

Menstruation Education



The Menstrual Cycle and Menstruation

What is Menstruation?

One of the biggest changes that takes place during puberty is the beginning of **menstruation**, which is often referred to as a “period.” Only people with female reproductive systems have periods.

- Menstruation is the process where the body sheds the inside lining of the **uterus** through the **vagina**, a tube that leads to the outside of the body.
- During menstruation, small amounts of blood and tissue will leave the body through the vagina.
- Menstruation typically happens once a month and lasts for several days (between 3-7 days).
- Menstruation typically begins between ages 9 and 16, but everyone is different.
- Menstruation is the most noticeable stage of a monthly cycle called the **menstrual cycle**.

What is the Menstrual Cycle?

The **menstrual cycle** is the series of changes that happen in the body to prepare the female reproductive system for the possibility of pregnancy. Each month the body prepares for pregnancy, and if pregnancy doesn't happen then the body will start a new cycle.

- The cycle typically lasts for 28 days, but for some people it can be longer or shorter.
- During the 28 day cycle, the following process takes place:
 - On day one of the cycle, menstruation begins and lasts between 3-7 days
 - At the end of menstruation, the inside lining of the uterus will stop shedding and will now begin to build back up and thicken. This is the body's way of preparing for pregnancy. While the lining is beginning to thicken, an **egg cell (or ova)** is maturing in the ovary and is preparing to be released.
 - Each month, halfway through the menstrual cycle (typically between days 13-15), one mature egg cell will be released from an **ovary** and will be swept into the **fallopian tube**. When an egg cell is released from an ovary, it is called **ovulation**.
 - The egg cell moves through the fallopian tube and into the **uterus**, which is a shaped like an upside-down pear, and it sometimes referred to as the “womb.”
 - If the egg is not fertilized, the egg cell will break down. **Hormones** will signal to the body that pregnancy has not happened and the body will begin to menstruate again (the period will start). This is the start of a new menstrual cycle.

What does someone do when menstruation (period) takes place?

When a person has their period, it is important to take care of their body. There are various options of **hygiene** items that can be used during menstruation to help take care of one's body. These items include pads, tampons, and menstrual cups:

- Pads, tampons, and menstrual cups help collect the blood and fluid that leaves the body during menstruation. It is important to follow the directions for these products and change them regularly to keep good hygiene.
- Pads – worn inside of the underwear to absorb the blood. Needs to be changed several times a day.
- Tampons – inserted into the vagina to absorb the blood. Needs to be changed several times a day.
- Menstrual Cups – small cups inserted into the vagina that collect the blood. Needs to be emptied a few times a day.

Other important thing to know:

- **Period symptoms:** Some people experience symptoms before or during their period. These symptoms could include cramps (pain in the abdomen, or lower belly), headaches, mood swings, or tiredness. It is normal to experience any of these symptoms, but if these symptoms become very painful, it is important to talk to a trusted adult.
- **Irregular Menstrual Cycles:** It is normal for menstrual cycles and periods (menstruation) to be irregular. The menstrual cycle may be very long, very short, or it may change in length from month to month. It takes time for the person's body to adjust to the new cycle and can take a few years to become regulated.
- **Tracking Menstruation (Period):** Many people choose to track their menstrual cycle, using a calendar or a period-tracking app. Tracking the menstrual cycle can help a person determine when their next period is likely to begin and if it is irregular.

Who can a person talk to if they have questions about menstruation or the menstrual cycle?

A trusted adult is a great person to talk to if a person has any questions or concerns. Some examples of a trusted adult include:

- A parent
- A doctor
- A school nurse

Vocabulary Terms	
Term	Definition
Fallopian Tube	carries the egg from the ovaries to the uterus
Hormones	chemical substances made and released in one part of the body that cause a change in another part of the body
Hygiene	the things that you do to keep yourself and your surroundings clean in order to maintain good health
Menstrual Cycle	a recurring cycle where the lining of the uterus prepares for pregnancy
Menstruation	flow of the lining material out of the female
Ova (Egg Cell)	the female reproductive cell (also called the egg cell)
Ovary	stores the ova (eggs) and hormones that cause the egg to mature
Ovulation	when the ovaries release one mature egg cell each month
Uterus	shelters and nourishes the growing baby
Vagina	muscular passageway from the uterus to the outside of the body

FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

