



My First Period

pocket guide

Everything you need to know,
before the day arrives.

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This book belongs to

Name _____

My trusted adults _____

YOU ARE GETTING READY

Somewhere in the next few years your body will do something it's been planning since before you were born. You'll start your periods. Nobody can tell you the exact day, so the useful thing is knowing what's coming.

Read this in any order, come back to it whenever you need it, and keep it in your pouch with your pads. It's yours.

MY BODY IS CHANGING

Puberty can start as early as 8 and as late as 14. It's not a race. Things you may notice:

- You grow taller, quite fast.
- Hair grows under your arms and between your legs.
- Your body gets softer and curvier.
- You sweat more, so you may want deodorant.
- Your skin and hair get oilier, and spots can appear.
- Your breasts begin to develop.
- And then, at some point, your first period.

It's all normal, and it happens to nearly everybody. None of it means anything's wrong with you.

HOW I MIGHT FEEL

The changes you can't see are just as real. Hormones move about, and your feelings move with them. You might be happy one minute and in tears the next, easily annoyed, extra sensitive, self-conscious, or tired for no clear reason.

These are often strongest in the week before a period and usually lift once it starts. Sleep, food, water and moving about all help. Be kind to yourself, and tell somebody how you are feeling.

BREASTS AND A FIRST BRA

Often the first sign of puberty, and usually up to two years before a first period arrives.

How it starts

Small firm lumps grow behind each nipple. They're called breast buds and can feel tender, especially if knocked.

One before the other

It's very common for one side to start months before the other, and for them to be different sizes. They may become more similar as you grow.

A first bra

Some girls want one as soon as buds appear, some much later. A soft crop top or bralette is comfortable. There's no right age.

Everyone runs on their own clock. If you're worried that things are starting very early or very late, tell a trusted adult so a doctor or nurse can check.

WHAT IS DISCHARGE?

A clear or creamy-white fluid you may find in your underwear. It's your body keeping itself clean and healthy, and it's completely normal.

- It often begins 6 to 12 months before a first period, and carries on afterwards.
- A liner keeps your underwear feeling fresh if you want one.
- Never wash inside your vagina, and skip scented sprays. Warm water outside is all you need.

Tell an adult if it turns green or grey, smells strong and unpleasant, or makes you itchy or sore. That's easily treated.

HOW HEAVY, AND WHEN

Every period is different, but most follow a similar shape. Heaviest at the start, lighter towards the end.



It can look like a lot, but the actual amount of blood lost over a whole period is usually much less than it seems.

WHAT IS A PERIOD?

Each month your womb builds a soft lining, in case a baby is ever going to grow there. When there's no baby, the lining isn't needed, so it leaves your body through your vagina. That's a period.

Fallopian tube

Ovary

Womb
(uterus)

Cervix

Vagina

It's blood and lining. Nothing is broken and nothing is wrong.

Your ovaries hold the eggs. The fallopian tubes carry them. The womb is where the lining builds up each month.

PERIOD QUESTIONS

How long does it last?

Usually 3 to 7 days. The first two are often heaviest.

How often?

At first, periods can be irregular. A cycle is often around 21 to 45 days, counted from the first day of one period to the first day of the next. It can take time for your periods to settle into a pattern.

When will mine start?

Everyone is different. Most girls start around age 12, although it can happen earlier or later. If you reach 15 and your periods have not started, tell a trusted adult so you can speak to a doctor or nurse.

THE DAY IT ARRIVES

Most first periods are quiet. A small mark in your underwear, or a little colour on the toilet tissue. Not the flood people joke about. The colour can be brown, rusty or red. Brown just means the blood took its time getting out.

Then tell an adult you trust, even if it feels awkward, so they can make sure you have what you need for this period and the next one.

You haven't done anything wrong and you're not in trouble. Keep a pad in your bag all the time, not just when you expect it.

WHAT YOU CAN USE

We all need different things. Your period is yours, and what suits your friend may not suit you.

PADS

Stick inside your underwear and catch the blood as it leaves. The easiest place to start, and what's in your kit.

LINERS

Thinner and smaller. For discharge, light days, or when you think your period may be due.

TAMPONS

Worn inside. Safe from your first period, but there's no rush at all.

PANTS

Period pants and washable pads. Worn, washed and used again.

Which pad?

Day pads for light to medium days. Long pads for heavier days. Night pads are extra long at the back, for sleeping. Start with a day pad.

Trying something new? Ask a trusted adult first. There's no prize for rushing.

USING A PAD

- 1 Open the wrapper and peel the pad away from the backing paper. The back of the pad feels sticky.
- 2 Press it sticky side down into the middle of your underwear.
- 3 If it has wings, peel their tabs, fold them under your underwear and press so they hold.

Practise once when you don't need it. It makes the real thing far easier, and that's what the practice pad in your kit is for.

Nobody can tell you're wearing one. A pad makes no sound and doesn't show through your clothes.

If it starts and you have nothing

Fold some toilet tissue into your underwear. It'll hold for the few minutes it takes to find an adult and ask. Asking is completely normal.

CHANGING AND BINNING

- Change your pad every 4 to 6 hours, or sooner if it feels full.
- More often on heavy days, less on light ones.
- Wrap the used pad in its wrapper or in tissue and put it in a bin.
- Never flush a pad, not even one that says flushable. It blocks the pipes.
- Wash your hands before and after.

**No bin in the cubicle? Wrap it up, carry it out and use the bin outside.
Nobody can tell what's in your hand.**

STAYING FRESH

Your body already knows how to clean itself. You only help it from the outside.

- Wash the outside with warm water, and plain soap if you like.
- Never wash inside your vagina. It cleans itself.
- Skip scented sprays and wipes. They upset the natural balance.
- Wipe front to back, every single time.
- A daily shower or wash is plenty, and yes, you can wash your hair.

**Period blood only starts to smell after a while outside the body.
Changing regularly is all it takes.**

ABOUT TAMPONS

A tampon is a small soft shape you put inside your vagina, where it soaks up the blood before it leaves your body. A string stays outside so you can take it out.

- Safe from your very first period, but there's no rush at all. Lots of girls stay with pads for a year or two.
- Start with the smallest size, and use the lowest absorbency that works.
- Change it every 4 to 8 hours. Never leave one in longer than 8.
- It can't get lost inside you. There's nowhere for it to go.
- It has nothing to do with virginity.
- Take the last one out at the end of your period.

Ask a trusted adult before your first one, and read the leaflet in the box together.

One safety point, and it matters

Very rarely, tampons are linked to a serious illness. If you suddenly feel very unwell with a high temperature, sickness, dizziness or a rash while wearing one, take it out and tell an adult straight away.

AT SCHOOL

A plan turns the whole thing from a panic into an errand. Sort these before you need them.

- Keep your pouch in your bag every day, not only when you expect it.
- Two spare pads and a clean pair of underwear live in it, always.
- Find out who to ask. Most schools keep spare pads at the office or with the school nurse.
- Know where the nearest toilet with a bin is.
- If your period starts or you need to change your pad during a lesson, tell your teacher that you need to use the toilet. If you find it difficult to get the help you need, speak to another adult you trust.

Worried about your skirt? Tie a jumper round your waist, then go and change. Cold water lifts blood out of fabric. Hot water sets it.

Nobody can tell

Not by looking at you, and not by the way you walk. The only people who know are the ones you decide to tell.

SPORT, SWIMMING AND SLEEP

- You can do all of it, and moving about often makes cramps better rather than worse.
- PE, running, dancing and football are fine with a pad on.
- You can swim on your period. A tampon, menstrual cup or period swimwear can be used in the water. A normal pad will soak up pool water, so it isn't suitable for swimming.
- Your energy may dip on the first day or two. Doing a bit less that day is just sensible.
- At night, put a fresh night pad on right before bed. They're longer at the back for lying down, and you don't need to wake up to change it.

TRACKING YOUR CYCLE

Once you write it down, your period stops being a surprise. It takes a few seconds a month.

- Day 1 is the first day you bleed. Count to the next Day 1. That's your cycle.
- Note when it starts and stops, how heavy it was, and how you felt.
- After a few months you'll start to see your own pattern.

Turn the page for what to look for, and a tracker you can fill in.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

You're not looking for perfect numbers. You're looking for your own pattern, so that next time you can see it coming.

How long between periods

Count from the first day of bleeding to the first day of the next one. Write that number down each month and watch whether it settles.

How many days you bleed

Three days or seven, both are normal. What matters is whether yours stays roughly the same.

How heavy each day is

Light, medium or heavy. Most girls find the first two days are the heaviest.

How you felt

Tired, achy, tearful, full of energy. Feelings are part of the pattern too, and noticing them helps you plan.

Remember

Your cycle is not a test and there are no marks for getting it right. If it's all over the place in the first year or two, that's exactly what it's supposed to do.

Knowledge today. A brighter tomorrow.



MY PERIOD TRACKER

One month. Fill in a row on any day your period is here.

Date	Period	Pad changes	Flow	Symptoms	Mood

Flow key

L light
M medium
H heavy

Symptoms

cramps, backache,
headache, sore
breasts, tired

Mood key

happy, calm, flat,
tearful, cross,
worried

Cycle at a glance

First day this month: _____

Days until the next one: _____

Want the full twelve-month tracker? It's free at thereadylady.com.

CRAMPS, AND WHAT HELPS

An ache low in your tummy or back is common on the first day or two. It happens because your womb is squeezing.

- A warm water bottle or heat pad on your tummy.
- Moving about. A walk or a stretch often beats lying still.
- Warm drinks, water, and food you actually feel like eating.
- Curling up on your side for a while.
- Painkillers, but only with a trusted adult, and never anybody else's.

WHEN TO TELL AN ADULT

None of these mean something terrible is happening. They mean a doctor or nurse should take a look.

- You keep soaking through pads every 1 to 2 hours, or your bleeding lasts longer than 7 days.
- Pain stops you going to school, or painkillers don't touch it.
- You bleed in between your periods.
- You're 15 and nothing has started yet.
- Anything that frightens you or feels wrong.

You don't need the right words. "Can I talk to you about periods?" is enough to start.

MY FIRST PERIOD: WHAT DO I DO?

If today is the day, here is the whole of it, in order.

1

Check

A mark in your underwear or a little colour on the toilet tissue. Brown, rusty or red are all normal.

2

Put on a pad

Sticky side down, in the middle. No pad with you? Fold some toilet tissue in for now.

3

Tell someone

An adult you trust, at home or at school. You're not in trouble and nothing is wrong.

4

Write down the date

Day 1. Put it in the tracker, your phone, or the back of a notebook.

5

Change when you need to

Every 4 to 6 hours, or sooner if it feels full. Wrap it and bin it.

You've got this.

NOTE TO SELF

Questions you want to ask. Things you noticed. Anything you want to remember for next month. Nobody else has to read it.



My body. My voice. My story.

TRUE, WHATEVER THEY SAY

Plenty of what gets whispered about periods is simply untrue. Every one of these, though, is a fact.

- ✓ You can wash your hair and have a bath or shower.
- ✓ Nobody can tell you're on your period by looking at you.
- ✓ You're not dirty. It's blood and lining, nothing more.
- ✓ You can run, dance, swim and do PE.
- ✓ You don't have to eat differently or stay away from anyone.
- ✓ The amount you lose over a period is small, and it doesn't make you weak.
- ✓ Using a pad or a tampon has nothing to do with virginity.

STARTING THE CHAT

Talking to an adult can feel like the hardest part. It helps to start with them rather than with you. Try asking: how old were you when yours started? What was it like? Who did you tell first?

Once they're talking about theirs, it's much easier to talk about yours. They've been through it too, so very little will surprise them.

Pick your two: one adult at home, one at school. Write their names on your trusted adult card and keep it in your pouch.

You're ready.

You know what's coming, you know what to do, and you know who to tell.
That's the whole of it.

Found a golden card?

Show it to a trusted adult and ask them to email us. There's a prize for you,
and a free kit for a friend or someone in your family.

Questions? Ask a grown-up to write to us

hello@thereadygirl.com

thereadygirl.com

This guide gives general information about periods and growing up. It is not a substitute for professional medical care, and it cannot know your body. If you are unwell or worried, speak to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist, and always follow the advice they give you.

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