

My period

What's normal?



What's normal?

Period pain

Having your period is a natural and normal part of life. You're not alone if you have any questions or concerns. That's normal, too!

Most women experience period pain, usually:

- a dull ache that comes once a month
- happens for the first 1 or 2 days
- pain and cramps are relieved with heat packs, a warm bath or mild painkillers such as paracetamol
- you can still do regular activities such as going to school, playing sport and hanging out with friends

Blood flow

Blood flow can vary during your period. It might be very light for a couple of days followed by quite heavy flow. The flow can also change from one period to the next. Sometimes there may be small clots and the colour will vary from black/brown to bright red.

What's not normal?

Period pain

If you have persistent sharp, stabbing, dragging or burning pain that you find distressing, you don't have to put up with it. If you take a mild painkiller and you're still feeling the pain, or you're too uncomfortable to go to school, exercise or work, talk to your doctor.

Blood flow

If you have to change tampons or pads very often or you're regularly avoiding physical activities because you're bleeding so much, try keeping a record of a couple of cycles and show it to your doctor. There are some conditions that cause severe pain and heavy bleeding with your period such as endometriosis or polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).

If you're worried about your period, tell your doctor. Health professionals deal with these problems a lot and they will be able to help you. You're not alone.

What can you do?

Find a health professional you can trust. It might be the nurse at school or your family doctor. Or ask your mum or a friend for the name of their doctor.

Tell the doctor what your period is like

It's normal to feel worried about your period. If you are, your doctor will be happy to talk about what's concerning you.

Keep a record of your period to show your doctor. You can use the Jean Hailes pain and symptom diary (see link on back page) to write down all the details that your doctor will probably ask you. They can read it and let you know what they think.

Talk about how your periods make you feel

No one else can feel your pain so try describing how the pain makes you feel, such as 'I was in so much pain I couldn't stand up,' or, 'my pain made me feel like vomiting.'

Talk about how your periods affect your life

Tell your doctor if your periods affect you in other ways, such as 'I couldn't go to school' or 'I love playing sport but I couldn't go to training'.

Keep a diary

If you're in pain or worried that you're bleeding too much, it can be difficult to remember what happened later. Writing things down makes it easier for you to tell your doctor and explain your concerns.

Frequency

How often do you get your period?

How many days does it last?

How long is your usual cycle? You can work it out by counting the days from the first day of your period to the first day of your next period.

Blood flow

Tick those that apply to your flow

- ☐ Very heavy
- ☐ Passing clots bigger than a 50c piece
- ☐ Feels like it's flooding
- ☐ Bleeding between periods

Managing your flow

How often do you change your tampon or pad? What size are they on your heaviest day? How many pads or tampons do you have to use daily?

What about at night time?

Do you ever have to change the sheets? yes/no

Tiredness

Do you feel more tired during your period? yes/no

Bladder & bowel

Do you feel any pain going to the toilet during your period?

yes/no



Remember, everyone is different. The key is to know what's normal for your own body so that you (and possibly your doctor) are able to detect what's not normal for you.

Pain severity

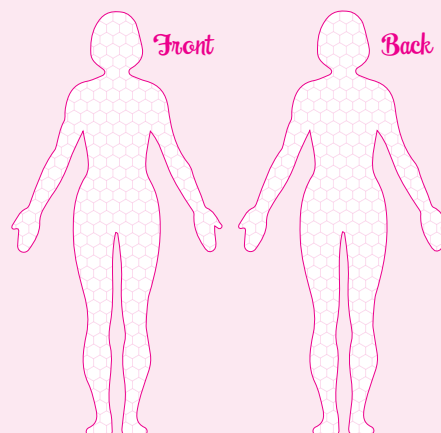
Try and describe the severity of pain during your period on a scale of 1 to 10 for each day of your period (1 = low pain, 10 = severe pain).

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pain							

Does it prevent you from any activities such as going to school or playing sport?

Pain location

Indicate where you feel pain such as pelvic area, back, stomach, legs or other areas. You can colour in the areas on this body map.








Other symptoms

What colour is the blood during the heaviest part of your period?

Do you get any other symptoms during your period that you don't get at other times?

The visit to your health professional

-  If you're nervous, take a trusted family member or friend with you when you go to the doctor
-  Bring along a record of your period, and show your doctor; having 2-3 months to compare is helpful
-  Explain if your enjoyment of life is being affected when you get your period, tell your doctor if you're missing school or regular activities like work or sport
-  Your doctor might prescribe pain relief or the oral contraceptive pill to help regulate the bleeding
-  Sometimes you might feel a little awkward talking to a health professional but try to find someone you're comfortable with. Keep going until you find someone who will listen to you. It's very likely that they've heard it from other women before.

For more information about period pain and to download a period diary go to:

jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/periods/period-pain

This brochure is designed to be informative and educational. It is not intended to provide specific medical advice or replace advice from your health practitioner.
© Jean Hailes for Women's Health 2018

Jean Hailes for Women's Health gratefully acknowledges the support of the Australian Government. This project is funded by the Victorian Government.

Jean Hailes
FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH

Updated July 2018

