

Fact Sheet - English

MENSTRUATION (PERIODS) AND HOW YOU CAN MANAGE IT



What Is Menstruation?

Menstruation happens as part of the changes in a woman's body that prepare her uterus (womb) for pregnancy. Each month the lining of the uterus thickens with blood so that if she becomes pregnant the baby will be able to grow there. If the woman is not pregnant a thickened lining is not needed, so the blood flows out of her vagina over several days each month – this is called menstruation. In Australia, most women just say they are having their 'periods'.

When Does It Happen?

Most women have periods. Girls usually start having periods when they are between 9 and 16 years old. Women stop having periods when they are about

50 years old. Generally periods last for about three to seven days each month. Some women bleed a lot and others have light periods. Some have painful periods, and others don't have any pain. If you are worried about your periods, visit your doctor or Family Planning clinic.

Managing Period Pain

Some women get period pains or cramps for a day or two when their period starts. If this happens, taking ibuprofen or paracetamol tablets can help. Lying down with a heat pack or hot water bottle on the painful area can also help and you could also see your doctor or Family Planning clinic for more advice on how to manage painful periods.

Managing Periods

When a woman has a period she needs to use a sanitary pad or a tampon to catch the blood. Sanitary pads are made of a soft material that absorbs the blood. A pad has an adhesive strip that sticks inside underwear to help it stay in place. Pads come in different sizes such as super for heavy days – often at the beginning, and regular – for general use.

Some women like to use tampons instead of pads.

A tampon is a small cylinder of absorbent material that a woman can put in her vagina to soak up the blood.

A tampon has a string attached to it so that it can be pulled out easily.

You should change pads and tampons at least four times a day, or more often if you bleed a lot. When you change the pad or tampon, wrap it in toilet paper and put it in a bin. Never put pads or tampons down the toilet as they can block the plumbing.

Hygiene

Always wash your hands before and after changing pads or tampons. It is important to bathe or shower regularly when you have a period. You can swim as well if you want to, as long as you use a tampon.

Where Can You Get Pads And Tampons?

You can buy pads and tampons at a pharmacy, a supermarket, or a corner shop.

For Further Information

- Contact the Family Planning NSW Talkline on 1300 658 886 or go to www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline
- NRS (for deaf) 133 677
- Or visit your nearest Family Planning clinic

Reviewed: July 2014 | FPNSW 07/14

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www.fpnsw.org.au | [talkline 1300 658 886](tel:1300658886) | [bookshop](#)

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Family Planning NSW is a not-for-profit organisation funded by the NSW Ministry of Health

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