

What you need to know. Period.

What is a
normal period?



* *What you need to know. Period.* is for everybody: for people who get a period, people who will eventually get a period, and even people who will never get a period. Together, we can have open and honest conversations about **menstruation**.

Words you need to know. Period.

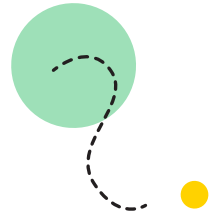
Menstruation is often called a period because it's the period of time each month when a person with a uterus bleeds. The uterus is a triangle-shaped area inside the body (below the belly button). This is where a baby can grow during pregnancy.

Almost everyone will go through puberty eventually. For some people, getting a period will be part of puberty. Since everybody is different, everyone's experience of puberty or having a period will be a little different. A period can be an important sign of health, also known as a vital sign, for people who get their period. It can be helpful to learn about what's normal and not normal for most people. How can a person know if their period is normal? And what exactly is a "normal" period?

When we use the words "normal" and "not normal" here, we're talking about what most people experience. If your experience is different from what's "normal," that doesn't necessarily mean there's something wrong. If you're worried, speak with an adult you trust.

Who can get a period?

Only a person with a uterus and ovaries can get a period. You can't tell if someone gets a period just by looking at them.



When can a period start?

- Most people with a uterus and ovaries will get their first period between ages 8-16
- While you can't predict when a first period will arrive, it usually happens around 2 years after the first signs of puberty (breasts and pubic hair start to grow)
- Some young people with a uterus will never menstruate. A hormone imbalance, an illness, eating disorder, or being very athletic can interrupt a person's period.
- People with a uterus who haven't had their period within 3 years of developing breasts may want to speak to a doctor, nurse, or trusted adult

How long can a period last?

- Most people's periods last about 3-5 days, but some can last for up to 8 days
- How long a period lasts can change over time, especially during the first years of having a period

How often does a person get a period?

- About once every month
- Most people's periods happen every 21-35 days and a typical menstrual cycle is about 29 days long
- **TIP:** To know how long a menstrual cycle is, start counting from the first day of one period to the first day of the next period

July						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

August						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

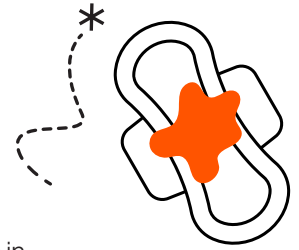
September						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

What does it mean to have a "regular period?"

- When you have a regular period, it means that you have an idea of when the next one's coming
- For example, if a person's period comes every 27-30 days, it's a regular period
- In the first couple of years of having a period, a person's cycle can be unpredictable
- Most people's periods become more regular over time

What can a normal period *look* like?

- Most people produce around 2-3 tablespoons (tbsps) of blood each period
- Some people have heavier periods (more than 3 tbsps of blood) and some have lighter periods (less than 2 tbsps of blood)
- A person's flow can be heavier in the first and last years of having a period as well as in the first few days of each cycle
- The colour of blood can change throughout the cycle (it might be bright red, deep red, or brown at times)
- Having some blood clots (jelly-like clumps of blood) during a period is normal, especially for people who get a heavy period, as long as the clots are smaller than the size of a quarter



What can a normal period *feel* like?

The way a period feels can be different for each person, because everybody is different.

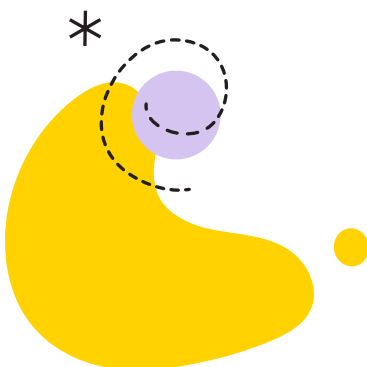
Some people will experience:

- Cramping in the area below the belly button
- Diarrhea, constipation, or nausea
- Sore breasts
- Feeling more sensitive emotionally
- Back pain
- Fatigue or tiredness
- Dizziness



Let's talk. Period.

Did the list of examples of what it can feel like to have a period surprise you? Is anything missing? What would you add to the list?



What is normal period pain?

Most people will feel some discomfort or even pain before and during their period. This is pretty common. Some people have very little pain with their period and others have very difficult periods. This can make it tricky to know when to ask for help.

Your period pain & symptoms might not be normal if...

- Taking an over-the-counter painkiller like Advil, Tylenol, or Midol doesn't help
- The pain regularly keeps you from going to school and doing your regular activities
- You regularly vomit, have diarrhea, or are constipated during or around your period
- You regularly bleed through a pad, tampon, or period underwear in less than 2 hours

If any of these are true for you, you may want to speak with a doctor, nurse, parent, or elder in your community.

*** Remember:** only you know what it feels like to be in your body. You know your body better than anyone else does.

If you think something's wrong, ask for help

Some period pain symptoms can be embarrassing or difficult to talk about, but there's nothing to be ashamed of. Ask for help. You know your body best. If you're worried about your period pain, speak to a doctor, nurse, parent, or elder in your community.

Learn more about endometriosis and other period-related health conditions:

The Endometriosis Network Canada: endometriosisnetwork.com

Financial contribution:
Contribution financière :



Health Canada Santé Canada

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.

