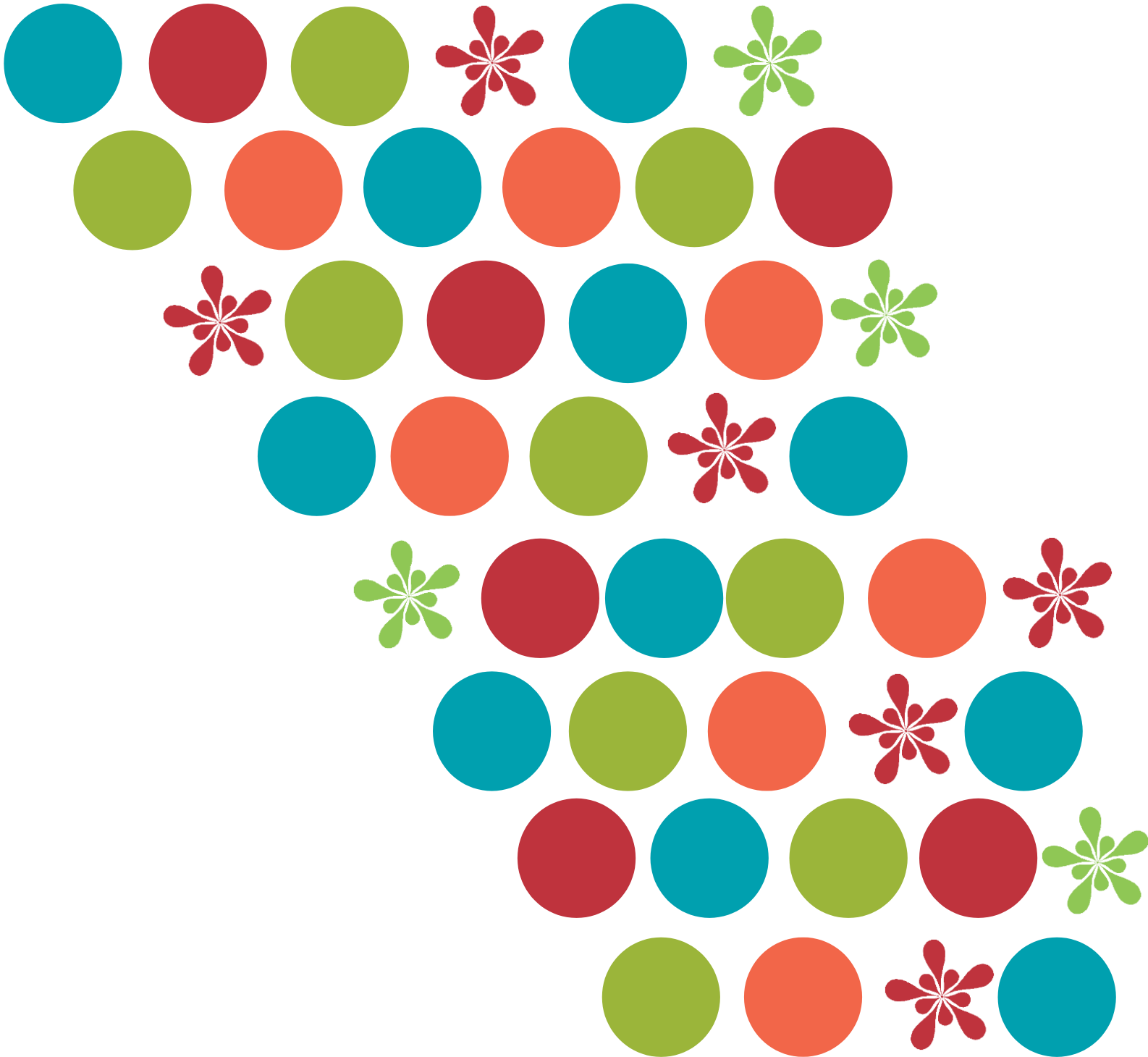
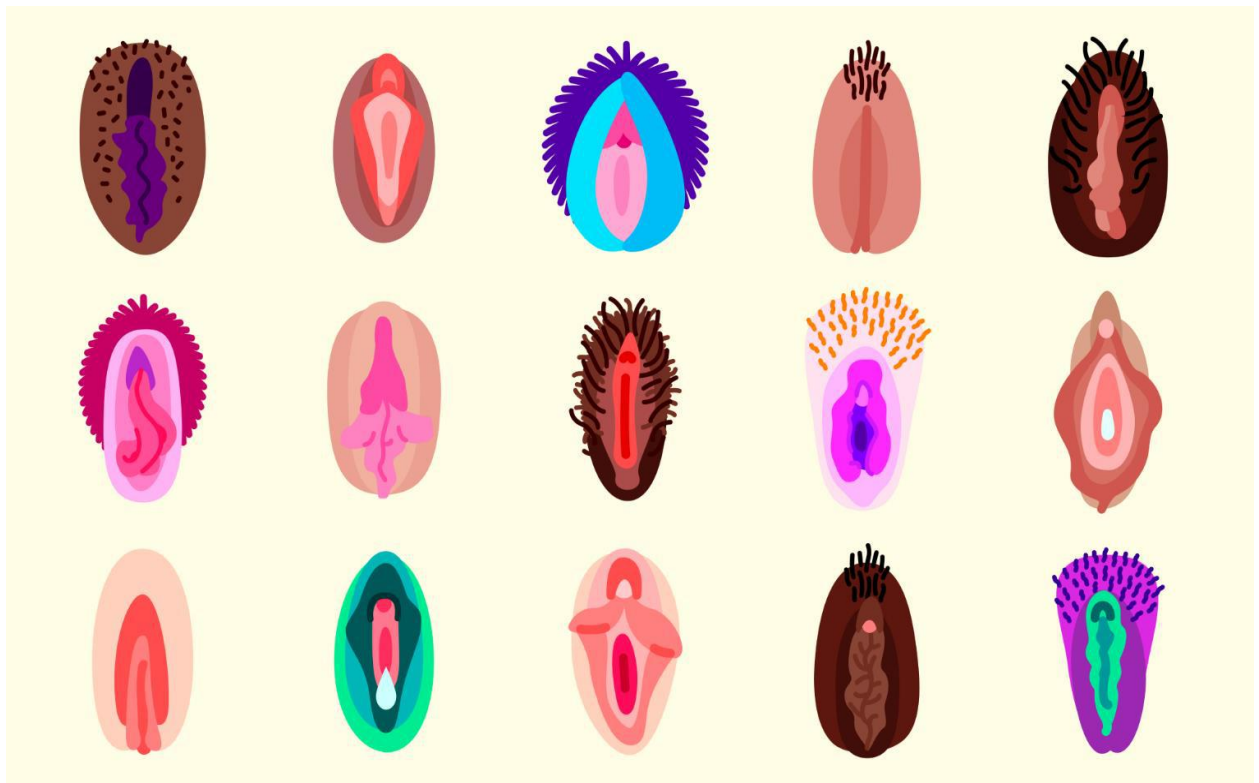


# Period Power





PERIODS ARE NOT  
TOO GROSS,  
TOO WEIRD OR  
TOO INAPPROPRIATE  
TO TALK ABOUT.

You may be getting to that age where people say you'll soon experience the mysterious thing called your "period".

You have probably heard the word period before and also probably know a little about what it is. But what else is there to know?

Periods - also known as *menstruation* - can be wonderful things! They are a sign of a healthy body and are something to be proud of.

### Your First Period - Congratulations!

This is an exciting time in your life! You are growing into an adult and have your first period to prove it! This booklet will cover everything you might want to know about your period – but first things first. Relax and celebrate this moment – you will only get your first period once!



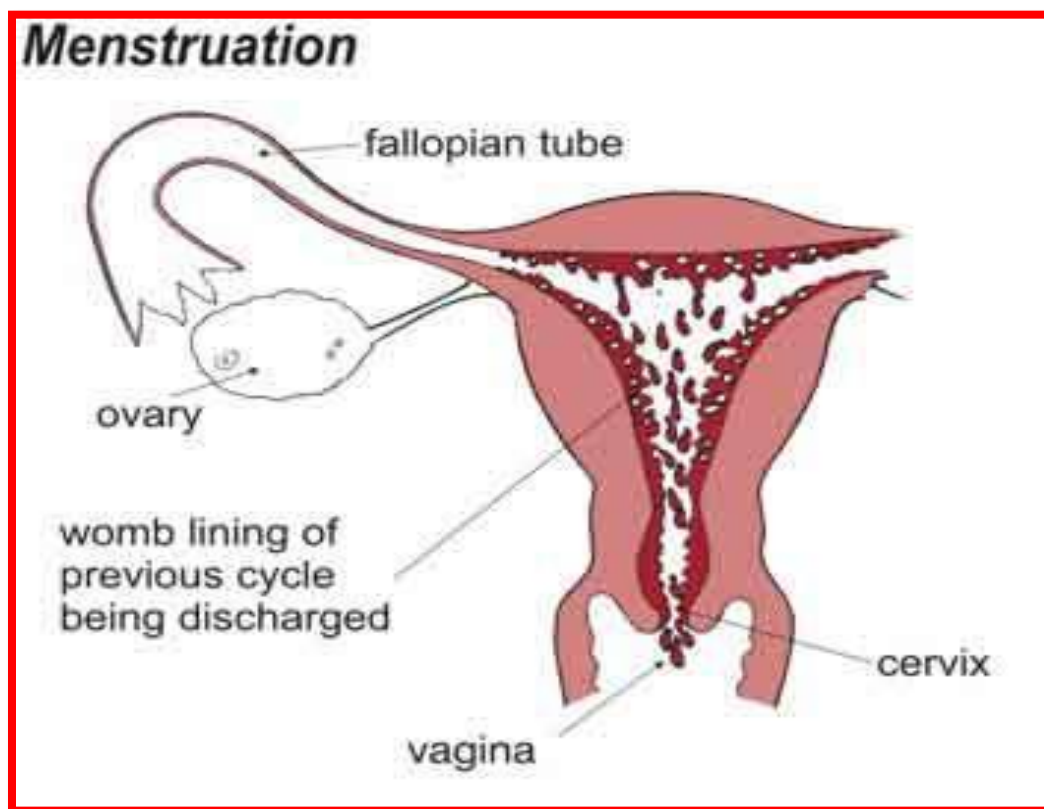
### This is an exciting time in your life!

You may be experiencing many different changes as your body prepares for its transition into adulthood. You may only notice the physical changes but there are emotional changes happening too! You might start experiencing mood swings with strong emotions which may be confusing. You may have questions about your body, your attractions and your identity. Your relationships with friends and adults in your life may start to change. There

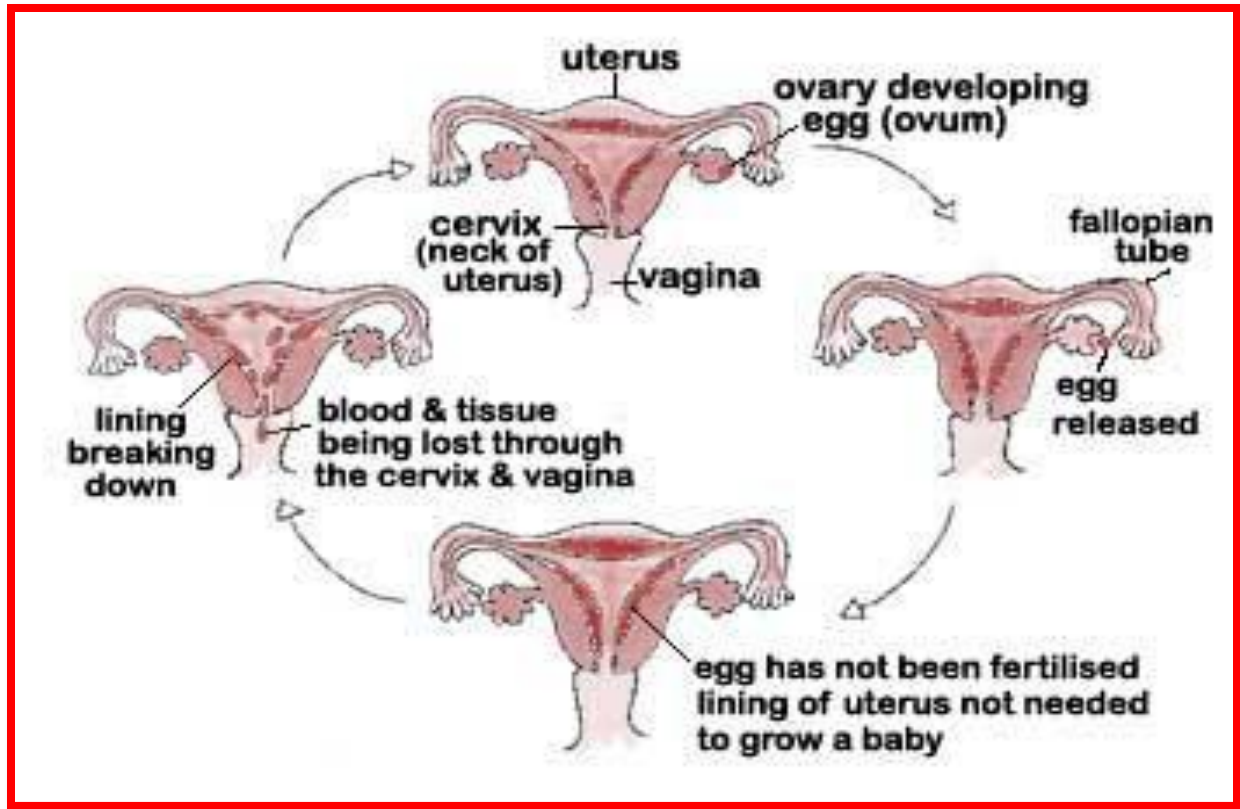
are natural chemicals in your body called hormones that are causing all these unique and amazing changes. This is all healthy and something you should expect.

### What is a period?

In general terms, a period is the shedding of the lining of the uterus (womb). See menstruation diagram below. It shows the uterus and its surrounding organs – the ovaries the fallopian tubes, the cervix and the vagina.



The uterus is an organ in the body that provides a safe environment for a baby to grow in during pregnancy. In order for a baby to be protected a lining grows in the uterus. Even when a person is not pregnant, this lining grows in the uterus to prepare for a baby. If a person does not become pregnant, this lining is no longer needed so it is shed from the uterus until the next month. This is called *menstruation* – our period!

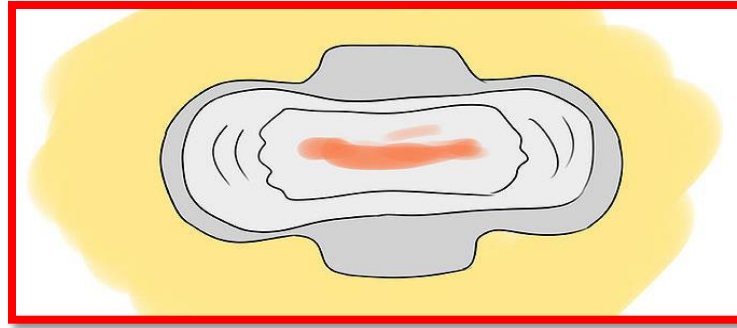


## But what does that mean?

This means that about once a month (usually not on a strict schedule, but about every 28 days) our bodies will shed the lining (made up of blood and tissue) from the uterus, through the cervix and out the vagina. Often when you first get your period it takes a year or more for your period to become regular. For some people their period is never regular. Every body is unique in its workings.

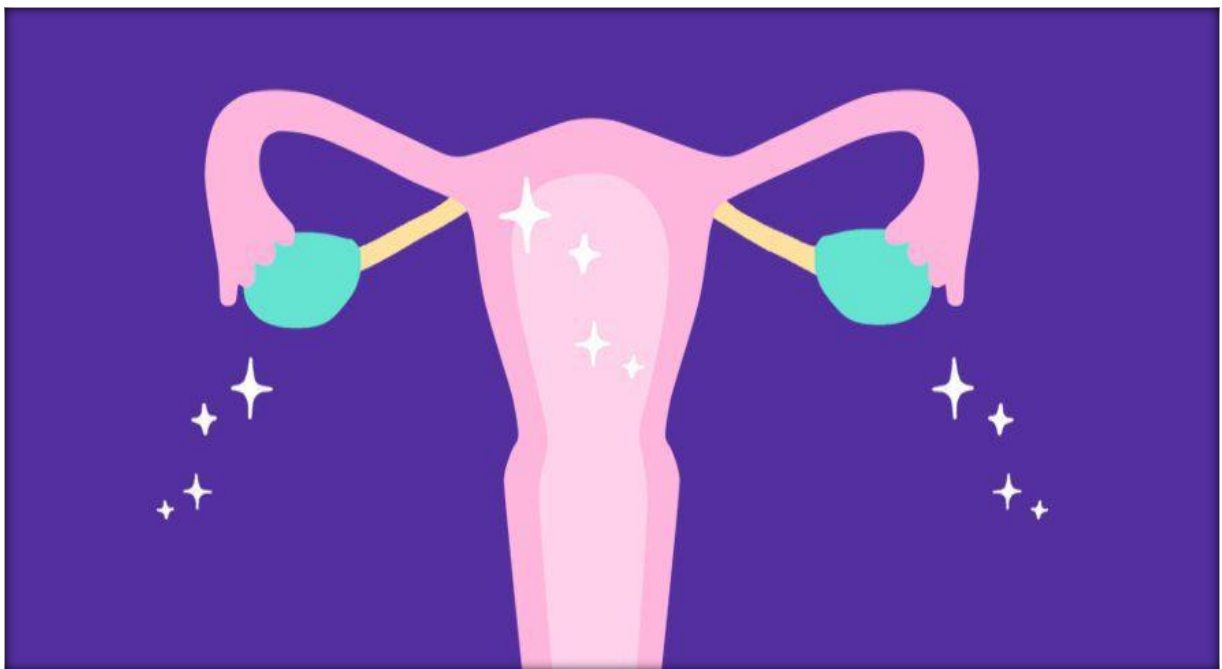
## What is normal?

A period is a red, rusty, pink or brownie coloured spot on your underwear or pad. Depending on the heaviness of the flow, the colour might be brighter red and might change from one day to the next. This might be surprising the first time, but is a sign of a normal, healthy body!

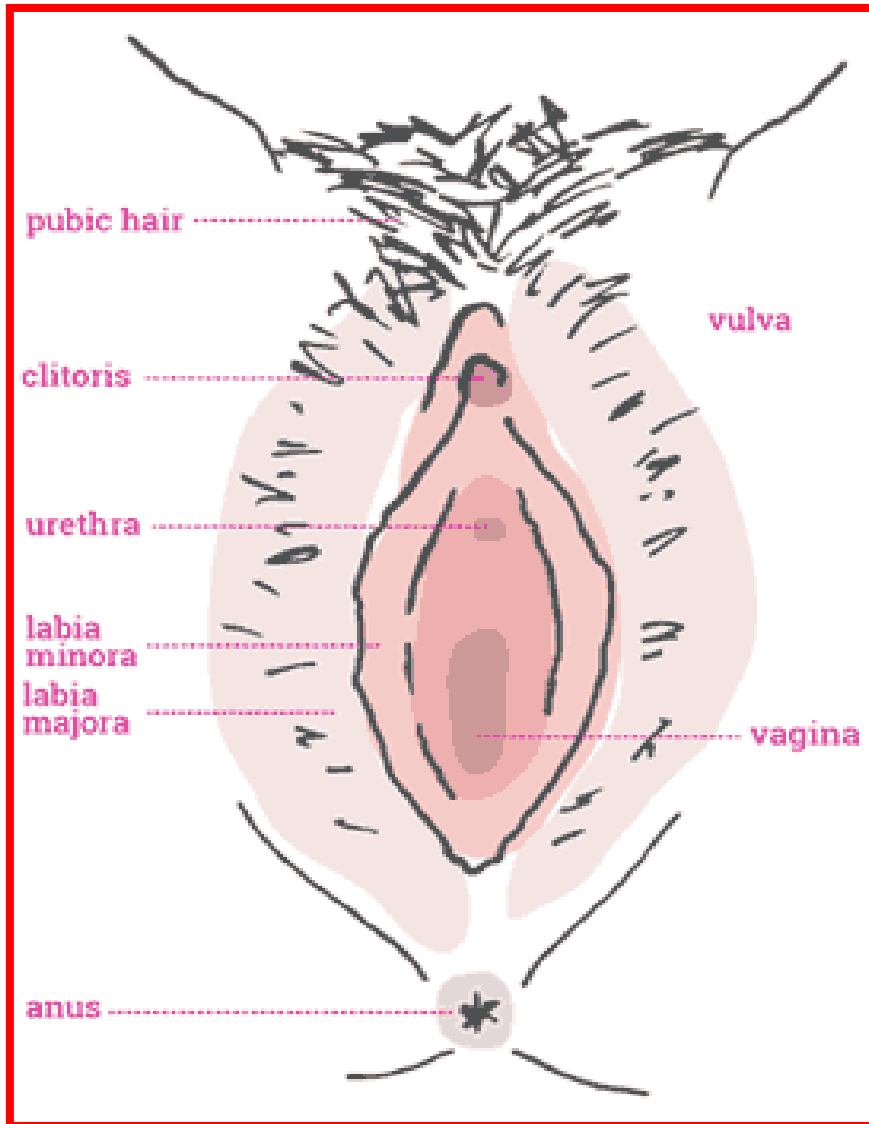


## What else is on my underwear?

You might notice other things on your underwear or pad other than your period. This is discharge and your body's way of cleaning itself. The fluid is produced by the vagina and cervix and helps remove dead cells and bacteria from the vagina to help prevent infection. Discharge is usually clear or white, and may or may not have a smell. This discharge will look different at different times of the month and sometimes it might not even be there at all. Usually discharge is a sign that you are healthy and your body is working how it is supposed to.



## The Vulva



## What is a Vulva?

The vulva is everything you see on the outside. The menstrual blood (your period) comes from the vaginal opening. The vagina is internally connected to your uterus, with the cervix in between. The vaginal opening is also where a tampon or diva cup can be inserted during your period. They sit in the vagina to collect the blood.

## Does a period hurt?

Sometimes a dull, aching pain happens when having your period – this is called “cramps” because of the cramping feeling. Sometimes the feeling will be right below your bellybutton, sometimes it could feel like a backache, or side pain. A period usually lasts about 3 to 7 days. You may feel cramps the day before you get your period. Cramps do not usually last your entire period, usually one or two days. And some people do not get any cramps.

## Something to ask an adult or doctor about?

- ♥ A sharp, unusual or strong pain
- ♥ Unusual discharge (the stuff you see in your underwear)
- ♥ A period lasting longer than 7 days
- ♥ Heavy bleeding (changing pads or tampons more than once every 1-2 hours)
- ♥ Frequent periods (more than once every 20 days)

## How to manage the symptoms?

When experiencing cramps, or other emotional and physical feelings, most people want to lie in bed until it passes. But, there are ways to help relieve the pain and symptoms of your period. Lying in bed actually does not help!

- ♥ Exercise! Helps get the blood flowing through the body
- ♥ Healthy diet: eating from all the food groups, especially fruits and veggies, drinking lots of water
- ♥ Use a heating pad on your lower tummy or take a warm bath
- ♥ Relaxation techniques – deep breathing, meditation, stretching or yoga
- ♥ Keep moving, staying busy takes your mind of the cramps





## Who gets their period?

Most people with a uterus get a period. This usually means people with vulvas and vaginas, but not everyone with a vulva and vagina will have a uterus. Some people are born without a uterus and some people have their uterus removed.

Sometimes people who have a uterus will not have a period. There are a few reasons for this:

- They are not old enough yet
- They are pregnant
- They are taking certain medications or birth control that stops their period
- They have gone through menopause
- They have too much or not enough body fat to get their period



## When do people get their periods?

The average age that people get their period in Canada is 12. However, people can get their period as young as 8 or 9 or as old as 15 or 16. People usually have their period until they are in their fifties. If you do not have your period by the time you are 16 you should see a doctor.

A period does not usually come at a predictable time every month. Sometimes it might come unexpectedly, especially if you have recently got it for the first time. As you get older it may get more regular and predictable. There are ways to chart your cycle so that you can predict when you will get your period, as well as how you might be feeling around that time of the month.

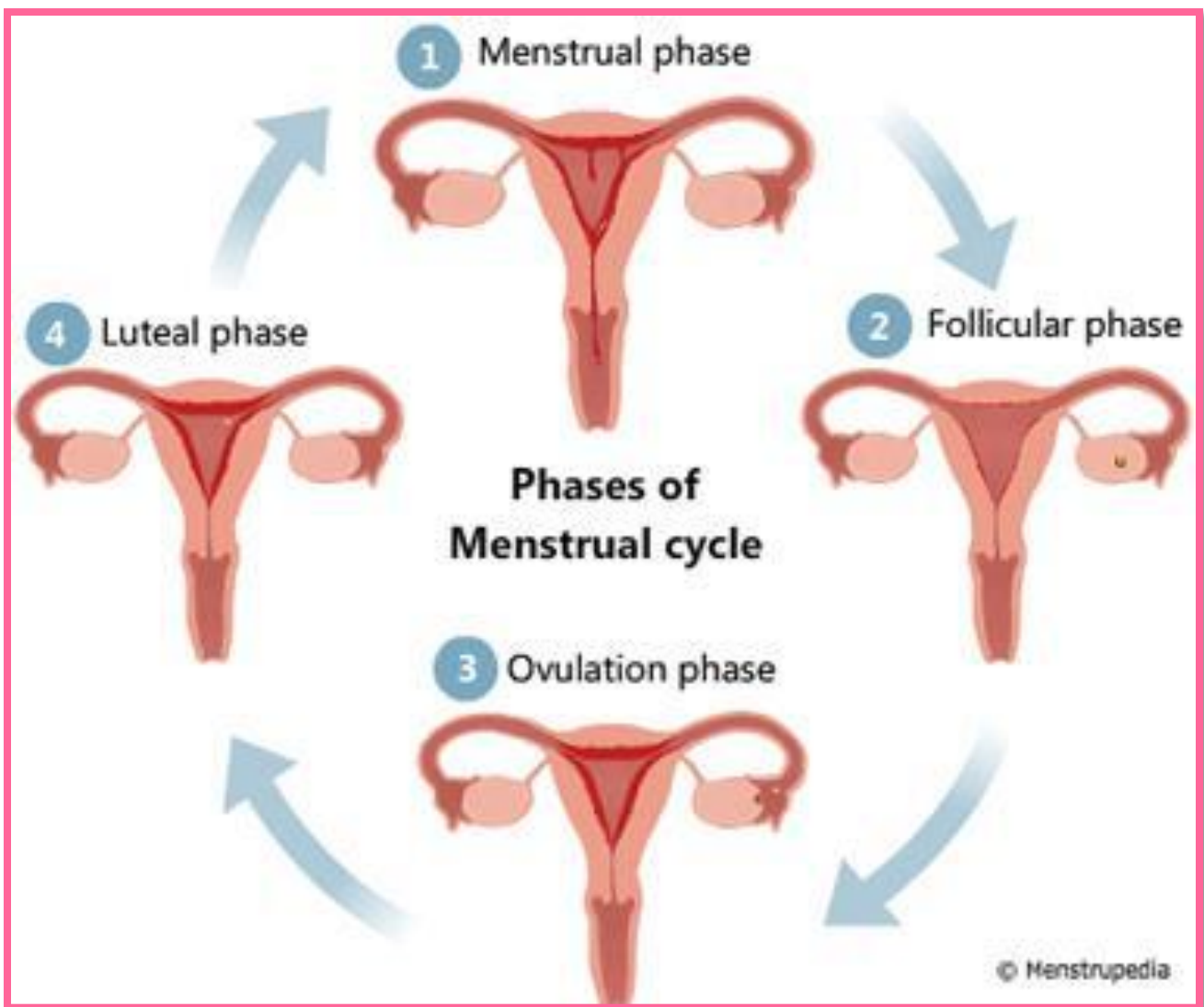
## What is a cycle?

A cycle is something that happens again and again over time. On average, a *menstrual cycle* is 28 days long. But, most people's periods are very different from the average so don't be surprised if it is longer or shorter than that (range of 21 – 36 days). Each person is different, so the only way to find out how your body works is to pay attention and keep track of what is going on with your uterus! You can use a calendar, a diary, or an app on your phone or iPod.



**QUICK FACT:** Hormones are natural chemicals your body makes to help it do certain things - like grow or start getting your period! During puberty, you're loaded with hormones that tell your body that it is time to start changing.

Over the course of the month, there are many things going on in your body. The cycle is split into 4 stages and begins with the first day of your period. Here is a quick explanation of what happens during the menstrual cycle.  
:



## Stage 1 – Menstrual Phase:

- Commonly called the period!
- The uterine lining (endometrium – made up of blood and tissue) is dissolving and shedding – thanks to low levels of a hormone called Progesterone
- All hormones are low during this phase
- Lasts 3-7 days

## Stage 2 – Follicular Phase:

- 15-20 tiny eggs about the size of this period (.) are maturing inside the ovaries thanks to FSH (Follicle Stimulating Hormone)
- Each egg has a protective casing (follicle) as they compete to become the largest & strongest they can be
- Meanwhile in the uterus, the endometrium (lining) begins to grow thicker again
- This phase before ovulation can vary quite a bit - anywhere from 7-22 days long, depending on what is happening in your life – which explains why the total length of the cycle can change too

## Stage 3 – Ovulation Phase:

- The winning egg breaks through its follicle and is released from the ovary thanks to LH (Luteinizing Hormone)
- The fallopian tubes then reach out its fimbria (like small tentacles) and sweep the egg down their channel towards the uterus
- At this point in the month you will see discharge that is thicker and sticky

## Stage 4 – Luteal Phase:

- The follicle holding the egg becomes a corpus luteum which stays in the ovary & starts releasing Progesterone
- The egg can either implant (attach itself in the endometrium, which would only happen if it was fertilized by a sperm and this would be the beginning of a pregnancy) or simply dissolve and shed along with the lining
- Very predictable phase – lasting 12- 16 days
- When this phase ends, you get your period again – that’s why it is called a cycle!



## Where do people get their periods?

The short answer to the question “where do people get their periods” is anywhere! It is always good to be prepared since we don’t often know what time of day our period might come.



Even though a period follows a cycle, periods are often not easily predicted – especially at the beginning. It is a good idea to chart them or at least keep track of them to help you plan for when it might begin. As you begin to get older, they may get more regular and easy to predict.

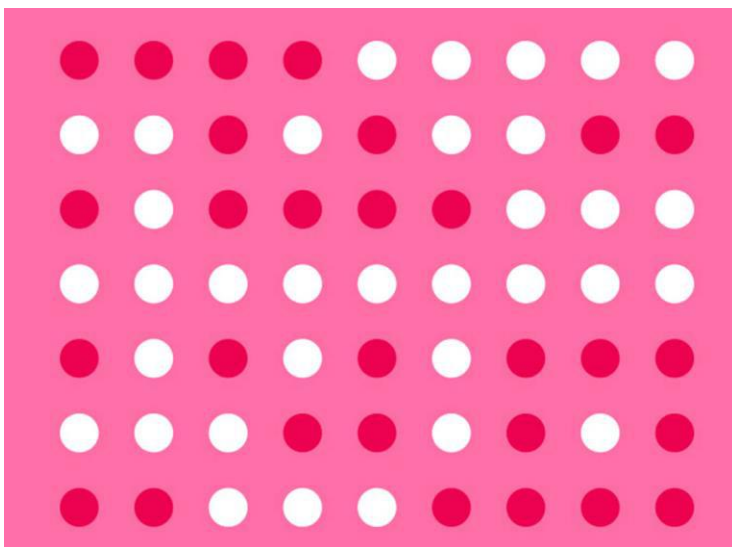
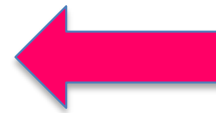
It might be nerve-wracking to think about getting your period at school or around friends, but one thing to remember is that approximately half of the

people on this earth will have, or have had, a period at some time in their lives! This is a healthy, natural part of life and not something to be embarrassed about.

Keeping things like pads and tampons or a diva cup handy (even in a pocket in your backpack or bag) can be good to help you feel more relaxed should your period pay you a visit unexpectedly!



How do you say vagina in sign language?



Some products that might be helpful:

**The Luna Pad  
(washable &  
reusable  
organic cotton  
pad)**



**Tampon (one  
time use – make  
sure unscented  
& cotton)**

**The Diva Cup  
(washable &  
reusable  
silicon cup)**



**Pad (one time use  
– make sure  
unscented &  
cotton)**

**I ♥ my Vulva and Vagina**

## How to keep your Vulva & Vagina Healthy & Happy

Do	Do Not
Wear loose white cotton underwear.	Do not wear underwear to bed unless wearing pads or panty liners.
Wash hands before & after going to the washroom, as you often touch yourself when using menstrual products and wiping. Wipe from front to back.	Do not sit around in damp or wet clothing. Do not use powders such as Talcum powder or baby powder.
Try natural menstrual products such as the Diva Cup, Lunapads or products made of unbleached organic cotton.	Do not wear panty liners or pads every day. Repeated use can be abrasive and irritating.
Pee when you have to pee, do not hold urine.	Long baths in hot water can dry out and irritate the vulva.
Eat well, drink water, get adequate sleep, exercise.	Tight clothing and synthetic materials should not be worn for long periods of time.
Use a soft cloth and warm water to clean your vulva - no soap. Do not clean inside the vagina.	Do not share unwashed towels, washcloths, underwear or bathing suits.
See a Health Care Provider if you have lumps, bumps, abnormal discharge, increased discharge, a foul odour, a strong odour, swelling or pain.	Do not use coloured or scented toilet paper or scented menstrual products.
Check your vulva and vagina often so you will notice how and when they change.	Do not be afraid to seek information, ask questions or talk to others about your vulva and vagina – that is how we learn.



## Resources

### Books about Periods:

Blume, Judy (1970). **Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.**

Gravelle, Karen & Gravelle, Jennifer (2006). **The Period Book: Everything you don't want to ask but need to know.**

Kauder Nalebuff, Rachel (2009). **My Little Red Book.**

♥ Lavender, Missy & Donatelli Ihm, Jeni (2015). **Below Your Belt: How to be Queen of your Pelvic Region – A Pelvic Health Handbook for Girls.**

Loulan, JoAnn & Bonnie Worthen (2000). **Period. A Girl's Guide.**

♥ Weschler, Toni (2006). **Cycle Savvy: The Smart Teens Guide to the Mysteries of her Body.**



## Videos about Periods:

- ♥ The Period Fairy - On YouTube (Hello Flo)
- ♥ First Moon Party - On YouTube (Hello Flo)
- ♥ Camp Gyno - On YouTube (Hello Flo)

## Websites about Periods:

- ♥ Diva Cup  
[divacup.com](http://divacup.com)
- ♥ Lunapads – reusable menstrual pads  
[lunapads.com](http://lunapads.com)
- ♥ Hello Flo – monthly care package  
[helloflo.com](http://helloflo.com)
- ♥ Scarlet Teen  
[scarleteen.com](http://scarleteen.com)



For more information contact:

Stacey Jacobs, MSc

Community Sexual Health Education Manager

# SHORE Centre

Sexual Health Options, Resources & Education

235 King Street East, Suite 130  
Kitchener, ON N2G 4N5

Email: [education@shorecentre.ca](mailto:education@shorecentre.ca)

Website: [shorecentre.ca](http://shorecentre.ca)

Phone: 519 743 9360



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