

Period info



Family Planning Tasmania
sexuality education & clinical services

GROWING UP:

As you grow up your body will start to change into an adult's body. These changes are called puberty.

Some changes include:

- breasts start to grow
- hips get wider
- pubic hair starts to grow on the vulva and underarms
- periods start

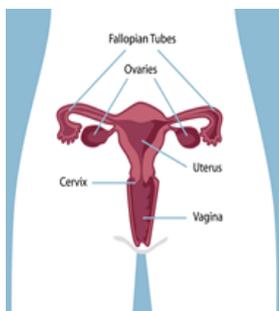
WHAT IS A PERIOD?

Some changes take place inside the body so that later, you may choose to have a baby.

Girls are born with thousands of tiny eggs (ova) inside the ovaries. During puberty the ovaries start to release an egg every month (ovulation). Each ovum travels down the fallopian tubes to the uterus. It takes about two weeks for it to reach the uterus.

The lining of the uterus (that's where babies grow) thickens with blood and fluid to prepare for a possible pregnancy. If the egg is not fertilised by a sperm from a male, this lining breaks down and passes out of the body through the vagina. This bleeding is called a period or menstruation. It lasts for a few days and about 1-2 tablespoons of blood is lost. There is often more bleeding in the first few days of your period.

The time between one period and the next is called the menstrual cycle. This is usually about one month. Once you get your period you can use a calendar to help you work out when to expect your next one.



WHEN?

Girls usually have their first period between the ages of 9 and 16, often after other puberty body changes have started. It may take a year or two for your periods to become regular.

A woman continues to have her period each month until her body runs out of eggs – that's usually when a woman is about 50 years old.

WHAT TO DO?

You need to use either a pad or a tampon to absorb the blood and keep your clothes clean. Buy them at supermarkets and chemists in the section labelled "sanitary products" or "feminine hygiene".

Pads – are worn over the opening of the vagina. They have a sticky strip on the back to stick to the inside of your underpants. Some pads have wings which fold to the outside of the pants.



Tampons – are inserted into the vagina. Some come with an applicator to help you, others you just use your finger. When inserted properly, you cannot feel a tampon. Tampons **can't** get lost inside the body and they have a string to make them easy to take out. There are detailed instructions in the packet on how to use them.



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PADS OR TAMPONS?

It's up to you! It's your body it's your choice!

- Some people may choose not to use tampons for personal, religious or cultural reasons.
- You might like to get used to using pads first, and then try tampons.
- If you want to go swimming when you have your period, you need to use a tampon.
- Some women prefer to use tampons when they are playing sport.

WHAT WILL MY PERIOD FEEL LIKE?

Everybody is different. You might:

- Feel a bit sick or sore in the abdomen
- Get a bit cranky or tired before your period starts
- OR feel fine! 😊

If you do feel sick or sore, talk to an adult you trust.

PERIOD PAIN:

Period pain is caused by the uterus cramping – sometimes people call it stomach cramps. It is more common with heavy periods.

To help period pain you can

- Exercise
- Eat healthy food
- Place a hot water bottle or heat pack on the area
- Have a warm bath

If these don't work, talk to an adult you trust about taking pain killers to help.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- Change pads and tampons every 3 to 4 hours or more often if needed. Always wash your hands before and after you do this.
- Use the right absorbency product for your menstrual flow – use super pads or tampons if you have heavy bleeding, use regular for medium bleeding or mini/light for light bleeding.
- Wrap used pads or tampons in toilet paper or a paper bag and place in a sanitary/rubbish bin. DON'T flush down the toilet.
- Use pads overnight, NOT tampons
- Carry a couple of pads or tampons in your bag, just in case you get your period when you are out or when you don't expect it.
- If you do get caught without a pad or tampon, use tissues or toilet paper on the inside of your underpants until you can get one. Schools usually have pads available for times like this.
- Shower every day when you have your period—it'll help keep you feeling healthy and clean.
- No one will know you have your period – unless you tell them. Periods are private but it is ok to talk about them with someone you trust.
- Using tampons increases the risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). This is a very rare illness caused by bacteria. Symptoms include fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, rash, sore throat. Remove tampon and see your doctor immediately if you suspect TSS.

Disclaimer.

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