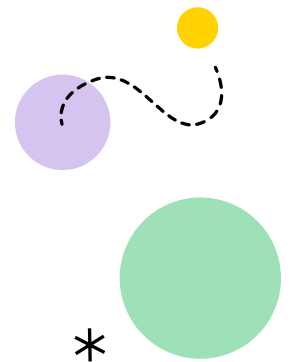


# *What you need to know. Period.*

Having inclusive  
conversations with youth  
about menstrual health



\* The *What you need to know. Period.* program is all about getting people talking. It's not a secret that some of us get a period, but there is a lot of misinformation out there about **menstruation**. Let's work together to demystify periods for everyone, not just for people who get a period.

## Words you need to know. Period.



**Menstruation** is often called a period because it's the period of time each month when a person with a uterus bleeds. The uterus is a triangle-shaped area inside the body (below the belly button). This is where a baby can grow during pregnancy. Most periods last anywhere from 3-8 days and happen once a month.

Periods are a part of life for many people. Even so, many of us aren't comfortable talking about periods, whether we get one or not. Oftentimes, we don't even use the words 'period' or 'menstruation' in conversations about menstrual health. And, our period talks don't always include everyone. We do youth a disservice when we leave people out of the conversation.

This discussion guide is designed to support adults to have inclusive conversations with youth in plain language about periods and period-related health issues.

# Words are powerful. Say what you mean.

There are lots of words people use to talk about periods, without actually saying the words 'period' or 'menstruation.' Some word choices might be euphemisms (an indirect word or expression used instead of another word that might seem too direct or taboo). Others might be intended as humorous. Ultimately, not using the actual words to talk about menstrual health creates confusion and keeps us in a cycle of stigma and shame. It contributes to the unnecessary secrecy around periods.



**Ask yourself:** What message does having so many different code words to talk about menstruation send to people who get a period, or who may eventually get a period? What message does it send to people who don't and may never get a period?

We encourage you to use accurate, period positive language in your menstrual health conversations. Here are some helpful words we can use to talk about periods:

- A period
- Having or getting a period
- Menstruation or menstrual cycle
- Menstruating
- Bleeding
- A cycle
- Moontime
- Flow



# Have inclusive period talks with youth

Include everyone in your period talks. You can't always tell if someone gets a period just by looking at them. That's why we used inclusive language in the *What you need to know. Period.* program. For example:

Who can get a period? Only a person with a uterus and ovaries can get a period.

A person with a uterus could be a:

- cisgender girl or woman
- trans, non-binary, or two-spirit person
- person assigned female at birth (AFAB)
- intersex person



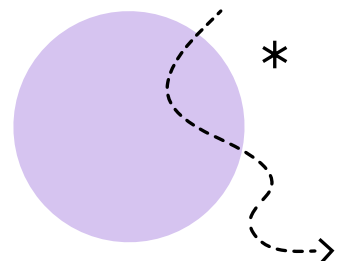
**Ask yourself:** Is it important for everyone, not just people who get their period, to learn about menstruation and menstrual health? Why? Here are some ideas:

- To develop empathy and compassion for our own experience and the experiences of others
- To be an advocate for our own health and the health of the people we care about
- To be a source of support to people who get a period
- To understand the impact of periods on gender equality, poverty, and the environment

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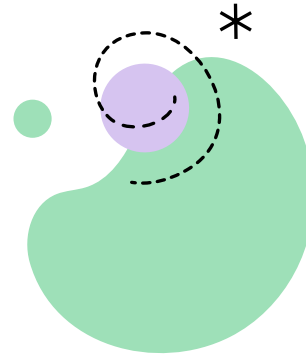
## What does it mean to be period positive?

Being period positive means talking openly about periods, avoiding negative language when speaking about periods, and advocating for your needs and the needs of others who menstruate. There are lots of ways to be period positive and you can learn more at [periodpositive.com](https://periodpositive.com)

## How can you practice having inclusive period talks with the young people in your life?



- ☐ Use the most accurate words for what you want to say, for example 'period'
- ☐ Avoid the use of gendered language and instead, use words or phrases like 'people who get a period'
- ☐ Include all young people in your period talks, even those who will never get a period
- ☐ Speak positively and plainly about menstruation



## Continue your learning

This discussion guide focuses on using plain language to have inclusive conversations with youth about menstrual health. For more information about menstruation, including activities and ways to continue your learning, check out our additional resources, including:

- The *What you need to know. Period.* workbook - available online and in PDF format
- What to do if you're worried about your period pain - a bite-sized lesson plan
- Endometriosis: More than just a bad period - a bite-sized lesson plan

