

About Your Period.

What is a period?

A period is another name for a phase of the cycle of the uterus that starts happening during puberty. Other names for your period are menses or menstruation. The period is when fluid containing blood and tissue coming from the inside of the uterus leaves your body through the vagina.

Does period-bleeding hurt?

The bleeding doesn't hurt, but it can feel sore when the uterus squeezes on itself because it is a muscle – this is called cramping.

How often do periods happen?

At first, periods might happen every 2 weeks or might be a few months apart. Later, most people have periods about one month apart, but not always on the same days of the month.

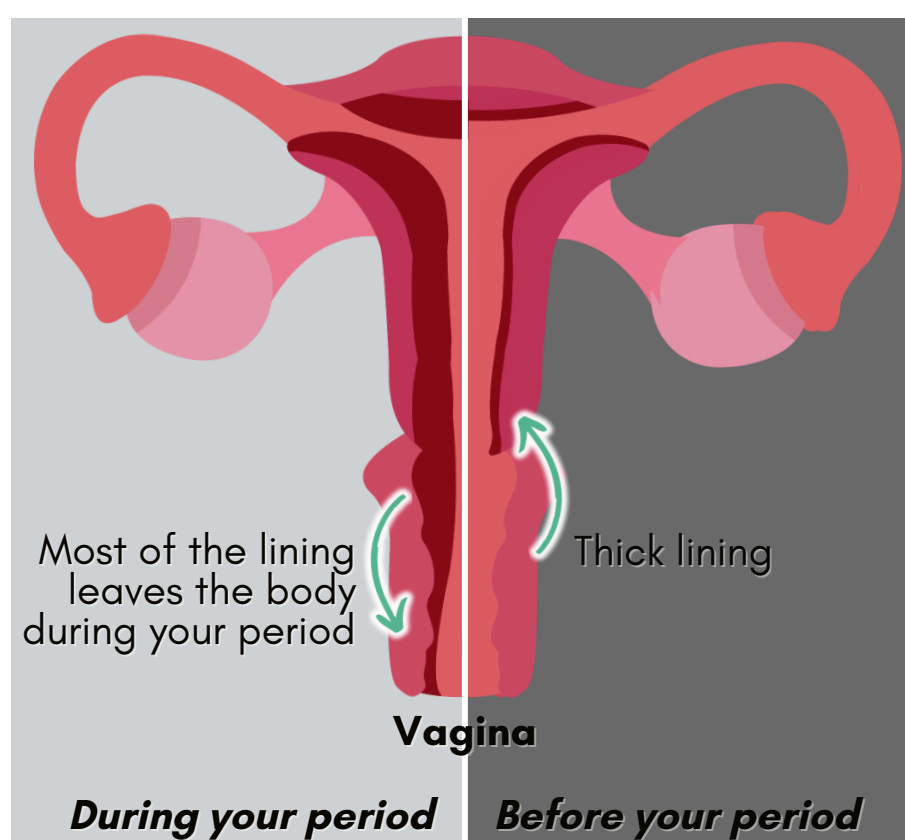
What is the menstrual cycle?

A cycle is something that happens over and over – like wheels turning on a bike, the changing of the seasons from year to year, or the phases of the moon. Your ovaries use hormones to tell the uterus about the phases of the menstrual cycle. When one of the hormone levels drops, it tells your uterus to start the period a few days later.

Here is what happens during the cycle:

- 1 Hormones make an ovary release an egg and the uterine lining grow thicker.
- 2 When hormone levels go down, your body will let go of the thick uterine lining (tissue). The lining leaves your body through your vagina – this is your period.

Some people start to feel signs of their period even before they have bleeding. This can be skin breakouts, feeling sad, tired or angry, cramping, or swelling or pain in their breasts.



- 3 The first day of the full flow of your period is called Day 1. Start counting! **Most periods last 4-5 days.** The normal range is 2-7 days. Longer than 7 days is TOO MUCH!
- 4 When the period ends, another egg will grow and be released. The uterine lining will grow thick again. After about 2 weeks, the period will start again.

What is heavy menstrual bleeding?

Signs of heavy menstrual bleeding include:

- bleeding lasting longer than 7 days
- sudden gushing (or bleeding that overflows outside a pad or tampon)
- passing blood clumps larger than 1 inch or a quarter
- soaking through pads/tampons in less than 2 hours
- feeling tired or dizzy
- bleeding that limits activities like school, sports, or work

Tell your healthcare provider if during your period, you:

- bleed longer than 7 days
- do not go to school or play sports
- have heavy cramping or pain
- feel weak, tired, dizzy, or look very pale

Heavy menstrual bleeding can be a sign of a bleeding disorder. Having long and heavy bleeding can be stressful, especially if you feel you cannot control your bleeding. Talk to a caregiver, nurse, or healthcare provider about your symptoms.

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Words to know

- Uterus:** A muscular organ shaped like a pear. It is where a baby will grow if a person becomes pregnant.
- Vagina:** The muscular tube that connects the uterus to the outside of the body. This is where blood leaves the body during a menstrual period.
- Ovary:** Oval-shaped organs that make, store, and release eggs. Your ovaries use hormones to communicate to the uterus about the phases of the menstrual cycle.
- Egg:** A small cell that can grow into a baby if it is fertilized by a male reproductive cell.
- Fallopian Tubes:** Tubes on each side of the uterus have openings near each ovary. An egg released from the ovary gets picked up by the tube and moved toward the uterus.
- Hormones:** Chemicals that act like messengers in the body. They travel through the bloodstream and tell your body to do things like grow.
- Estrogen:** A hormone the ovaries make and release. It tells the lining of the uterus to grow and thicken. It also helps stabilize the uterine lining.
- Progesterone:** A hormone the ovaries make and release. It causes changes to the uterine lining. When progesterone levels drop, that is the signal for the period to start.
- Ovulation:** When an egg is released from the ovary. This happens about 2 weeks before the period.

Watch how the cycle works!

Watch this video to learn more about the parts of the body, the menstrual cycle, and what you should talk about with your healthcare provider.



Use the QR code or watch online:
www.fwgbd.org/period-talk-toolkit

