



One minute guide to...

Periods

What are they?

Each period is the lining of the womb shedding when there is no fertilised egg. It's blood. Bacteria like blood. Too much of the wrong bacteria can lead to unpleasant odours and an imbalance of the delicate eco system that is your vagina. Your lady bits are the superhero of your body, you need to look after them and keep them clean. By paying a bit of attention to your body you can learn about your menstrual cycle. Whilst there are certain 'norms' your cycle is yours; it may not be same as your friends or your sister or your mums. Periods may be messy but that does not mean they are dirty! You are not dirty.

What do you need to know and do?

- In the first few years after starting your periods you may bleed a lot and often, a lot not very often, a little and often, a little and not very often or any combination of these. That's just your hormones finding their own natural adult balance.
- Your vagina (the part just inside you) is a self-cleaning eco system. It's very clever in that your body retains the right pH level inside to keep it clean and healthy. You do not need to wash / douche inside your vagina. This upsets the eco system and can lead to bacterial or yeast infections. Same goes for 'feminine' washes and deodorants. These mess up your eco system as your body doesn't recognise them. This confuses it and can lead to further infections.
- Your vulva (the outside bit) however, is not self-cleaning. You will need to keep on top of washing here. Again you don't need special products promising to 'leave you feeling fresh'. Plain old water will do to wash the blood from this area. Highly perfumed shower gels and soaps can be irritating to this delicate area too. If you shower or bathe every day spare a moment to wash your vulva well, and yes, the hairy bits too. If you don't shower or bathe every day, make sure you wash this area every day during your period.
- If you 'leak' on your period, i.e. your pad or tampon can't hold the blood and it gets on your clothes, you'll feel better if you change your underwear as soon as you can. If you leak often, it might be worth carrying a spare of pants with your extra tampons/ pads. To get blood out of your clothes make sure you run them under COLD water first before putting them in the wash.
- What products do you need? Well, that's very much up to you and what makes you most comfortable. Most product types are fairly inexpensive if you avoid the big-name brands but do the same job. The little drops on the packets indicate their flow suitability. More drops, heavier flow. Pads stick to your pants and collect the blood when it comes out of your vagina. Tampons are inserted into your vagina to soak up the blood inside your vagina. These come with or without an applicator. When using these for the first time do it in an evening or a weekend. You probably won't want to be faffing whilst you're at school. Wait until you've got used to inserting them and removing them.
- You'll need to change your sanitary protection every few hours. Once you finished with it don't flush anything down the toilet. Wrap it in a small amount of toilet roll and if in public use the special bins in toilets at home do the same but pop in the bathroom bin.

Further Information:

General information: <https://www.healthforteens.co.uk/>

NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/periods/starting-periods/>

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