



share*the*dignity

A guide to your first

Period.



Growing up doesn't have to be scary!
With a bit of preparation, these changes
can be exciting - not frightening.

Let's do it together!



"What actually is a period?" - Emma, 10

A **period is a natural bleed** that happens about once a month and usually lasts around five to seven days. Each month your uterus grows a new lining and then sheds it in a process called menstruation - that's your period.



"When is it coming?" - Isla, 12

The average age to start getting your period is **between 12 and 13 years old**, but because everybody is different it's totally normal to get it as young as 8 or late as 16. When it does happen it can be a bit of a surprise, which is why we've created this booklet to help you feel prepared!



"I'm scared. What will it feel like?" - Olivia, 12

For your first period, you might notice some **light bleeding, tummy cramps or mood swings**. Seeing blood in your undies for the first time can feel a bit confronting, but we promise it won't always feel so scary.



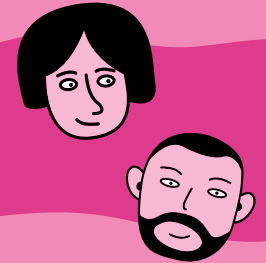
It's always good to talk to someone you trust, like a parent, sibling, or friend, about how you're feeling. They can help guide you through this new experience.

"What do I do when it comes?" - Alex, 11

Take a deep breath! After reading this booklet, you'll feel completely ready for your first period. Plus, you'll have already put together a period pack, so you'll be prepared for anything. All you'll need to do is **grab a period product and let someone at home know what's happening**.

If you don't have your period pack with you, let a friend or trusted adult know what's happening so they can help you with period products until you get home.

Tell a trusted adult what is happening so they can help you through this!



Let's put together your period pack!

- Period products x 3
- Spare undies
- Some pain medication

Put it in a little bag to protect your products from unwrapping or getting lost in your schoolbag.



"Which period product should I use?"

- Annalyn, 13



Pads

BEGINNER FRIENDLY



Pads have a sticky strip along the back which helps hold it in place on your underwear. They come in a few different sizes and thicknesses, so you should try a few out to see which feels best and the level of absorbency you need for your period. You can easily see how full your pad is when you go to the bathroom, so remember to change it regularly. Pads are used once and then thrown away.



You might like these for *ease and accessibility!*

Tampons

TAKES SOME PRACTICE



While pads absorb blood in your underwear, Tampons absorb blood inside your vagina. This involves inserting the tampon into your vagina and removing it for disposal when full. This might sound a bit scary, but when inserted correctly, you shouldn't feel it and it shouldn't cause any discomfort or pain.

Tampons come in three sizes - mini, regular and super. You might need to try different sizes to see what works best for your body and the level of absorbency you need for your period. Make sure you check the instructions in the packaging for how to properly insert it. Tampons are used once and then thrown away.



You might like these for *swimming and sports!*

Period Undies

BEGINNER FRIENDLY



Period undies look just like regular undies, but have a cloth pad built into the crotch which absorbs your menstrual blood. They come in lots of different styles, colours and levels of absorbency and, the best news is that they are reusable! They can be used on their own, but on heavier days (like at the start of your period) you might choose to use them in combination with another product, like a tampon. Period undies can last up to 5 years when properly cared for and, if you like them, you can also try period swimwear!



You might like these for *comfort and leak protection!*

Menstrual Cup

TAKES SOME PRACTICE



Like tampons, menstrual cups are inserted directly into the vagina. However, instead of absorbing the menstrual blood, cups work by catching the blood leaving your uterus. When inserted correctly, you shouldn't feel your cup and it shouldn't cause any discomfort or pain. Menstrual cups come in different sizes, and it's important to find the best fit for your body and the heaviness of your flow. Even when folded, a cup is larger than a tampon, so if tampons seem too big or uncomfortable you may not be ready for a cup yet.



You might like these for *sustainability and practicality!*

Remember to wash your hands before and after handling period products and dispose of your products correctly!



"Does it hurt?"

- Emma, 10



Not much for the first few months, but as you get older you'll find that **period pain is very common**. As many as 9 in 10 people who menstruate experience some level of pain during their period.

It's not the blood itself which causes the pain, but the muscles contracting in the uterus to help shed the lining. You might feel this pain in your abdomen or lower back and it can feel crampy or sharp. Some people may not experience any pain, and for others it can be very bad. It can also cause other effects such as nausea, vomiting, bloating and headaches. If you experience very painful periods let a trusted adult know so you can consider seeing a doctor.

For most people, period pain only lasts one or two days at the start of your cycle, and simple treatments such as heat, pain-relief medicine, and exercise can be very effective at relieving it!

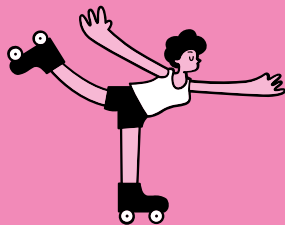
You can try:



HEAT



PAIN MEDICATION



EXERCISE

"Will it come regularly?" - Ava, 13

For a couple of years after your first period it might not come regularly. This can make it hard to predict (but that's ok because you'll always be prepared with your period pack!). Eventually, **your cycle should settle into a regular pattern and come around every 4 to 5 weeks**.

"How much blood comes out?" - Kat, 11

It might look like a lot, but usually you will only lose **a few tablespoons** of blood during your period.

"Will I have my period forever?" - Lissie, 13

Your period will come regularly until you reach menopause at age 45 to 55 when it will permanently stop. There are other circumstances which will stop your period from coming such as while on certain medications, hormonal contraceptives, and while pregnant.

When to see a doctor

Most people don't have any problems with their periods, but it's a good idea to talk to your doctor if you:

- are 15 and haven't started your period
- have had your period for more than 2 years and it's still not regular (coming about every 4–5 weeks), have periods that last more than a week, or have bleeding between periods
- have severe cramps that don't get better with pain medication
- have very heavy bleeding (bleeding that goes through a pad or tampon faster than every 1 hour)
- If tampons hurt even when inserted correctly



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You've *totally* got this!



Periods are a normal and healthy part of growing up. They shouldn't stop you from playing sport, going to school, or spending time with friends. If you have any questions about periods, make sure to ask a doctor, parent/guardian, health teacher, school nurse, or even an older sister.

Or, find out more on our
Menstrual Education Hub!



This information should be used only as a guide and should not be relied upon as a substitute for professional, medical or other health professional advice.