



MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT



A complete guide to

Menstrual Hygiene Management



Printed with support from:

UNFPA

In Partnership with:

**Plan International Zimbabwe
Youth Ensemble
Harare City Council**



A brief introduction



This booklet has been written to help young girls manage the critical period from the time when they enter adolescence. Adolescence is the time during which boys and girls grow from childhood into adulthood and changes take place in their bodies. During this period, known as puberty, menstruation starts in girls.



Menstruation



Menstruation is commonly called a **period** or **MPs** (menstrual period). Menstruation is basically the monthly discharge of blood from the uterus through the vagina of non pregnant girls and woman from puberty to menopause (when menstruation stops in older women). The menstruation or bleeding, usually lasts from about three to seven days. However, some girls' bleeding may last longer than seven days. The whole menstrual process or cycle takes about 28 days from the first day of your MPs. In a few cases, girls may have cycles that last for as many as 34 days or as few as 19 days.





5 important menstrual hygiene tips

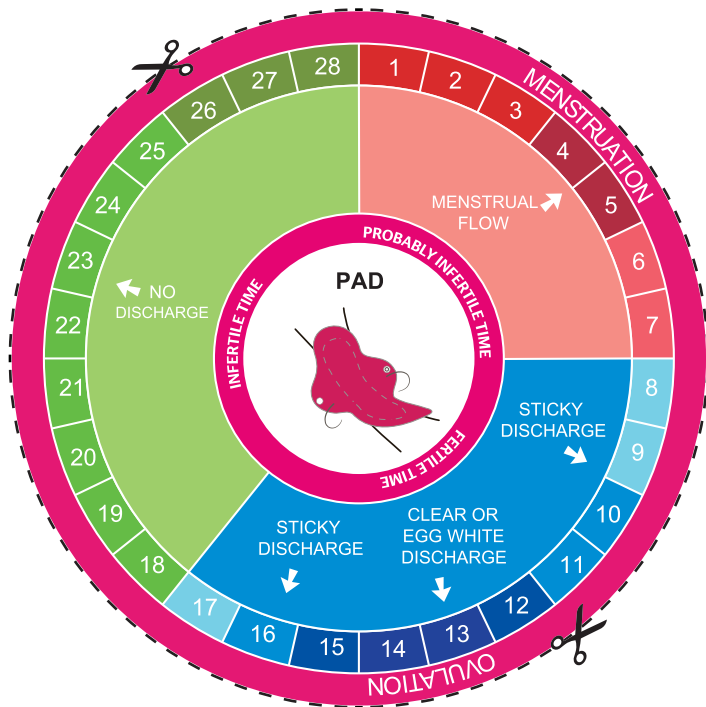


5 important menstrual hygiene tips

1. Use clean underwear and change them regularly.
2. Change pads or tampons regularly (once every six hours).
3. Wash the genital area with plain water (no soap) after each toilet visit and even after urination, if possible. At least wipe with toilet paper or tissue.
4. Keep the area between the legs dry, otherwise you may experience chafing.
5. It is very important to remember that the vagina has its own self-cleaning mechanism, and an external cleaning agent like

-Feel safe, feel free-

Cycle calculator



The first menstrual period

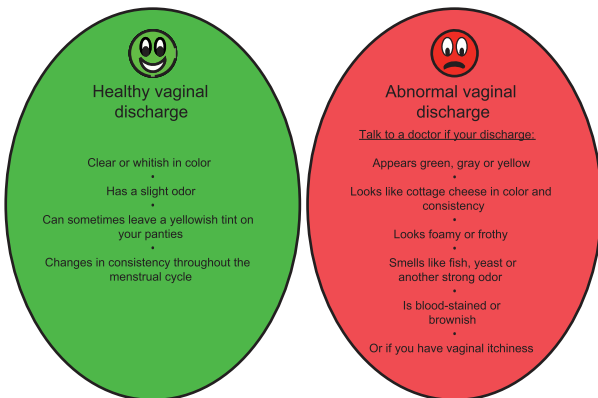
Girls typically start to menstruate during puberty or adolescence, typically between the ages of 9 and 19. At this time, they experience physical changes, such as breast growth, wider hips and body hair, and emotional changes due to hormones. Menstruation continues until a woman reaches menopause – usually in her late 40s to mid 50s. Then, menstruation ends.

Menstruation is also sometimes called “menses,” a “menstrual period” or just a “period.”

What to expect in addition to menstruation

Vaginal discharge, which is different from menstruation, usually begins around the time a girl gets her first period. It can start up to six months before you have your first period. This is when the body is undergoing many hormonal changes. The type of vaginal discharge your body produces can shift during your menstrual cycle and during your lifetime. You may find it is heavier or lighter at different times.

Vaginal discharge is made up of fluids from your uterus, cervix and vagina. When your body releases an egg from your ovary, you may notice that your vaginal discharge is thicker. This change in discharge may indicate peak fertility times.



What can help to reduce the pain during your period?

There are many different ways to feel more comfortable. Here are some of the most popular:

Healthy food



Nuts

Nuts are rich in omega-3 fatty acids and can help you feel better during your period.



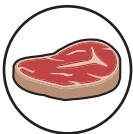
Fresh fruits

Get a lot of fresh fruits before your flow begins to ensure a healthy digestive system.



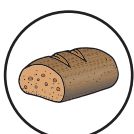
Leafy green vegetables

They are rich in iron and B vitamins. Their high fiber content also can help with digestive issues.



Red meat

It is important to increase your iron intake during your period to make up for the iron you lose while bleeding.



Whole grains

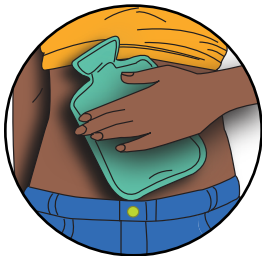
Just like with fruit, the fibers in whole grains can help you to have regular bowel movements during your period.



Water

It's good to drink a lot of water to cleanse your body.

Hot water Bottles



Remember!

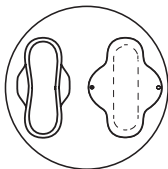
For severe cramps, ask the doctor for a prescription for pain killers.



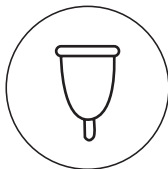
Menstrual sanitary products



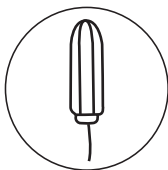
Disposable and reusable sanitary pads



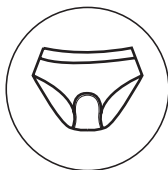
Menstrual cups



Tampons



Menstrual panties



How to manage your period



If you use a pad, place it in your underwear. Never insert the material inside your vagina (except if it's a tampon or a cup, then you have to insert it into the vagina). Change the cloth, pad, cotton or tissue every two to six hours, or more frequently if you think the blood flow is getting heavy.

Talk about menstruation with other girls and women, like your mother, sister, aunt, grandmother, female friend or an older woman in your community.

Don't be afraid. It can be scary to see the blood on your underwear, but it is perfectly normal and natural.

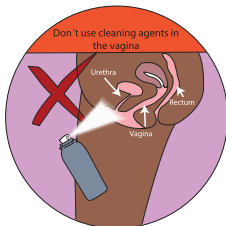
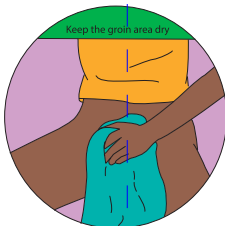
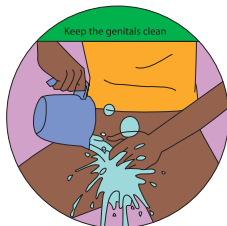
If you are at school when you get your first menstrual period, tell the matron, a female teacher or a fellow student.

Feel proud! Your body is developing into that of a young woman.

Tip!

Menstrual products should ideally be stored in a clean, cool, dry place that is free from dust, smoke and chemicals, if at all possible.

How to wash and stay clean during menstruation



Girls and women need to practice a high level of personal hygiene during menstruation:

1. Keep the genitals clean

When you menstruate, the blood tends to enter tiny spaces like the skin between your labia or crust around the opening of the vagina. You should always wash this excess blood away. This also minimizes odor from the vaginal region. It is important to wash your vagina and labia well, before you change into a new pad, if possible.

Always wash or clean the area in a motion that is from the vagina to the anus. Never wash in the opposite direction. Washing in the opposite direction can cause bacteria from the anus to lodge in the vagina and urethral opening, leading to infections. If you cannot wash yourself before you change pads, be sure to wipe off the areas using toilet paper or tissue.

2. Keep the groin area dry

It is important to keep your groin area dry, so that you don't get any infections or vaginal fungi.

3. Don't use cleaning agents in the vagina

The vagina has its own cleaning mechanism that works in a very fine balance of good and bad bacteria. Washing it with soap can kill the good bacteria, increasing the risk of infections. So, while it is important to wash yourself regularly during this time, all you need to use is some warm water. You can use soap on the external parts, but do not use it inside your vagina or vulva. And do not try to remove bad odor with deodorant.

How to use and Dispose Sanitary pads.

How to Use



Place the cloth pad in the underwear inner side facing upward



Fold this wings of cloth pad downwards



Press the button in the wings



After use keep the used pads inside the wet pouch

How to wash Re-Usable pads.



Soak the used cloth pad in water for 30 mins



Rinse it until the water runs clear



Dry in direct sunlight



Do not use hot water / Bleach / Brush

A reusable pad can be washed and reused at least 100 times. when it can no longer be used, it should then also be disposed of.

Steps on how to dispose DISPOSABLE sanitary towels:

1 Wrap in paper



2 Put in dustbin



3 Close the lid



4 Do NOT flush

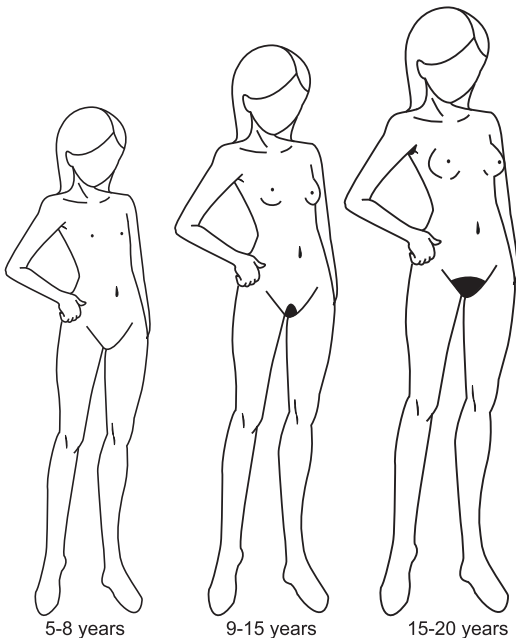


Place the bin outside for collection by the garbage truck.

It is recommended to incinerate all items containing blood or other bodily fluids.



What happens to your body



What physical, emotional and social changes occur when a girl is growing up?

Physical changes

- Height gain
- Weight gain
- Acne
- Growth of hair on the armpits and genitalia
- Voice becomes high pitched
- Development of the vagina and breasts
- Menstruation

Emotional changes

- Ambition/desire/dreams
- Shyness
- Strong opinions

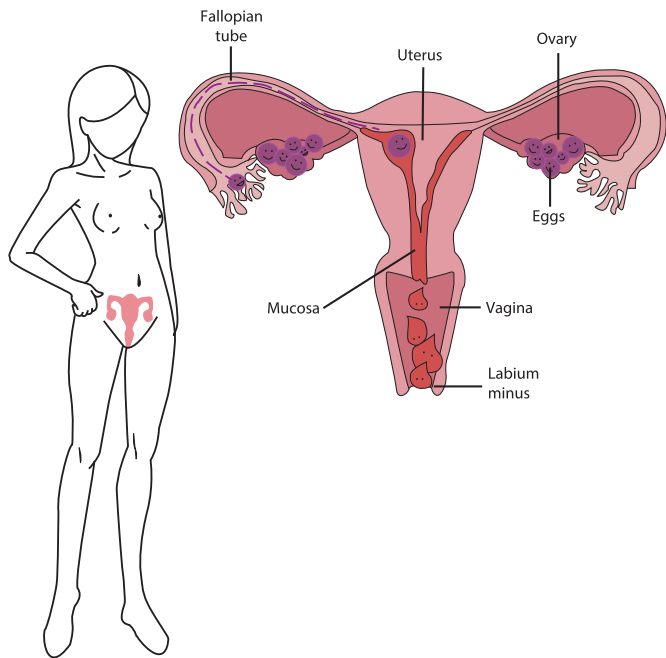
Social changes

- Responsibility
- Individual desire
- Seeking independence and testing

What is menstrual blood and where does it come from?

Menstruation is the regular discharge of blood and mucosa from the uterus through the vagina.

The uterus is a hollow, pear-shaped organ that is responsible for nourishing the embryo and fetus during a pregnancy. When preparing for an egg, the uterus mucosa thickens. This helps the uterus to hold on to a fertilized egg. If the egg is not fertilized, the mucosa is released through the vagina as menstrual blood.

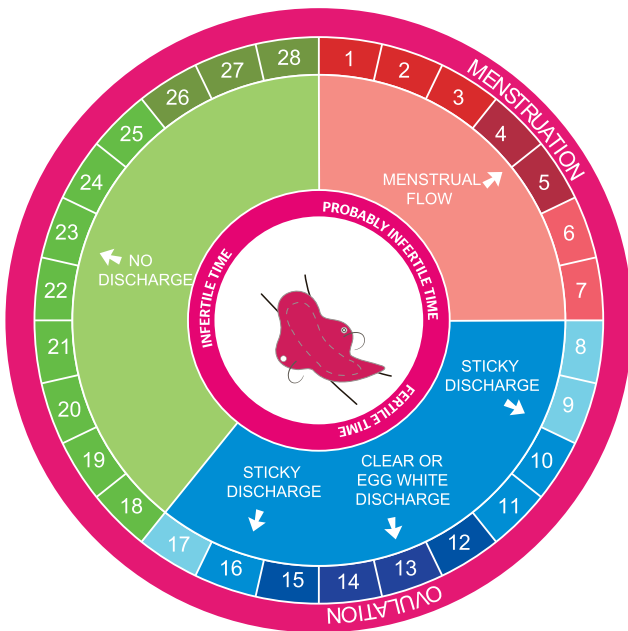




How to calculate your menstrual cycle



Day one of the cycle is day one of your period; cycle day two is the second day of your period and so on.



Let's say the first day of your menstrual cycle is March 4, and that you bleed for five days.

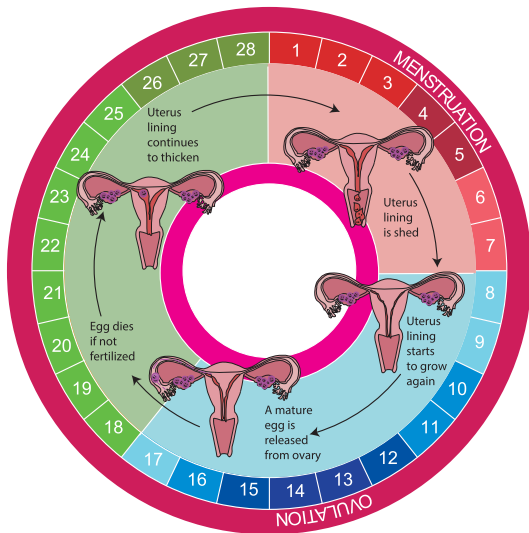
The duration of your menstrual period is five days for the month of March. If your next period starts on April 2, then your menstrual cycle length is the number of days from March 4 to April 1 (the day before your next period), which is 29 days. You should not count the first day of your next period, because that day is part of the next menstrual cycle.

The female reproductive system

The menstrual cycle usually lasts approximately 28 days but it can vary from 21 to 35 days. Each cycle involves the release of an egg (ovulation), which moves into the uterus through the fallopian tubes. Tissue and blood start to line the walls of the uterus for fertilization. If the egg is not fertilized, the lining of the uterus is shed through the vagina along with blood. The bleeding generally lasts between two and seven days, with some lighter flow days and some heavier flow days. The cycle is often irregular for the first year or two after menstruation begins.

Menstrual side effects

During or before the bleeding part of the menstrual cycle, many women and girls suffer from pains such as abdominal cramps, nausea, fatigue, lightheadedness, headaches, backache and general discomfort. They can also experience emotional and psychological changes such as heightened feelings of sadness, irritability or anger due to changing hormones. This varies from person to person and can change significantly over time.



Menstruation stops after menopause, which usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age.

Do you know what PMS is?



PMS stands for Pre-Menstrual Syndrome. Usually, a few days before menstruation, you may start feeling some soreness or heaviness in your breasts, and your stomach may feel bloated. You may get headaches, backaches, nausea and food cravings. Sometimes, because of the fluctuating hormone levels, you may feel more moody, sad or emotional than usually.



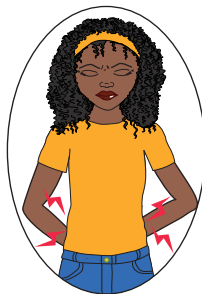
Sore breasts



Abdominal
pain



Headache



Backaches



Acne

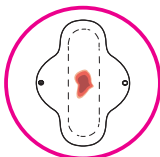


Mood
changes

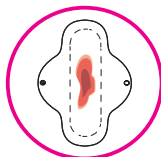


Is it really blood?

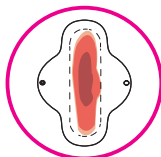
Menstrual discharge is not just blood, but a mixture of uterine lining tissue and blood. The total monthly menstrual discharge varies from about 4 to 12 teaspoons, and the average woman's menstrual flow is between 30 and 40 ml. Anything over 60 ml is considered heavy menstrual bleeding. The flow will be lighter at the start of your period, then heavier for a time, then lighter again. The color will also change from brownish-red at the beginning of your period to darker red in the middle and light or brownish-red again at the end.



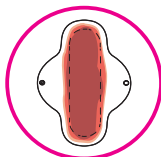
Scant amount
Blood only on tissue when wiped or less than 1 inch/2,5 cm stain on a pad within one hour.



Light amount
Less than 4 inches/10 cm stain on a pad within one hour.



Moderate amount
Less than 6 inches/15 cm stain on a pad within one hour.



Heavy amount
Saturated pad within one hour.

What is a taboo?



A taboo is something people don't like to talk about, so they avoid conversation about the topic.

One common menstruation taboo is that periods are embarrassing and that women are unclean during the time of their period. But it is not true. Periods are completely natural and should not be surrounded by shame.

COMMON MYTHS

About what women can't do when they have their menstruation

A lot of women are oppressed in their daily lives by myths. Some of the most common myths - all of which are untrue - are that women cannot:



Attend religious functions



Cook



Go to school



Touch males



Eat certain types of food

*"Menstruation is a healthy
and normal part of most women
and girls' lives. Lets break the
silence and talk about it."*



For youth friendly services,
contact our **PSZ Clinic**



Call Toll - free on:
Econet - 08080019/20
Netone - 08010019/20



0772 145 222

www.pszim.com



Population Service Zimbabwe

Support Office

Population Services Zimbabwe
9 Bisley Circle, Belvedere, Harare, Zimbabwe
P.O. Box CY2399, Causeway, Harare
Telephone: 263-242-740558, 740573
E-mail: marketing@pszim.com