



## WHAT'S THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE?

THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE IS A HORMONAL CYCLE THE BODY GOES THROUGH TO PREPARE FOR A PREGNANCY



### Quick Facts

- The menstrual cycle usually starts between the ages of 10-14 though some people start sooner or later than that. If you haven't had a period by the age of 16, speak to a medical provider.
- Once you start your period, it can take a while for it to be regular. For some people it can take a year or two to become regular. If it's been more than two years and your period is not regular, talk with a provider.
- The average menstrual cycle is 28 days long. However everyone's body is different so some people's cycles are as short as 21 days or as long as 35. If your cycle is regular and shorter than 21 days or longer than 35 days, speak with a provider.
- Your menstrual cycle happens in four phases: period or menstruation, follicular phase, ovulation, and luteal phase.
- If you get pregnant, your menstrual cycle pauses and you will not have a period until after pregnancy ends.

### What to Expect With Your Period

Your period is your body shedding the uterus lining. Most people bleed for about 2-5 days. If you regularly bleed more than 7 days on your period, speak to a medical provider.

Period blood will usually be bright red, dark red, pink, or brownish. If your period blood is suddenly having changes or is outside of this color spectrum, speak with a provider.

Sometimes people have symptoms while on their period. These symptoms should not get in the way of your ability to live your life; if they are do, speak with a provider.

#### Common symptoms include:

- abdominal cramps
- constipation or diarrhea
- sore breasts
- bloating
- acne



### What is PMS?

PMS stands for premenstrual syndrome. PMS is a series of physical and emotional symptoms that a person may experience a week or two before their period.

Symptoms of PMS can include bloating, gassiness, irritability, mood swings, fatigue, headaches, feelings of depression or anxiety, cramping, constipation, diarrhea, sore breasts, and sleep problems.



# MENSTRUAL CYCLE BASICS

## Cycle Tracking

Cycle tracking is simply keeping a record of your period and documenting any symptoms, issues, or patterns associated with your cycle.

You can use an app or a calendar to track your cycle. It helps you to know when to expect your next period, to keep track of irregular periods, and to note symptoms which may be interfering with your quality of life.

If tracking your cycle, remember that day one of your cycle is the first day of your period.

Cycle tracking helps you know what is regular for you and to notice changes in your cycle.

## Period Management

There are many products that can help you manage your period. All of these products either absorb or hold period blood.

They include:

- Pads--go inside the underwear
- Tampons--go inside the vagina
- Menstrual Cup--goes inside the vagina
- Period Panties--worn like regular underwear
- Menstrual Disc--goes inside the vagina



## Birth Control and Periods

Some people take birth control to prevent pregnancy but some people take birth control to help regulate their menstrual cycle( and some do both!). It is safe to take birth control to help with your period even if you are not sexually active. Different birth control methods impact your period in different ways.

- Light period, irregular period, or no period: hormonal IUDs (Mirena, Skyla, Kyleena, and Liletta), Nexplanon implant, or Depo shot.
- Light, regular periods: birth control pills, birth control patch, birth control ring
- No change or heavier periods: nonhormonal IUD (Paragard)

## When to Talk to a Medical Provider

While the menstrual cycle can be challenging to deal with, it shouldn't get in the way of your life. If you start to experience some of the symptoms below, reach out to your gynecologist or primary care provider.

- Periods that are longer than 7 days
- Periods where you are changing a super tampon or pad every hour
- Bleeding between periods
- Period pain that is really bad and does not go away or lessen with ibuprofen or naproxen
- PMS that is so bad it makes it hard to live your life regularly
- Periods that are suddenly irregular
- Skipping periods
- Period blood that is not red, pink, or brown
- If your cycle is really long (over 35 days) or really short (less than 21 days)

