested workshop activities

Activity 1 | Get to know your anatomy

Materials Required: Print out of Appendix A: The Female Reproductive System.

Use a print out of Appendix A in this manual, covering the labels with stickers/a piece of paper. Ask workshop participants to label the female reproductive system at the start of the workshop, to see how much they know already!

Activity 2 | Flow diary

Materials Required: Personal diary or journal

Encourage workshop participants to regularly write about their period in their personal capacity, such as the symptoms or emotions experienced during their cycle.

Some prompts:

Today, I felt _____ about my period.

*I took this medication _____ to relieve cramps/pain/etc.
My flow was light/heavy/in between.*

I didn't feel like doing _____ today, or _____ took a lot more effort than usual.

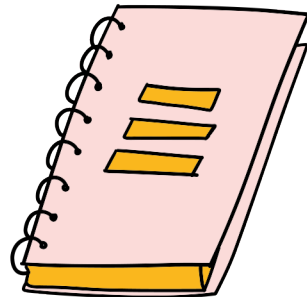


Activity 3 | A letter to your period

Materials Required: Paper, pens, markers

Encourage participants to write a letter to their period. No one else will read it. Encourage them to think about:

- 1. Think of a name for your period.*
- 2. How will you manage your period?*
- 3. How will you treat your period?*
- 4. What does a period mean to you?*
- 5. How would you write about your experience of your first period?*



Activity 4 | Happy thoughts

Materials Required: Paper and pens

Ask participants to write any negative thoughts they have about themselves and then rewrite them in a more positive way. Encourage participants to highlight the parts about themselves that they love and are proud of.

Helplines

Childline South Africa

Toll-free helpline: 0800 055 555

Website: www.childline.org.za

The Trauma Centre

Tel: 021 465 7373

Email: info@trauma.co.za

Rape Crisis

Tel: 021 684 1180

Email: info@rapecrisis.org.za

1000 Women 1 Voice

Tel: 071 776 4851

Email: info@1000women.co.za

Website: www.1000women.co.za

South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG)

To Contact A Counsellor: 011 234 4837

Suicidal Emergency: 0800 567 567

Helpline: 0800 456 789

Website: www.sadag.org

Lifeline

Tel: 0861 322322

LoveLife sexual health line

Tel: 0860 121 900

Women's Legal Centre

Tel: 021 424 5660

Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare Options

Marie Stopes

<https://www.mariestopes.org.za/>

Termination of pregnancy (abortion) information found [here](#)

Pregnancy and Parenting

The Parent Centre

Tel: 021 762 0116

Website: <https://theparentcentre.org.za>

The Zoe Project

Tel: 073 174 1992

Email: info@thezoeproject.co.za

Website: <https://thezoeproject.co.za>


Digital Resources

Watch the Minister of Menstruation's TEDTalk 'Bad Blood' [here](#)

[Playlist](#) for videos on puberty and menstruation

[Videos](#) on healthy relationships

Track your period on a smartphone with the [Flo](#) or [Clue](#) apps



**As a coach/facilitator/
mentor, you do not
have to have ALL the
answers. Sometimes
all that is needed is
pointing in the right
direction.**

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Appendix A: The Female Reproductive System

