

period talk

Presented by



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Background information on menstruation matters for teachers.



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Activity overviews and curriculum links.



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Teaching and learning modules.



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Handouts and resources.



Note: This resource has been written so it can be delivered to either single-sex or mixed sex classes. It is our belief that it is just as important for boys to learn about menstruation as it is for girls and so we encourage boys to be included in these sessions

Before beginning any teaching activities from the resource it is recommended that you set some ground rules for discussion to ensure that the issues are discussed with sensitivity and maturity.

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations and thank you. You truly are at the forefront of educating your kids. I salute you!

Period Talk was born out of frustration that there are very limited resources available on the topic of menstruation other than its basic mechanics and people are still awkward and embarrassed to talk about periods. My dream is to normalise the conversation and get kids everywhere exploring the topic, thinking about periods from a human rights and environmental impact perspective whilst having fun and making it easier for you, the teachers!

We're proud to be partnering with Share The Dignity Foundation, an Australia women's charity that distributes sanitary items to women and girls who are homeless, at risk and can't afford to buy their own. Share The Dignity realised that whilst it is important to help end period poverty, it is equally important to provide education around menstrual literacy.

Huge thanks to all the kids involved - none of whom are professional actors - Ginja, Alira, Lil, Yasmin, Harvey and Kaiden. So very proud of them and their approach to the whole program. Gratitude to my hugely talented (and ridiculously patient!) videographer and editor Henry Glover.

We enlisted the help of highly qualified and well respected PDHPE teachers, as well as Mike Armour, Doctor of Philosophy (Women's Health) from the University of Western Sydney to ensure the information is reliable, current and necessary.

The resource itself was written by the incredible Janice Atkin, who put up with my zillion phone calls and questions and has managed to successfully translate my crazy vision into something substantial that is now right in front of you!

My hope is that you have fun teaching your kids this info - Girls need to know and understand their cycles, in order to truly understand and connect with their bodies. Boys need to know and understand the cycles, in order to truly understand and connect with women and girls.

Thanks again - keep me posted with any feedback/questions:
info@periodtalk.com.au

You rock!

Tasha x

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SECTION 1: Background information on menstruation matters for teachers



WHAT IS PERIOD PAIN(DYSMENORRHEA)?

Dysmenorrhea, more commonly known as “period pain” is pain that usually occurs in the area below your belly button. There are two kinds of dysmenorrhea:

- **Primary (the most common and caused by hormonal changes)**
- **Secondary (caused by other conditions like endometriosis).**

Period pain caused by primary dysmenorrhea can feel different to different women, but it’s commonly described as cramping or aching. Sometimes it can feel sharp, like a stabbing sensation, or a feeling of something dragging.

Sometimes this pain will feel like it’s in your lower back as well as your tummy. It’s not as common but some women will feel like the pain goes down into their thighs, which can feel very heavy or stiff.

Pain usually starts within a few hours after your period starts, but some women can feel the pain begin anywhere from a few hours or a day before their period starts. This pain usually lasts for the first one to two days once your period starts. If your pain starts more than a day before your period and lasts more than the first two days, you may need to speak with your doctor about this. The pain that occurs during your period can often come and go, or get worse at certain times, often at night. Women often describe the cramping sensation coming in ‘waves’. This is mostly due to changes in levels of some of the hormones involved in causing

period pain at different times.

Most women with dysmenorrhea have other symptoms that come either at the same time, or just before, their period pain.

Common symptoms that come along with the pain are:

- **Feeling tired**
- **Having emotional changes (like feeling angry or sad)**
- **Headaches**
- **Breast tenderness**
- **Bloating**

Some of these things, like some mild cramps during the first couple of days of your period, might be frustrating, but probably are not anything to worry about. Other things, like having pain in your tummy for the whole period that is so bad you have to stay in bed, need to be checked out by your doctor.

WHAT IS PMS?

Symptoms that occur in the two weeks before the period (and are very common in the 3-7 days before the period) are often called Pre-menstrual symptoms or 'PMS'.

It is very common to experience these 'PMS' symptoms, with around a third of women reporting at least one of these symptoms on a regular basis. Researchers have shown that stress seems to make PMS symptoms worse for most women.

The most common PMS symptoms are:

- ▶ **Breast tenderness/soreness.** Some women say it feels like their breasts are heavy, sore or hot.
- ▶ **Bloating.** Usually in the lower abdomen.
- ▶ **Food cravings.** Foods containing a lot of salt and carbohydrates (like chips) seem to be a common craving, as does chocolate.
- ▶ **Sudden mood changes.** Usually feeling angry, irritable or sad more easily than normal. These symptoms are different to depression or anxiety in that as soon as your period starts these emotional symptoms should completely disappear within 24-48 hours.

Researchers are not sure exactly what causes these PMS symptoms but there is evidence to suggest that the prostaglandin hormone (PGF2a), the same hormone that causes period pain, might be involved.

This hormone gets absorbed into the bloodstream and can cause at least some of these symptoms. This might be why these symptoms are so common in women with significant period pain.

Other possible causes are changes in levels of chemicals in the brain such as serotonin (one of the chemicals that make us feel happy) as well as genetic factors. Some of the self-care options, especially the yoga postures, and the dietary advice might help reduce PMS symptoms, especially if these are mild and do not impact your life too much.



NUTRITION AND PERIOD PAIN

There are three main components of diet that women can change or 'tweak' to see if it helps with period (menstrual) symptoms. Out of the three options, the most well researched and effective is Omega-3.

OMEGA-3

Many of you might have heard of Omega-3's before, they are considered to be a 'good fat' that are involved in reducing inflammation. There are three types of Omega-3's (fatty acids); EPA and DHA which are most commonly found in high amounts in fish, especially oily fish like salmon and ALA which is found in vegetarian sources such as walnuts, and flaxseeds. Research has shown that making sure you have enough Omega-3 in your diet, either by getting it in your food, or supplementing it, helps reduce period pain quite significantly.



If you are getting your Omega-3's from EPA and DHA (such as a fish oil supplement or eating fish as part of your meals) then you only need quite a small amount to make a difference each day, 180mg of EPA and 120mg of DHA. To get this amount you only need to eat about 100g of salmon or take a single Fish Oil capsule (be sure to check the label).

If you include salmon in your diet 2 to 3 times per week you are likely to get enough Omega-3's to help reduce your period pain. If you don't like eating fish, then you can take either Fish Oil or a Krill Oil supplement (if you consume animal products) or eat a handful of walnuts or take flaxseed oil if you are avoiding animal products. Keep in mind that even though the ALA in these sources gets converted to EPA and DHA in the body, it's not converted very efficiently, so you would need to eat more of these for the same effect. There isn't any research that looks directly at how much ALA you need to reduce your period pain, so a good idea is to take the recommended dosage on the bottle and see if that helps. You might need to increase the dose slightly if you don't notice any difference after a couple of months.

VITAMIN B1



This is a B vitamin that is commonly found in nuts, fish and legumes. There is some research to suggest that quite a high dose (100mg/day) can reduce period pain in a similar manner to Fish Oils. It would be very difficult if not impossible to get 100mg per day from your food, but it might be worth trying to increase your Vitamin B1 intake through your food first and see if that makes any difference.

Good sources of Vitamin B1 are nuts (especially macadamia nuts and pistachio nuts) and fish (such as tuna and salmon). So if you are eating fish regularly you'll get the benefit of both the Omega-3 and the Vitamin B1.

SECTION 2: Activity overview and curriculum links



YEARS 5 & 6 MODULE

Activity 1: What exactly is a period anyway?

Australian Curriculum

Achievement standard elements

Students investigate developmental changes and transitions.

Content descriptions

Investigate resources and strategies to manage changes and transitions associated with puberty (ACPPS052)

NSW Curriculum

Stage 3 Outcomes

PD3-1: identifies and applies strengths and strategies to manage life changes and transitions.

PD3-2: investigates information, community resources and strategies to demonstrate resilience and seek help for themselves and others.

Content

Examine change and investigate resources and strategies to manage transition and challenges, for example:

- understand that individuals experience change associated with puberty at different times, intensity and with different responses eg menstruation.

Activity 2: How can periods affect you physically and emotionally?



Australian Curriculum

Achievement standard elements

Students investigate developmental changes and transitions.

Content descriptions

Investigate resources and strategies to manage changes and transitions associated with puberty (ACPPS052)

Investigate the role of preventive health in promoting and maintaining the health, safety and wellbeing for individuals and their communities (ACPPS058).

NSW Curriculum

Stage 3 Outcomes

PD3-1: identifies and applies strengths and strategies to manage life changes and transitions.

PD3-2: investigates information, community resources and strategies to demonstrate resilience and seek help for themselves and others.

Content

Examine change and investigate resources and strategies to manage transition and challenges, for example:

- understand that individuals experience change associated with puberty at different times, intensity and with different responses eg menstruation.
- identify and evaluate age-appropriate sources of information to enhance understanding of changes associated with growth and development.

Activity 3: How do you manage your period?

Australian Curriculum

Achievement standard elements

Students investigate developmental changes and transitions.

Content descriptions

Investigate resources and strategies to manage changes and transitions associated with puberty (ACPPS052)

NSW Curriculum

Stage 3 Outcomes

PD3-1: identifies and applies strengths and strategies to manage life changes and transitions.

Content

Examine change and investigate resources and strategies to manage transition and challenges, for example:

- understand that individuals experience change associated with puberty at different times, intensity and with different responses eg menstruation.
- identify and evaluate age-appropriate sources of information to enhance understanding of changes associated with growth and development.



Activity 4: How can what you eat and your exercise levels impact on your period?



Australian Curriculum

Achievement standard elements

Students investigate developmental changes and transitions.

Content descriptions

Investigate resources and strategies to manage changes and transitions associated with puberty (ACPPS052)

Investigate the role of preventive health in promoting and maintaining the health, safety and wellbeing for individuals and their communities (ACPPS058).

NSW Curriculum

Stage 3 Outcomes

PD3-1: identifies and applies strengths and strategies to manage life changes and transitions

PD3-2: investigates information, community resources and strategies to demonstrate resilience and seek help for themselves and others.

Content

Examine change and investigate resources and strategies to manage transition and challenges, for example:

- understand that individuals experience change associated with puberty at different times, intensity and with different responses eg menstruation.
- identify and evaluate age-appropriate sources of information to enhance understanding of changes associated with growth and development.



Teacher note: The activities in the Year 5 and 6 section may be relevant to Year 7 and 8 students if they haven't had any pre-requisite learning in primary schools. It is recommended to test students knowledge of the hormone cycle, sanitary products and preventive management strategies at the beginning of the unit and if there are any gaps in knowledge, consider teaching activities from the Years 5 and 6 section first before introducing activities from the Years 7 and 8 section.



Activity 1: Understanding periods and menstruation

Australian Curriculum

Achievement standard elements

Students evaluate strategies and resources to manage changes and transitions and investigate their impact on their identities.

Content descriptions

Evaluate strategies to manage personal, physical and social changes that occur as they grow older (ACPPS071)

Investigate and select strategies to promote health, safety and wellbeing (ACPPS073)

NSW Curriculum

Stage 4 Outcomes

PD4-1: examines and evaluates strategies to manage current and future challenges
 PD4-2: Examines and demonstrates the role help-seeking strategies and behaviours play in supporting themselves and others
 PD4-9: demonstrates self-management skills to effectively manage complex situations.

Content

Investigate the impact of transition and change on identity:

- Examine the impact of physical, social and emotional changes during adolescence.
- Evaluate strategies to manage personal, physical and social changes that occur as they grow older.

Activity 2: Making healthy choices about sanitary products

Australian Curriculum

Achievement standard elements

Students evaluate strategies and resources to manage changes and transitions and investigate their impact on their identities.

Content descriptions

Evaluate strategies to manage personal, physical and social changes that occur as they grow older (ACPPS071)

Investigate and select strategies to promote health, safety and wellbeing (ACPPS073)

NSW Curriculum

Stage 4 Outcomes

PD4-1: examines strategies to manage current and future challenges

PD4-9: demonstrates self-management skills to effectively manage complex situations.

Content

Investigate the impact of transition and change on identity:

- Examine the impact of physical, social and emotional changes during adolescence.
- Evaluate strategies to manage personal, physical and social changes that occur as they grow older.



Activity 3: Basic human right

Australian Curriculum	NSW Curriculum
<p>Achievement standard elements Students evaluate strategies and resources to manage changes and transitions and investigate their impact on their identities.</p>	<p>Stage 4 Outcomes PD4-7: investigates health practices, behaviours and resources to promote health, safety, wellbeing and physically active communities.</p>
<p>Content descriptions Evaluate strategies to manage personal, physical and social changes that occur as they grow older (ACPPS071)</p> <p>Investigate and select strategies to promote health, safety and wellbeing (ACPPS073)</p>	<p>Content Examine factors that influence health and wellbeing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examine how contextual factors influence attitudes and behaviours towards health and wellbeing.

Activity 4: How can cultural and religious beliefs impact on a woman's experience with periods?

Australian Curriculum	NSW Curriculum
<p>Achievement standard elements Students evaluate strategies and resources to manage changes and transitions and investigate their impact on their identities.</p>	<p>Stage 4 Outcomes PD4-7: investigates health practices, behaviours and resources to promote health, safety, wellbeing and physically active communities.</p>
<p>Content descriptions Evaluate strategies to manage personal, physical and social changes that occur as they grow older (ACPPS071)</p> <p>Investigate and select strategies to promote health, safety and wellbeing (ACPPS073)</p>	<p>Content Examine factors that influence health and wellbeing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examine how contextual factors influence attitudes and behaviours towards health and wellbeing.

SECTION 3: Teaching and learning activities

YEARS 5 & 6

Activity 1: What exactly is a period anyway?

Learning intentions: After completing this activity students will:

- ▶ Understand the nature of the menstrual cycle.
- ▶ Understand what happens when you have a period.
- ▶ Clarify any misconceptions or misunderstandings they had about menstruation.

Resources required:

- ▶ Post-it notes
- ▶ Whiteboard and markers
- ▶ Video 1
- ▶ Video 2
- ▶ Animation 1



Activity description

Introducing the concept

Introduce the activity by explaining that over the next few lessons we are going to be exploring how boys and girls change as they get older and move from childhood into adolescence.



Ask students if they know the word we use to describe the changes that happen as we move from childhood to adolescence - explain that the word is puberty if it is not volunteered by the class.



Break the class into small groups of 4-5 students and distribute a small stack of post-it notes or a whiteboard marker to each group. Explain that they are going to participate in a group relay challenge where each group has to work together to identify as many different physical changes that happen as we go through puberty. Groups need to list changes one at a time on a post-it note that they run and stick on the board or take in turns writing their responses on the board with a marker.

Example changes include:

Growing taller, getting heavier, breasts getting larger, hips widening, shoulders widening, hair under the arms, pubic hair, sweating more, starting periods, pimples/spots/acne, feeling emotional, attracted to other people, hair on legs and chest, voice changes.



Once all groups have exhausted their ideas, as a class work through each of the changes listed and classify them on a Venn Diagram as experienced by only boys, only girls or by both boys and girls.

Explain that these changes are all a normal part of growing up and everyone goes through them at their own rate.

Expanding the concept



Show the class the VIDEO 1 - What Exactly is a Period Anyway?



Show the Animation 1 – What exactly is a period?



Show VIDEO 2: When Should You Expect it and What should you do When it Finally Arrives?

After watching, discuss or invite students to record::

- 🕒 What new information did you notice in the video and animation?
- 🕒 Was there anything interesting or surprising?
- 🕒 What did it make you wonder? Explain to the class that the next few lessons we are going to learn all about periods (or menstruation which is the scientific name) and the menstrual cycle.

It is important that both boys and girls learn about this as it is something that we are more than likely all going to have some experience with - either because you are a woman and will more than likely experience periods or because you may be a partner, father, brother, uncle or friend of a woman who experiences periods. It is really important that you support a friend or family member, particularly when they first get their period as it can be scary and cause anxiety.

Ask the class to share ways that they could help support a friend or family member when they get their period?



Explain that so far we have used two different names - menstruation and periods to describe what happens to a woman each month.

Ask the class does anyone have other names that they use or have heard to describe a period? Brainstorm as a class the different terms (including slang terms) for periods or menstruation.



Reinforcing the concept

Explain to the class that we are now going to play the 'Everyone is Different' Game.

1. Ask the class or group to arrange themselves in order of height. Make the point that there is a large range of heights within the group but that these are all normal or healthy.
2. Now ask the class to move in to groups based on the colour of their eyes or hair. Make the point that there are a range of different eye colours and hair colours and that is also perfectly normal.
3. Lastly, ask students to arrange themselves in a line based on the size of their shoes. Once again make the point that there is a large range of different shoe and feet sizes but these are all normal and healthy.

Explain that this is the same with puberty and menstruation. The physical changes that are associated with puberty will happen at different times for everyone and that is perfectly normal and healthy. As part of puberty, girls will start their period at different ages and have different cycles. This is also very normal

Activity 2: How can periods affect you physically and emotionally?

Learning intentions: After completing this activity students will:

- ▶ Understand what happens physically and emotionally when you have a period.
- ▶ Understand the role that hormones play during the menstrual cycle.
- ▶ Understand some of the challenges that may be faced by boys and girls as they move through puberty.

Resources required:

- ▶ Video 3
- ▶ Video 4
- ▶ Animation 2
- ▶ Challenges mindmap worksheets



Activity description

Introducing the concept

Explain to the class that menstruation is a normal part of a female's life that should not prevent them from taking part in everyday activities. However, some young women may experience some discomfort.

Menstrual cramps may be uncomfortable either before or during a period. A hot water bottle, a heating bag or moderate exercise can relieve cramps. Be careful when using heat. Include the impact on lifestyle. If cramps become severe then visiting the doctor to discuss solutions is advised. Let the class know that you'll talk more about how exercise and diet can help manage some of the symptoms of growing up in later lessons.

Explain to the class that not only do our bodies go through physical changes as we become an adult but we will also notice emotional changes as well. These may be changes in the way we feel and also the way we behave, including the way we behave towards others such as our family and friends.

Introduce concept of hormones, specifically introduce the terms 'estrogen, testosterone and progesterone' and how they work in the body before viewing video.

INFORMATION BOX:

OESTROGEN is a powerful female sex hormone that regulates many aspects of our lives. Initially it makes girls develop into women at puberty by stimulating breast growth, laying down fatty deposits, thickening the vagina and causing it to secrete mucous. It affects how our skin looks, whether our bones are strong and healthy and it can protect us against heart disease. It also regulates our menstrual cycle. At the beginning of our cycle about 30 egg follicles will start to ripen and produce oestrogen. When levels of oestrogen in the blood are highest the hypothalamus in the brain release hormones that make a follicle release an egg, therefore if you are not producing enough oestrogen you will not ovulate. It is produced by the ovaries and naturally declines after the woman goes through the menopause.

PROGESTERONE is one of the female sex hormones produced by the ovaries and adrenal glands. It plays an important role in maintaining a pregnancy. As well as helping to sustain pregnancy it also regulates the monthly menstrual cycle.

Its most important function is to encourage the endometrium to secrete proteins in the second half of the menstrual cycle in preparation for a fertilised egg. If no egg is fertilised or implanted then oestrogen and progesterone levels fall and the endometrium breaks down and is passed out through the body through your period bleed.

High levels of progesterone are thought to be responsible for symptoms of PMS (pre-menstrual syndrome). These can include breast tenderness, bloat and mood swings.

TESTOSTERONE is a male hormone that stimulates development of male secondary sexual characteristics. It is produced mainly in the testes, but also in the ovaries and adrenal cortex. Testosterone is involved in the development of male sex organs before birth, and the development of secondary sex characteristics at puberty, such as voice deepening, increased penis and testes size, and growth of facial and body hair.

Women produce small amounts of it in their ovaries and it helps to regulate energy and mental state. Women's total testosterone levels are about a tenth to a twentieth of men's levels.



**Show the class VIDEO 3 -
How Do Periods Affect Us Physically And Emotionally?**



Show ANIMATION 2 - The Female Hormone Cycle

Divide the class into groups of 4 –6 students and handout a set of the menstrual cycle mix and match cards to each group (template at end of resource). Ask students to match the days of the cycle with the phase of the cycle by recalling information from the animation.



Show the class VIDEO 4 - What is pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS)?



Teacher note: See the Background information for teachers section at the front of the resource for further information about the nature, symptoms and duration of PMS.

Expanding the concept



Ask students to share how they think our feelings, moods and behaviour might change as we go through puberty? As students respond use the follow-up question “What makes you say that?” to encourage students to expand on their ideas or to explain their thinking and reasoning.

Student responses could include that some people may become more moody, short-tempered, confused or frustrated easily, may feel sad, feel tired or get upset or angry easily.

Ask the class ‘can you tell when someone’s on their period?’ - The answer should be no in which case it reassures students that no-one knows unless they choose to tell them.



Discuss and explain that many of these emotional changes may be triggered by hormones being released into the body. These hormones will be released in greater amounts the further into the change process we get. As the hormones are released they trigger physical changes in the body such as growth spurts, voice changing, body hair growth and development of body they can also trigger fluctuations in our moods and feelings. This is because our brain needs time to get use to the new levels of hormones, particularly those areas of the brain that manage our feelings and emotions.

Reinforcing the concept

Explain to the class that knowing that there is a consistent cycle that the female body generally follows when it comes to periods means that it makes it easier to make a good plan for managing stuff around our periods. If females know what is going on in their bodies with the hormone levels and how these different hormones can make them feel and behave it means they can plan their days/weeks/months in tune with their cycle.

Explain that there are various apps that you can download on your phone to understand more about each phase and to log your cycle so you know which phase you’re in and when to expect your period. Eg: Clue and Flo.



A menstrual wheel is also a good way of demonstrating what's going on in the body in each phase of the cycle. Distribute the two layers of the Menstrual wheel (1 per student) and direct students to cut out each of the layers. Instruct students to add the following information under the relevant days of the cycle on the base layer:

- ▶ Phases of the cycle (menstruation, follicular, ovulation, luteal phase)
- ▶ Body and mood changes (more energised, memory improves, mood increases)
- ▶ Activities to do (given the body and mood changes what activities would fit with how your body and mood is changing).



Teacher note: Students may need to re-watch Animation 2 - The female hormone cycle in order to complete the Menstrual wheel.

Explain that sometimes our changing emotions may not only affect us but can also affect other people such as our family, friends, our teachers, sports coach etc.



Think-Pair-Share- If we are not feeling ourselves and we are experiencing some of the emotions and feelings that we have discussed, how can we manage them without impacting on others?

Suggestions: counting to 10, taking time out, talking it through with someone you trust, finding a quiet place to be alone either at schools such as the library or at home such as in their bedroom.

In pairs, invite students to brainstorm and record different challenges that people their age might face as they go through the emotional and physical changes during the next few years. The challenges could include getting their period at school when they weren't prepared, feeling really irritable and not being able to stop the feeling, developing quicker than other students in their class, developing slower than other students in their class, changing ideas of what's important to them, not wanting to participate in sport anymore, having to get changed for PE in front of other students.

Ask pairs to rank their challenges from most to least tricky.

Ask pairs to join into groups of four, and:

- remove any doubles (finding similarities and differences)
- create a shared list of the top five things people their age might find challenging about going through puberty.



Discuss as a class which challenges might they feel comfortable and supported to ask for help from...

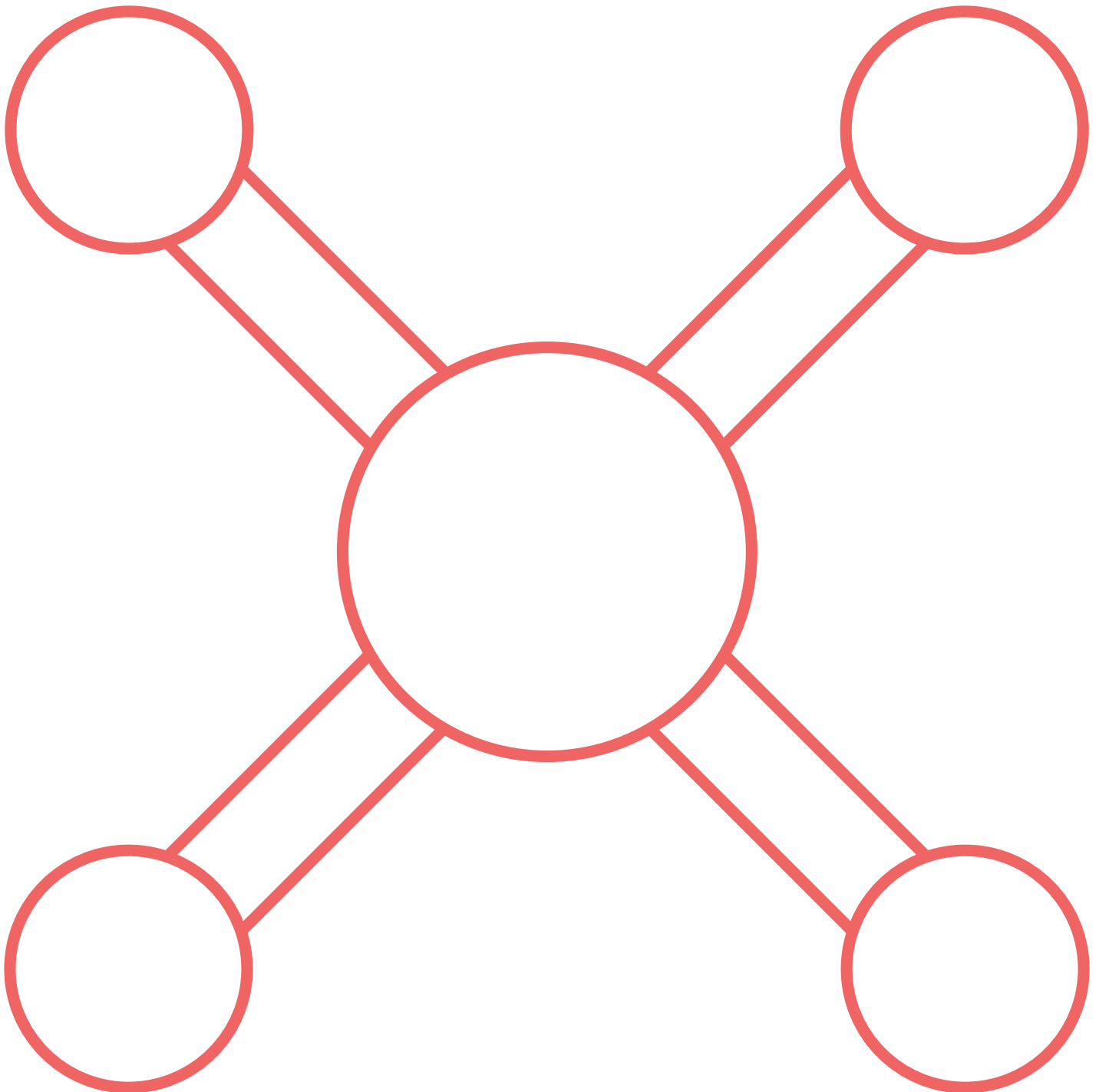
- a teacher?
- a friend or classmate?
- a family member?
- a different person?



In the group of four, ask students to choose one challenge and complete the mind map below:

- write the challenge in the centre.
- in the outer circles, write the different strategies students could use to deal with the challenge.
- In the arms, write who could help students use these strategies effectively.

Ask pairs to swap mind maps and identify the most useful strategy and why, and present their thoughts back to the class.



Activity 3: How do you manage your period?

Learning intentions: After completing this activity students will:

- ▶ Understand how much blood is lost during a period.
- ▶ Understand the different options available in sanitary products and the advantages and disadvantages.

Resources required:

- ▶ Bonus video
- For experiment:
 - Water with food colouring in jugs or bottles
 - 1 container per student
 - Tablespoon measure
 - Cup measure
- ▶ Video 5
- ▶ Video 6
- ▶ A range of sanitary hygiene products



Activity description

Introducing the concept

Explain to students that understanding the different changes that will happen during puberty is a key aspect of adapting and coping with the changes. While some girls may see getting their periods as a rite of passage and something to be excited about, others may feel quite anxious about getting their periods. That's OK as it is quite normal to be anxious about things that are new and unfamiliar. Hopefully today's lesson will help you better understand what happens when you get your period and how to manage it when it happens.



Show bonus Video – How much blood do you lose during a period?



Teacher note: Set this activity up as an experiment that your students undertake in the class whilst watching the video.

- 1. Ask students to pour in to the container the amount of blood that they estimate will be lost during a normal period.*
- 2. As a class compare the different estimates around the class.*



3. Inform the class that the average amount of blood lost in a normal period can be between 4 tablespoons and 1 cup of blood.
4. Measure out 4 tablespoons into one container and 1 cup into another container.
5. Compare these volumes with the estimates that the students made originally.
6. Discuss how the amount of blood that can be lost can be quite different from person to person.

Expanding the concept



Show VIDEO 5: How can you tell what a 'normal' period looks like?

After watching Video 5, ask students to complete a 3-2-1 reflector:

- ▶ What 3 things did you learn from the videos?
- ▶ What are 2 interesting or surprising things you heard or saw in the videos?
- ▶ What is 1 thing that the videos made you wonder?

Explain that 'period blood' is not just blood, it's a unique mix of blood and tissue that has built up in the uterus over the course of your menstrual cycle and because there is tissue it is perfectly normal for some people to see 'clots' when they bleed. Spotting where only very small amounts of blood are lost is also very normal as well as periods being lighter at the beginning and the end.



Show VIDEO 6: Sanitary Products

Reinforcing the concept: Lay out a selection of menstrual hygiene products on a table. You could include a range of different types of disposable pads and different sized tampons, a menstrual cup and panty liners. Ask students which ones they have seen or heard of on TV, the internet or from talking with friends or family.

For each of the products, explain what they are made of and how they are commonly used. (See information box below for descriptions)

Ask students to identify what would be the advantages and disadvantages of each of the different types of products.

Ask students to think about how women with a disability, athletes and women in the defense force might 'manage' their periods. What products would be best suited to their lifestyle and why?



Teacher note: Some students may have never seen a tampon before so it might be interesting to demonstrate how it absorbs fluid using a glass of water. It may also be useful to demonstrate how the different types of pads fit into underwear. You can show the bonus video or demonstrate in class



Show BONUS VIDEO: Absorbency experiment and pads fitting to underwear.

SANITARY PADS / NAPKINS: Are special cotton filled, plastic lined pads used to catch menstrual blood. They come in different sizes for the different flows. Also, some pads come with wings that wrap around the leg openings of the underwear. Most have a sticky strip that holds the pad to the underwear. Pads should be changed often. Also it is important to choose pads that are unscented. Can we include a cloth pad in here too somewhere please?

PANTY LINER: Similar to pads. Panty liners are used to catch light menstrual flow or vaginal discharge.

REUSABLE CLOTH PADS: washable organic cloth pads are made from certified organic cotton that is unbleached and non-dyed, healthier on the body, reduces landfill waste, and cost effective. They come in a range of sizes and last up to 2-3 years.

TAMPONS: Are another way to catch menstrual blood. Many young women like to use tampons as they can be worn for sports including swimming. They are made of soft cotton and have a string attached to the bottom. Tampons are inserted into the vagina with the string hanging down through the vaginal opening. The tampon is removed by pulling gently on the string. Tampons need to be changed often (every 4 – 6 hours).

APPLICATOR TAMPONS: Applicator tampons come with the tampon inside either a plastic or cardboard applicator. The applicator helps to guide the tampon into place within the vaginal opening more easily. Cardboard applicators are good for the environment, so once you've gotten the hang of plastic applicators you should try out cardboard ones.

MENSTRUAL CUPS: Made of silicone these small cups fit inside the vagina to catch the menstrual flow. They can be kept in for up to 12 hours at time and can be worn for sports including swimming. Some of the cups are reusable when cared for correctly.

PERIOD PANTS: Underwear with built-in liner that absorbs the blood so you don't need to wear a pad, tampon or cup.

Discuss with the class how to dispose of each of these items (i.e. wrap in toilet tissue and dispose in garbage; don't flush in toilets).



Teacher note: You may wish to demonstrate how to dispose of used materials properly. To do this, take toilet paper and a pad/tampon and demonstrate how to fold the pad/tampon and then how to roll it in toilet paper. You may also wish to take your female students into the restroom and show them (or see if they can show you) where to dispose of used pads/tampons. You can show the following bonus video or demonstrate with the class



Show BONUS VIDEO: Disposing of sanitary products safely.

Discuss where they should dispose pads at home too. Emphasise again that pads and tampons should never be flushed down the toilet.

Explain the importance of personal hygiene during menstruation. Emphasise to students that it is important for a young woman to shower/bathe during her period. Wearing clean clothes and changing pads/tampons often will help prevent unpleasant odour. Reinforce the need to wash hands both before and after changing a pad or tampon.

Activity 4: How can what you eat and your exercise levels impact on your period?

Learning intentions: After completing this activity students will:

- ▶ Understand how a healthy eating plan can help them manage some of the symptoms of menstruation
- ▶ Understand how being active can help them manage some of the symptoms of menstruation - shared research from Mike to be included here.
- ▶ Practise a range of yoga poses which can help build flexibility and manage period discomfort.

Resources required:

- ▶ Internet enabled devices for research
- ▶ Yoga routine video
- ▶ Yoga mats - 1 per student



Activity description

Introducing the concept

For this part of the activity move the class into an area where they will be able to spread out their yoga mats and have enough space to safely perform all of the poses demonstrated in the video.

Explain to the class that studies have found that women who exercise regularly are less likely to suffer menstrual pain, cramps and mood disturbance. Explain that scientists are not certain why exercise is helpful for PMS but studies demonstrate that exercise can release 'happy' hormones such as serotonin and endorphins, which may explain the benefit.

One of the exercises that scientists have studied is the use of yoga routines to manage the discomfort of menstrual cramps and the changes in mood that can be associated with PMS.

Ask students if any have participated in a yoga class previously and if they have any ideas which exercises might be good to help with sore backs and tummies. You may wish to explain a little more about the origins of yoga and the principles underlying the practice of yoga. A great beginners' guide to yoga can be found on the ABC website at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/health/2017-09-16/yoga-a-beginner-guide/8656236>



Show Yoga VIDEO and encourage students to follow the exercises in the video. Poses to include:



Teacher note: This series of yoga poses are also a good way to build mindfulness into your classroom. You could use this short routine after recess or lunch breaks to re-focus students to calm their minds and bodies before the next learning activity.



Expanding the concept

Explain to the class that there is a growing body of evidence that suggests diets rich in omega-3 fatty acids, Vitamin B1, calcium and vitamin D, and low in salt and caffeine may reduce the risk of troublesome PMS symptoms.

Ask students to research good sources of:

- ➊ Omega-3 fatty acids
- ➋ Vitamin B1
- ➌ Calcium
- ➍ Vitamin D



Teacher note: Information about how these food sources can reduce menstrual symptoms is included in the Background information for Teachers section.

Further information can be found at:

The Heart Foundation has a comprehensive list of foods that are a good source of Omega 3 Fatty acids that can be downloaded from https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/images/uploads/main/Programs/Sources_of_omega_3.pdf

Osteoporosis Australia has a comprehensive page about Calcium in foods that can be accessed at <https://www.osteoporosis.org.au/calcium>

Food cannot provide adequate amounts of vitamins B1 and D and most people are reliant on supplements (Vit B1) or on sun exposure (Vit D) to reach recommended levels. More information about recommended levels of Vitamin D can be found at <https://www.osteoporosis.org.au/vitamin-d>

Explain to the class that avoiding salt has been shown to help reduce fluid retention, abdominal bloating, breast swelling and pain that is often associated with hormonal changes.

Evidence has also shown that a diet high in caffeine can add to the intensity of feelings of irritability, poor sleep patterns and menstrual cramps associated with hormonal changes.

Reinforcing the concept

Divide the class into small groups and ask them to design a healthy weekly meal plan that takes account of the evidence about how nutrition can reduce some of the symptoms of PMS. The meal plan should be for 7 days and include 3 main meals per day and suggestions for snacks and drinks.

Allow groups to share their meal plans with the rest of the class and ask students to select the meals, snacks and drinks that they would most likely include in their own diet.



Activity 1: Understanding periods and menstruation.



Teacher note: *All of the activities in the Year 5 and 6 section may be relevant to your students if they haven't had any pre-requisite learning in primary schools. It is recommended to test students knowledge of the hormone cycle, sanitary products and preventive management strategies at the beginning of the unit and if there are any gaps in knowledge to consider teaching activities from the Years 5 and 6 section.*



Learning intentions: After completing this activity students will:

- ▶ Understand the nature of the menstrual cycle.
- ▶ Understand what happens when you have a period.
- ▶ clarify any misconceptions or misunderstandings they had about menstruation
- ▶ Identify who can help students manage their period (Family member, School health nurse, GP).



Resources required:

- ▶ Post-it notes
- ▶ Whiteboard and markers
- ▶ Animation 2

If revision required or introductory activities:

- ▶ Activity 1 from Years 5 and 6
- ▶ Video 1
- ▶ Video 2
- ▶ Animation 1

Activity description

Introducing the concept

Explain to the class that the next few lessons we are going to learn all about periods (or menstruation which is the scientific name) and the menstrual cycle. It is important that both boys and girls learn about this as it is something that we are more than likely all going to have some experience with - either because you are a woman and will more than likely experience periods or because you may be a partner, father, brother, uncle or friend of a woman who experiences periods.



Break the class into small groups of 4-5 students and distribute a small stack of post-it notes or a whiteboard marker to each group. Explain that they are going to participate in a group relay challenge where each group has to work together to identify as many different physical changes that happen as we go through puberty. Groups need to list changes one at a time on a post-it note that they run and stick on the board or take in turns writing their responses on the board with a marker.

Example changes include:

Growing taller, getting heavier, breasts getting larger, hips widening, shoulders widening, hair under the arms, pubic hair, sweating more, starting periods, pimples/spots/acne, feeling emotional, attracted to other people, hair on legs and chest, voice changes.



Teacher note: If students demonstrate a low level of understanding about menstruation then it is recommended to teach Activity 1 from the Years 5 and 6 resource to ensure that they understand the foundational knowledge required to engage with the rest of the Year 7 and 8 activities.

Expanding the concept

Explain to the class that the changes that occur during puberty, including the changes associated with the menstrual cycle are all regulated by hormones. The video that they are about to watch shows how the hormones work within the female body to control what happens during menstruation.



Show ANIMATION 2 - The Female Hormone Cycle

Reinforcing the concept



Teacher note: Depending on timetable structures, two lessons may be required to complete this animation task - Lesson 1 - developing script for animation, lesson 2 film and edit

Divide the class into small groups and explain to them that as a group they now have to produce an animation that explains how other hormones work in a male body or female to cause the changes that happen in our bodies as we go through puberty.

Direct groups to check out the following website pages to find out more about the role of hormones in causing the changes of puberty:

Everything you wanted to know about puberty - KidsHealth.org
<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/puberty.html>

What types of hormones are changing during puberty? How Stuff Works
<https://lifestyle.howstuffworks.com/family/parenting/tweens-teens/what-types-of-hormones-are-changing-during-puberty.htm>

How male puberty works - How stuff works
<https://health.howstuffworks.com/sexual-health/male-reproductive-system/male-puberty.htm>

How female puberty works - How stuff works
<https://health.howstuffworks.com/sexual-health/female-reproductive-system/female-puberty.htm>

Ask groups to select create their own animation that explains how hormones are involved in the developmental changes that occur to our bodies during puberty.

Within their animation each group must include the following information:

- The hormones involved
- How the hormones are released
- Where the hormones are released from
- What the hormones do within the body
- Why they think these hormones are important in the development of our bodies.



Teacher note: students could use online animation software such as :

Voki - <http://www.voki.com/>

PowToon - <https://www.powtoon.com/edu-home/>

Animaker - <https://www.animaker.com/>

Creaza cartoons - <https://web.creaza.com/en/>

Comic Life - <http://plasq.com/apps/comiclife/macwin/>

Activity 2: Making healthy choices about sanitary products.

Learning intentions: After completing this activity students will:

- ▶ Describe the ingredients in different pads and tampons?
- ▶ Understand the environmental impact of sanitary products

Resources required:

- ▶ Video 6
- ▶ Video 7



Activity description

Introducing the concept



Show the class VIDEO 6 - Sanitary products

Lay out a selection of menstrual hygiene products on a table. You could include a range of different types of disposable pads and different sized tampons, a menstrual cup and panty liners. Ask students which ones they have seen or heard of on TV, the internet or from talking with friends or family.

For each of the products, explain what they are made of and how they are commonly used. (See information box below for descriptions)



Teacher note: Some students may have never seen a tampon before so it might be interesting to demonstrate how it absorbs fluid using a glass of water. It may also be useful to demonstrate how the different types of pads fit into underwear.

SANITARY PADS / NAPKINS: Are special cotton filled, plastic lined pads used to catch menstrual blood. They come in different sizes for the different flows. Also, some pads come with wings that wrap around the leg openings of the underwear. Most have a sticky strip that holds the pad to the underwear. Pads should be changed often. Also it is important to choose pads that are unscented. Can we include a cloth pad in here too somewhere please?

PANTY LINER: Similar to pads. Panty liners are used to catch light menstrual flow or vaginal discharge.

REUSABLE CLOTH PADS: washable organic cloth pads are made from certified organic cotton that is unbleached and non-dyed, healthier on the body, reduces landfill waste, and cost effective. They come in a range of sizes and last up to 2-3 years.

TAMPONS: Are another way to catch menstrual blood. Many young women like to use tampons as they can be worn for sports including swimming. They are made of soft cotton and have a string attached to the bottom. Tampons are inserted into the vagina with the string hanging down through the vaginal opening. The tampon is removed by pulling gently on the string. Tampons need to be changed often (every 4 – 6 hours).

APPLICATOR TAMPONS: Applicator tampons come with the tampon inside either a plastic or cardboard applicator. The applicator helps to guide the tampon into place within the vaginal opening more easily. Cardboard applicators are good for the environment, so once you've gotten the hang of plastic applicators you should try out cardboard ones.

MENSTRUAL CUPS: Made of silicone these small cups fit inside the vagina to catch the menstrual flow. They can be kept in for up to 12 hours at time and can be worn for sports including swimming. Some of the cups are reusable when cared for correctly.

PERIOD PANTS: Underwear with built-in liner that absorbs the blood so you don't need to wear a pad, tampon or cup.

Ask students whether anyone has seen a commercial on TV, in magazines or on the internet for any sanitary products. Ask students who have to share some of the images and messages they recall from those advertisements.

Divide the class into small groups and direct them to the following websites to explore a range of different advertisements for sanitary products.

Sanitary Product TV ad examples:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q1GVOYlcKc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bpy75q2DDow>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNTUv6X-xFs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPcQjiNH2IU>



Teacher note: Depending on your students level of literacy you could also direct them to the following article that unpacks some of the messaging about periods reflected in advertising.

<https://helloclue.com/articles/culture/what-advertising-teaches-us-about-periods>



Ask groups to identify the different messages and imagery that are depicted in each of the four advertisements.

Ask groups to develop an idea for a TV advertisement that is more reflective of the accurate information that they have learnt about menstruation and sanitary products.

Expanding the concept



Show the class VIDEO 7 - Sanitary products and the environment

Discuss with the class how to dispose of each of the items that you have displayed (i.e. wrap in toilet tissue and dispose in garbage; don't flush in toilets).

Discuss where they should dispose pads at home too. Emphasise again that pads and tampons should never be flushed down the toilet.

Ask students to read the following article on the ABC website that explores the different sanitary products and how each impacts on the environment.

Tampons, pads, menstrual cups, period pants - What's best for the environment?

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-27/which-period-product-is-best-for-the-environment/9090658>



Ask students if anyone knows the ingredients that go into a tampon? Ask them to write down what they think and then get into groups, go online and find out.

Discuss as a class the different chemicals that are used and how they could affect a woman's body.

Introduce Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) and have a discussion around what it is and how and why it happens. TSS is a rare and potentially life-threatening illness that is thought to be caused by infection with certain types of bacteria, including *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Streptococcus pyogenes*.

Women who are menstruating are most likely to get TSS, as it is thought to be associated with tampon use.

Reinforcing the concept

Explain to students that the average Australian woman uses around 10,000-12,000 disposable menstrual products in their lifetime.



Ask students to investigate what kind of impact menstrual products have on the environment and propose alternatives that could reduce the negative impact on the environment.

Activity 3: Basic human right

Learning intentions: After completing this activity students will:

- ▶ Understand the challenges of menstruation for the homeless.
- ▶ Understand how the costs associated with managing menstrual health and hygiene can be prohibitive for some people.
- ▶ Understand the debate related to the luxury tax on sanitary products – is this fair?

Resources required:

- ▶ Video 8
- ▶ Bonus video: Share the Dignity presentation
- ▶ Internet access enabled devices



Activity description

Introducing the concept

Explain to the class that there are many women who live with disadvantage both in Australia and overseas who can't afford to purchase the sanitary products they need when they have their periods.



Show the class VIDEO 8 - Basic human right

Expanding the concept

Explain to students that Share the Dignity (<https://www.sharethedignity.com.au/>) is an Australian women's charity helping women experiencing domestic violence, homelessness or poverty in Australia. One of the key aspects of their work is to ensure that women who are homeless or on a low income are able to access sanitary products each month.

Divide the class into small groups and discuss how not being able to afford to buy sanitary products may affect a woman emotionally and physically. It is fair/right that women should have to pay for these products or should they be free?

Choose one person from each group to act as spokesperson for the group with their ideas.



Show the class Share the Dignity VIDEO

Reinforcing the concept

Explain to the class that Share the Dignity holds fundraising events throughout the year to raise money and collect donations to help women who can't afford to buy their own.



Divide students into small action teams and explain that their team is going to design a school-based fundraising event to raise funds or collect sanitary products that will be donated to Share the Dignity.

Direct students to the Share the Dignity website to explore the different events that are held during the year to raise awareness, funds and collect sanitary products for homeless and women living with disadvantage.

Provide time for each team to develop and then present their fundraising ideas to the rest of the class. As a class vote on the best idea and implement it as a fundraiser for Share the Dignity.



Activity 4: How can cultural and religious beliefs impact on a woman's experience with periods?

Learning intentions: After completing this activity students will:

- ▶ Understand different cultural beliefs and rituals related to menstruation
- ▶ Understand women's experience of menstruation around the world
- ▶ Discuss why periods are taboo in societies

Resources required:

- ▶ Video 9: Beliefs and traditions surrounding periods
- ▶ Bonus video: Countries and traditions - mix and match activity
- ▶ Cultural rituals mix and match cards



Activity description

Introducing the concept

Explain to the class that around the world, menstruation is viewed differently depending on the culture and community to which you belong. Some cultures consider it taboo, other cultures consider it a cause for celebration.



Show the class VIDEO 9 - Beliefs and traditions surrounding periods

Expanding the concept

Ask the class if they know of any rituals and or ceremonies that take place around the world. Discuss a range of rituals and ceremonies associated with getting older (such as birthday parties, bar mitzvahs, initiation ceremonies in Indigenous cultures, keeping the first lock of a child's hair or their first tooth they lose, marking the children's height on a door frame).



Show the BONUS VIDEO - countries and traditions: Mix and match

Explain that around the world there are a range of different rituals and ceremonies that specifically relate to when a young woman first gets her period. Distribute the Cultural rituals mix and match cards of the countries and rituals and ask students to try to match them up.

Ask if they think these rituals are necessary and what they think about 'celebrating' your period - Discuss the pros and the cons of each and whether they would hold a celebration for their own daughter/s one day.



Teacher note: The following websites provide some insights into different rituals and traditions:

<https://changethecycle.com/blog/2017/09/menstruation-around-the-world-a-cultural-perspective/>

<https://www.womenshealthmag.com/life/periods-around-the-world>

https://www.buzzfeed.com/susiearmitage/21-first-period-traditions-from-around-the-world?utm_term=.crPRe3n6j#.wvNP9nQk2

Reinforcing the concept

Discuss how girls in some countries having to use grass, cut up pieces of mattresses etc because they can't afford sanitary products.

Discuss which countries this happens in and the effect it has on young girls' education. They don't go to school because they can't sit in class every day for a week of every month without sanitary products so they end up missing school and ultimately, some drop out altogether and it ruins their opportunities for an education.

Explain to the class that having your period shouldn't mean missing out on education.



Direct the class to the following articles:

Chhaupadi: Nepal and menstrual cup revolution - ABC

<http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-10/chhaupadi-nepal-menstrual-cup-revolution/9531814?pfmredir=sm&sf184131371=1>

Indigenous girls missing school during periods - The Conversation:

<http://theconversation.com/indigenous-girls-missing-school-during-their-periods-the-state-of-hygiene-in-remote-australia-79348>

Ask students to write a letter to either:

The Foreign Minister of Australia (Julie Bishop) explaining why she needs to advocate to change the chhaupadi tradition in Nepal to prevent anymore need-less deaths of young women.

The Indigenous Affairs Minister of Australia (Nigel Scully) explaining the disadvantage experienced by many girls and young women in Indigenous communities and propose strategies to alleviate the challenges.

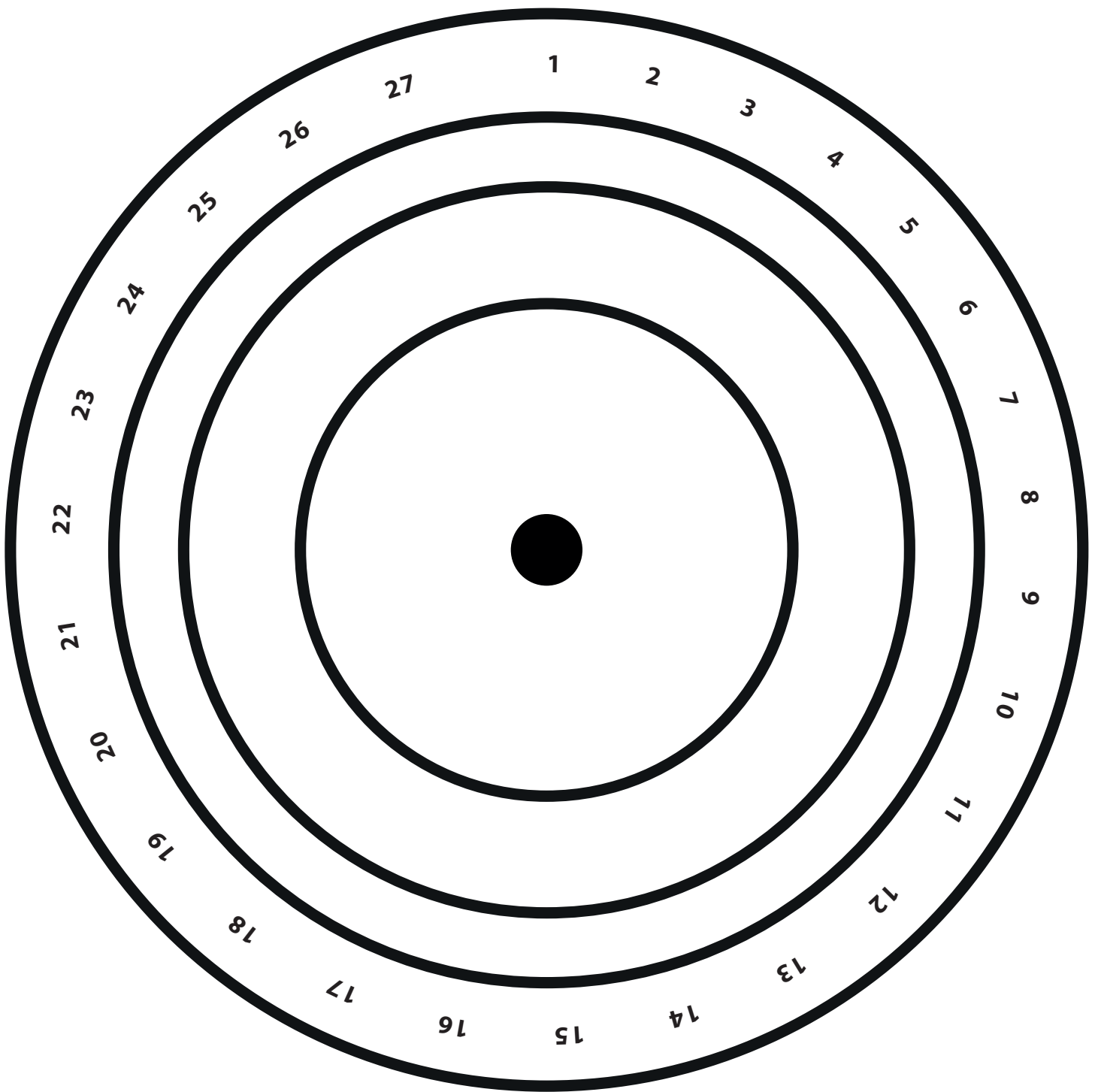
SECTION 4:
Handouts and
resources



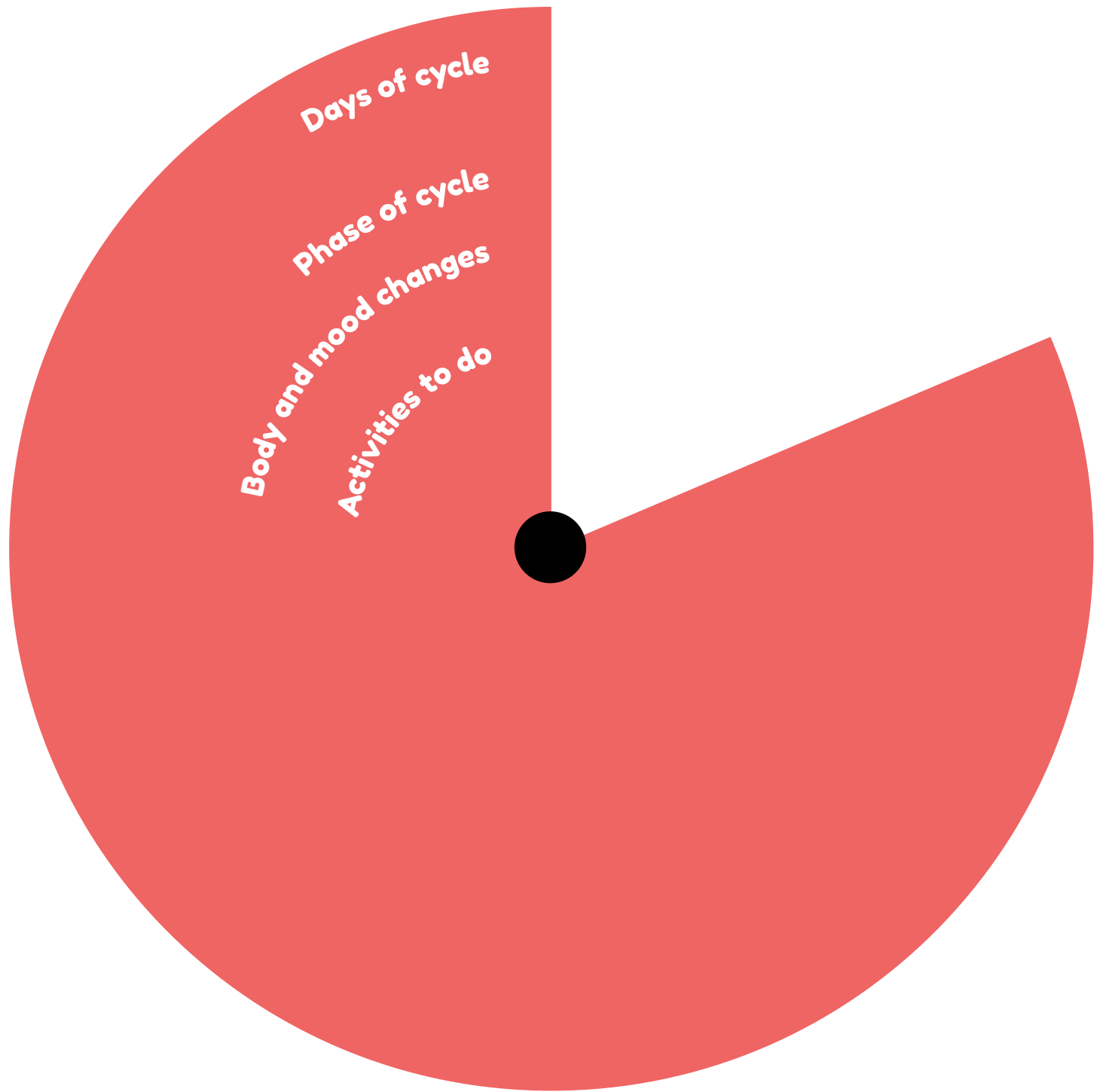
MENSTRUAL CYCLE MIX AND MATCH CARDS

PHASE OF THE CYCLE	DAYS OF THE CYCLE
Menstruation	Day 1 - Day 7
Follicular phase	Day 8 - Day 14
Ovulation	Day 15 - Day 22
Luteal phase	Day 23 - start of next period

MENSTRUAL WHEEL: BASE LAYER



MENSTRUAL WHEEL: TOP LAYER



CULTURAL RITUALS MIX AND MATCH CARDS

PHASE OF THE CYCLE	DAYS OF THE CYCLE
Afghanistan	Avoid washing vagina to stop infertility.
South Africa	Avoid children or men during your first period.
Japan	mother cooks sticky rice with adzuki beans to celebrate.
Israel	Lick a teaspoon of honey to make future periods easier.
Canada	she is taken out to sea while her village watches from the shore and cheers for her as she swims back.
Italy	everyone starts to call you "signorina"
Fiji	families draw lines with chalk on the floor of the doorway and have the girl cross over and enter the house.
Nepal	Banished to a hut for the duration of your period.
India	Not allowed to go into the kitchen, touch any males in their family, sleep in the same bed as their partner and not allowed to worship.
USA	She runs to show strength, and bakes a large cornmeal cake to feed the girl's tribe and family.

period talk

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