

Menstrual Bleeding - First Period

Definition

- Menstrual bleeding (your period) is the monthly loss of blood that lines the uterus. It's a normal part of puberty.

Health Information

Cause

- Your period starts between ages 8 and 16. Your first period comes a year or two after your breasts start to develop.
- Menstrual bleeding is caused by changes in hormones. Hormones from the brain and ovaries make the lining of the uterus thicken. Reason: to prepare for a possible pregnancy.
- When no pregnancy occurs, the blood lining the uterus breaks down and flows out the vagina.

Typical Normal Menstrual Bleeding

- Menstrual bleeding normally occurs every 21 to 35 days. On average, there will be 28 days between periods.
- Bleeding normally lasts 3 to 7 days. It's typically less at the start, more in the middle, and less at the end.
- Blood can be brown, dark red or bright red in color. There can be some small blood clots, often smaller than a quarter.
- In the first year, periods can be irregular. The time between periods, how long they last, and how much blood flow occurs can change. This is normal in the first year.

Side Effects of Menstrual Bleeding

- **Cramps.** Cramps are throbbing pain in the lower belly and back. You rarely get cramps in the first year of your period.
- **Gut Symptoms.** Hormone changes can cause nausea or diarrhea.
- **Mood Changes.** You may feel irritable, tired or anxious during your period. These feelings are from normal hormone changes.

Care Advice

1. Key Points

- Your period is the normal monthly shedding of the lining of your uterus.
- There are good options to manage your menstrual bleeding.
- Here is some home care advice that should help.

2. Managing Menstrual Bleeding

- Many products absorb blood and allow you to continue normal activities while having a period. A mother, trusted family member, nurse or doctor can show you how to use any of these options.
- **Pads.** Pads stick inside your underwear. Change your pad every 4 to 8 hours, or sooner if it is leaking.
- **Absorbable underwear.** These have a built-in lining that absorbs menstrual blood. Change them every 12 to 24 hours. Wash them and reuse them.
- **Tampons and menstrual cups.** Once you have gotten used to having a period, consider using these. See the Menstrual Bleeding-Normal handout.

3. **Stay Active**

- It's important to go to school while having a period.
- It is safe to take part in sports during a period.
- It is fine to swim, bathe, or shower like normal during a period.

4. **What To Expect**

- In the first year of getting your period, your bleeding can vary in amount and frequency. It's common to skip some months.
- Cycles will become more regular after 1 to 2 years.
- Once you start your periods, it is possible to get pregnant.

Call Your Doctor If

- Bleeding becomes much longer or heavier than usual
- You think your teen needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

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