



# Teens + Your Period

PATIENT EDUCATION



BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS  
PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER



## what's going on with my body?

Your preteen and teen years are filled with learning more about yourself every day. So it's no surprise that you may have questions about puberty and what to expect when you get your menstrual period.

This resource is meant to answer some of those questions. Your friends may have a lot to say about periods that may surprise or confuse you, so it's good to get the facts.



## what is puberty?

Puberty is the term for the time when your body begins to change into an adult body. Puberty includes rapid growth of bones and muscles and changes in body shape and size. It also includes the development of your body's ability to have children. Puberty is triggered by chemicals in your body called hormones.

One sign you are going through puberty is when you get your period.

## why do I get a period?

Hormones cause the lining of your uterus to become thicker with extra blood and tissue. Your ovaries release an egg. If the egg does not get fertilized, the lining of the uterus breaks down and flows out your body through your vagina. That flow of lining is what you see as your period.

## when will I get my first period?

Some people get their period the first time around age 12, but you may get it earlier or later. There is no right time or right way to begin. Don't compare yourself to others. Everyone is different and that's OK.

## How much am I going to bleed when I'm on my period?

Most people only bleed a total of a few tablespoons during their entire period. Some people have small, dark chunky clots of blood.

## How long is my period going to last?

For most teens, their period lasts between 2 and 7 days. Yours may be shorter or longer.

## How often am I going to have a period?

During the first couple years, you may not have a period on a regular basis. It may take a couple years for you to have regular periods. Once you do have them on a regular basis, you might have a period about once a month.



To help predict when you might have your period, consider tracking it using a calendar or an app. This will help you see patterns and know what to expect.

## what can I use while I'm on my period?

Many products are available for when you have your period. You can buy these personal care products without a prescription from most stores and pharmacies and online.

Pads soak up your menstrual flow. You place pads inside your underwear. Pads come in different sizes, styles and thicknesses. When your period flow is lighter or when you think your period may start any day, consider wearing panty liners to prevent accidents. Liners are much thinner and lighter than full-size pads.

Consider changing a pad of any kind every 4 to 8 hours or more often if you feel like it is full or you are uncomfortable.

Tampons soak up your menstrual flow from inside your vagina. Most have a cardboard or plastic applicator that you insert with your fingers. They usually have a string attached to them which hangs outside your body. They come in different sizes.

If you use tampons, change them every 4 to 8 hours or more often if needed. If you leave tampons in too long, you are at risk for a condition called toxic shock syndrome (TSS). TSS is a complication of certain bacterial infections.

The first time you put in and take out a tampon can be uncomfortable. Talk to your doctor or another trusted adult about how to use a tampon and what to expect.

Menstrual cups catch flow from inside your vagina. They are made of plastic or rubber. You remove the cup every 8 to 12 hours. You can throw away some cups and you can reuse some types.

Period underwear are undergarments you wear during your period to take the place of products you throw away like tampons or pads. Some teens like to use period underwear only on days when their flow is light. Then they use them in addition to pads or tampons when their flow is heavy.



## what's it going to feel like when I have my period?

You may have cramps in your belly or back. Your breasts may be tender to the touch. You may have headaches, a queasy stomach or diarrhea. You may be a little moody or sensitive.

These symptoms may begin a few days before your get your period, signaling to you that it's coming soon. These symptoms are all typical and do not mean anything is wrong.

Here is what you can do to be more comfortable:

- You can take nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, called NSAIDs for short, to help relieve cramps and headaches. An example of an NSAID is ibuprofen. You can buy these without a prescription. Be sure to take them according to the directions on the package.
- Hold a heating pad against your lower belly, your breasts, neck, forehead, or all of these. A hot bath or shower may help too.
- Drink plenty of water, avoid caffeine and get lots of physical activity.

If you are feeling down or moody, be patient with yourself. Consider going for a walk, listening to music or talking to someone who cheers you up.



## what should I do if I have concerns about my period?

Talk to your parents or caregiver if you have concerns.

You may need to see your doctor if:

- Your period hasn't started by the time you are 15 years old.
- You have heavy bleeding during your period which makes it so you have to change a pad or tampon pad or tampon every 1 to 2 hours.
- You are frequently passing blood clots bigger than the size of a quarter.
- Your periods often last longer than 7 days.
- You feel dizzy or have a racing pulse.
- You bleed between your periods, called breakthrough bleeding.

At any time if you have questions about your body's changes or your period, talk with your doctor.



Notes



## BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

Mrs. Lips, a resident of San Antonio, Texas, was a loyal Mayo Clinic patient of more than 40 years and a self-made business leader who significantly expanded her family's activities in oil, gas and ranching. Upon her death in 1995, Mrs. Lips paid the ultimate compliment by leaving her entire estate to Mayo Clinic. By naming the Barbara Woodward Lips Patient Education Center, Mayo honors her generosity, her love of learning, her belief in patient empowerment and her dedication to high-quality care.

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