

Healthy Menstruation

A guide for girls





Menstruation is one of the aspects of puberty in girls. This phase shows that girls are transitioning into adults and that our bodies are able to become pregnant.

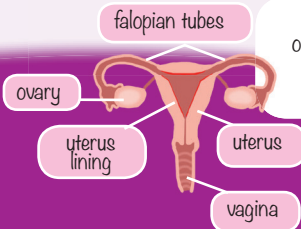
Menstrual period is part of the menstruation cycle where our bodies get rid of blood from our vagina. This cycles happens every month.

Other names people use in Tetun:

“ mens,
fulan mai, fase,
Avó Maria mai,
or periodu.
”

Don't forget!
Getting your menstruation is
a sign that as a girl you are growing
and developing normally!

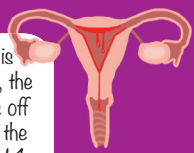
Let's look at the **Menstrual Cycle**



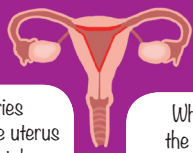
Women have two ovaries which make eggs.

After the menstrual period, the cycle begins again.

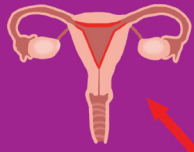
If the egg is not fertilized, the lining comes off the walls of the uterus after 14 days and leave your body as blood.



One of your ovaries releases an egg to the uterus through the fallopian tubes. This is called ovulation.



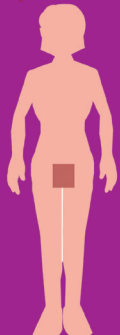
When the egg reaches your uterus, the lining of the uterus thickens.



If the egg is fertilized by a male's sperm, it leads to pregnancy.



5 days after ovulation, your lining thickens further.





I have lots
of questions!

Me too!



When do girls get their period?

Menstruation can begin anytime between ages 8-18, but the majority of girls start their period between ages 10-14.

What is the first period like?

Some girls can get discharge before their first period. But lots of the time, the first period comes without warning. Sometimes, the first menstrual blood can be a little brown, or it can also appear as little spots of blood. It's important to remember that it is a normal process and not to worry.

When do periods occur and how long do they last?

Usually, a period will occur each 28 days, but it can also occur anytime between 21-35 days. The menstrual cycle in the first year or two is sometimes irregular. Sometimes, it can come late between the first year to year-and-a-half before it becomes regular.

Periods can also be irregular when we are stressed, do heavy exercise, have a bad diet, or in emergency situations.

Blood flow can last from 2-7 days. However, all girls are different.

Is menstrual blood the same as normal blood?

Menstrual blood is made up of blood and membrane from the uterus. If we do not become pregnant during our cycle, the membrane that's been created to support the potentially fertilized egg slowly leaves our body. Sometimes blood can appear clotted or brown in colour, but that is all normal. While period blood is composed of normal blood, period blood is not the same as the blood we get when we have a cut, so there is no need to be scared or worried about menstrual blood.

Does menstrual blood smell bad?

Sometimes there can be a bad smell due to bacteria that grows in the moist, warm environment of underpants. Changing pad regularly (once every 3-5 hours, or whenever the pad is full) will help keep bad smells away, and also reduce the risk of infection.

Are cramps normal?

Yes. We can get cramps and a heavy feeling in our abdomen. Cramps occur when our uterus contracts in order to get rid of menstrual blood. Our breasts can also feel heavy and tender. To reduce the effects of cramps, it can help to do light exercise, use hot water bottles or have warm baths. If the pain gets worse please visit a nearby health facility.

That's great!
It's good to ask
questions so we
can learn!

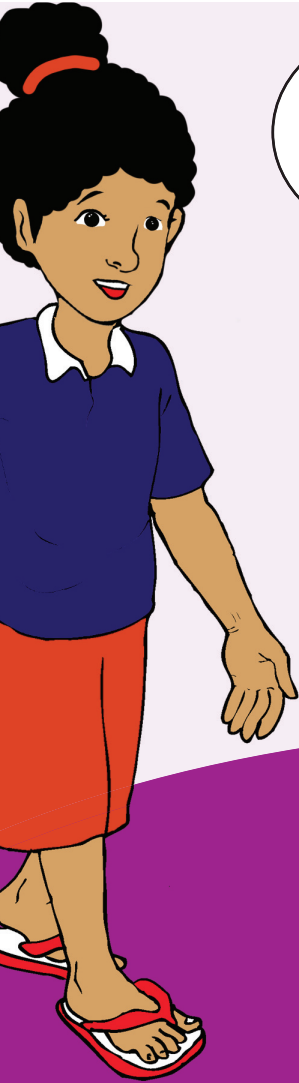


What is vaginal discharge?

During our menstrual cycle, sometimes we can get discharge and that is normal.

Discharge can be clear or yellowish. Discharge is protective because it can stop bacterial entering our vagina.

If discharge changes to a strange colour, or becomes smelly, that can mean that we have an infection and need to go have a check up at a health facility.



Marta, what is the best way to manage our period?



- ☆ Be prepared! Use disposable pads or reusable pads to absorb blood. Disposable pads come in different types: some with wings, some thin, some thick. There are also material pads that you can wash and reuse. It is important to use the one that feels best to you.
- ☆ Change you pad one every 3 to 5 hours, and more regularly if needed.
- ☆ Always keep spare pads in your school bag, even if its not time for your period. It is better to be prepared, especailly at school.
- ☆ Bathe daily and wash your vagina with water and soap twice a day.
- ☆ Wash your hands with soap and running water after using the toilet or changing pads.
- ☆ Use calender to mark your menstrual cycle so that you can predict your next menstruation.

How to wash hands properly



Wet hands



Use soap



Rub hands together

Yes, my mum gave me all this advice...

☆ Wipe vagina from front to back to prevent infection.

☆ Don't put perfume, cream or other products on your vagina.

☆ If you notice a change like discharge a weird colour or funny smell, or vagina feels itchy or hot, make sure you go for a consultation at the health care facility in case you have an infection.

I'm scared blood will leak on my clothes while at school!

This happens to most girls at least once or more. If you have a jacket you can tie it around your waste to hide the stain. If you don't have a jacket, you can twist your skirt around so the stain is on the side. That way, no-one will notice. Then, change your pad quickly so no more blood leaks. **To prevent this happening, it's important to change pads regularly and always carry spare pads in your bag.**



Make a lather



Rinse with water



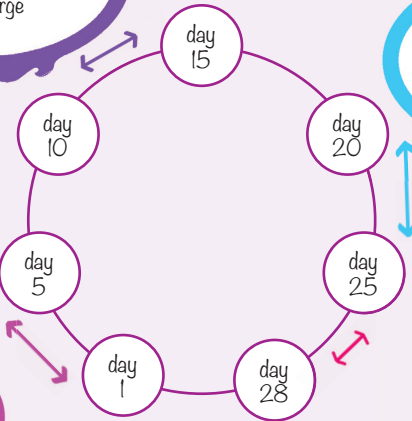
Shake dry

On the day of ovulation we can have cramps and we can also notice vaginal discharge

1 week before our period we can feel tired, always hungry, emotional etc

During our period we can have cramps and our breasts can be feel tender.

Before our period our breasts can feel heavy and we can also have vaginal discharge



We can use a calendar to monitor our cycle!

How do we monitor our menstrual cycle?

☆ You can use a calendar like the one on the next page and mark when your period begins.

☆ Usually our cycle will be the same each month and bloodflow will be the same each month.

A calendar can help us to guess correctly when our period will start and what it will be like.

☆ Count 21-35 days from when your period finishes in order to guess when your next period will begin.



CALANDAR

STKKSSD	STKKSSD	STKKSSD	STKKSSD

STKKSSD	STKKSSD	STKKSSD	STKKSSD

STKKSSD	STKKSSD	STKKSSD	STKKSSD

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How do we
take care of
ourselves during
our period?



☆ Maintain good hygiene!

☆ Eat nutritious food! (Don't forget food that helps reduce anaemia like: kale, beans, legumes and meat).

☆ Sleep 8 hours a day.

☆ Drink lots of (boiled) water.

☆ Keep moving! (Do exercise)

Atina, do you want to know how to take care of reusable pads?



Yeah! How?



☆ Wash them regularly with soap



☆ Dry them in the sun

Don't dry them inside because they need air flow and sunlight in order to dry properly and kill any bacteria that can cause infection.

☆ Always use clean and dry pads

What about reusable pads?

- ☆ Wrap pads in toilet paper or plastic and put them into a bin. Close the lid.
- ☆ Never throw pads into the toilet.



I hear many different things about periods...

How do we know which information is correct?



Myths & Facts

Myths are beliefs that are false
Facts are things that are true

Myth: Girls that are menstruating can't bathe in cold water or wash their hair because 'raan mutin' (vaginal discharge) will go to the brain.

Fact: Actually, it is very important to have proper hygiene, wash our bodies and hair each day, especially during our period.

When we bathe and wash our hair, we feel more confident.

Cold water has no negative impact on our health or menstrual cycle.

Myth: Drinking cold water makes a period stop.

Fact: Cold water has no impact on menstrual cycle. Menstruation is linked to the reproductive system, and drinking/eating is linked to the digestive system. Those two systems are separate.

Therefore, there is no risk that a period will stop (or period blood appearing clotted) from eating any particular foods or drinking cold water. Factors that can make a period come late sometimes are: being tired, stressed, or sick.





Periods are normal! They are not a sickness!

Myth: Girls who are menstruating need to rest and can't do heavy activities.

Fact: During menstruation, girls are as strong as usual, and do not become weak. If they experience anaemia they can feel weak. But generally, girls need not be worried about carrying out their everyday activities as usual.

Myth: Menstrual blood is dirty.

Fact: During our cycle, our bodies get rid of blood and membrane that we no longer need in our bodies. But, menstrual blood is just like other blood from our body and is not dirty blood.



Want to know more?

It's normal to want to know more about your period!
If you have any questions you can talk to your teachers,
friends, family members or even a health care worker
at a clinic near you.

It's really important that all girls
have the right information!





Healthy Periods
for all girls!

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