

About Your Period.

What is a period?

A period is another name for menstrual cycle. It is the time each month when fluid that contains blood and tissue leaves your body through the vagina.

When will my first period start?

Your period will usually start after your breasts develop and pubic hair begins to grow. The average age is 12 years old. Your period can happen anytime between 9-15 years old.

How long will my period last?

Your period may last two days or it may last seven days. Everyone's menstrual cycle is different.

Once my period starts, will I get it the same time every month?

When your period first starts, it may not come at the same time each month. This is normal. After two or three years, your period will become more regular and happen every 4-5 weeks. Some get their periods a little less often or more often.

Will my period be heavy or light?

Your period may be very light. Your next period might be heavy. If your period blood flow is always heavy and lasts longer than seven days, you may be having heavy menstrual bleeding.

What is Heavy Menstrual Bleeding?

Signs of heavy menstrual bleeding are:

- bleeding lasting longer than 7 days
- sudden gushing (or heavy bleeding not contained by protection like a pad or tampon)
- passing blood clumps bigger than a quarter
- soaking through pads/tampons in less than 2 hours
- feeling tired or dizzy
- bleeding that limits activities while at school, with friends, or while playing sports

Tell your healthcare provider if during your period you:

- bleed longer than 7 days
- stop going to school or playing sports
- have heavy cramping or stomach pain
- feel weak, tired, dizzy or look very pale

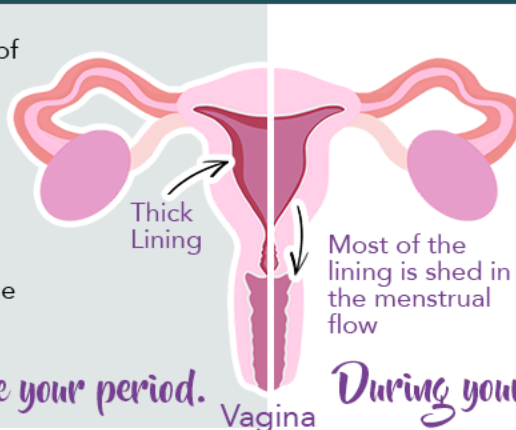
Heavy menstrual bleeding can be a sign of a bleeding disorder. Having long and heavy periods can be stressful especially if you feel you can't control your bleeding. Find someone you can talk to like a parent, aunt, sibling, nurse or healthcare provider at the treatment center.

Why Does Menstruation Happen?

1. Your period starts on Day 1 of the menstrual cycle.

2. Every month, your ovaries grow and begin to make eggs.

3. When an egg fully develops, your brain will tell it to leave the ovary.



4. While this happens, the lining of the uterus will start to grow thicker. This is to get ready for a baby to grow inside the uterus.

5. It usually takes one month for the lining to thicken.

6. If an egg is not fertilized, the uterus lining will break down and bleeding will begin.

Before your period.

During your period.

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Where does the blood come from?

Period blood comes from your uterus. Each month, the uterus will grow a thick lining. This lining is the place where a baby may grow. The lining is made of blood and other fluid. If an egg is not fertilized, the uterus lining will break down and flow out of the vagina and you will have a period.

How much blood will there be each time?

While no two bodies are the same, during a normal period, your body will lose between a few tablespoons to one quarter of a cup each day. Usually your period is heavier at the start than towards the end. More blood may flow on day one than on day four.

How long will I have my period?

You will continue to have your period for many years, until you are about 45-55 years old. If you take hormones to control your bleeding, you may not have a period.

Do you have to push on your stomach to make it stop bleeding (like other bleeding)?

No. The bleeding will stop when your period is finished.

What if I don't want to use pads or tampons?

You are not alone! There are other products you can use such as period underwear, period swimming bottoms, or even the menstrual cup. Try different products to see which you like best and which work best for you.

I am worried I might bleed on my sheets while I sleep. What should I do?

First, if your bleeding is very heavy, talk to your healthcare provider. He or she may recommend medication that can help. If you are still worried, try using multiple layers of pads and sheets on your bed. This way if you bleed on your sheets, you can remove a layer and go back to bed on clean sheets. You can also add a plastic cover over your mattress or plastic liners under your sheets. Also, change your pad before going to bed and again first thing in the morning. If your flow is heavy, you may have to change it more often.



Can I go swimming or exercise when I have my period?

Yes! When you have your period you can do everything you normally do: run, bike, dance, and even swim.

Exercise is a good thing to do when you have your period. It can help you feel better. If you go swimming, use a tampon or wear period swimsuit bottoms (trunks).