

# Irregular periods



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**Irregular periods** mean your period does not come every month.

Most people who have periods have one around every 28 days.

It is different for everyone.

Signs of irregular periods can include:



- the amount of blood in your period changes from one period to the next

- the number of days in between each of your periods is different and keeps changing



- your periods come closer together – less than 25 days from the start of one to the next one



- your periods come further apart – longer than 35 days between the start of one and the next one

Some people might not have a regular **menstrual cycle**.



Your **menstrual cycle** is the way your body prepares for pregnancy.

It ends in a period if you do not get pregnant.

The menstrual cycle lasts about a month.



Some people might have a different menstrual cycle each month.

This happens a lot when girls first start their period.

Most of the time there is no need to worry but it is important to speak to your doctor.



If you are having sex you might be pregnant so it is important to take a pregnancy test as soon as possible.

[More information on your options if you are pregnant](#)

Speak to your doctor if you are not pregnant and:



- you have started your period but haven't had one for around 3 to 6 months
- the number of days in between your period keeps changing
- your periods are closer together or further apart than usual
- you bleed between your periods
- you bleed after sex or after the [menopause](#)



It can be helpful to keep a note of:

- the dates your periods start and end
- your symptoms

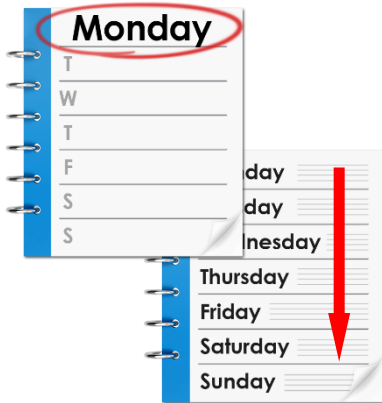


A **symptom** is a sign that you have an illness or health condition.

You can keep a note of this information using a calendar, a diary or an app.



You can then discuss this with your doctor to help them understand what you are experiencing.



If you are seeing your doctor there are some useful things to think about before your appointment like:

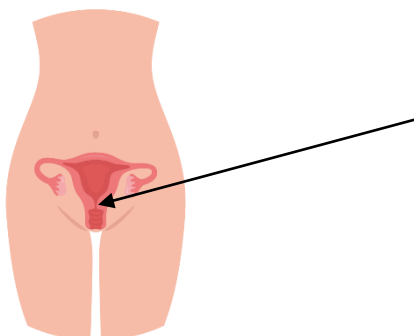
- the day your last period started
- how many days your period usually lasts



- what was the shortest time between your periods (from the first day of one period to the first day of the next)
- what was the longest time between your periods (from the first day of one period to the first day of the next)



- how often you need to change your period products on a heavy day



- if you are over 25, when you had your last **smear test**

A **smear test** checks the health of your **cervix**.

The **cervix** is the opening to your womb from your vagina.

## Causes of irregular periods



Irregular periods can be caused by lots of different things, usually involving changes in your **hormones**.

**Hormones** are chemicals in your body that help it to work well.

Your menstrual cycle is kept in check by hormones that can be affected by natural changes in your body like puberty, pregnancy and menopause.



**Puberty** is when your body changes from being a child to being a young adult.

Your period will start during puberty.

It can take up to 2 years for hormone levels and your periods to settle.



Your period will stop if you are pregnant but you might still experience some bleeding or spotting early on.



If you are worried about bleeding during pregnancy, speak to your midwife, doctor or local early pregnancy centre.



Most women will not have periods when they are breastfeeding.

If you are having sex and you do not want to get pregnant you must use [contraception](#).



Irregular periods can be common before [menopause](#).

The amount of menstrual blood can vary from one period to the next.



Other things that can cause irregular periods are:

- [stress](#)
- weight gain
- eating disorders
- doing extreme amounts of exercise
- hormonal contraception



Irregular periods can also be caused by underlying health conditions, including:



- [endometriosis](#)
- [pelvic inflammatory disease](#)
- [fibroids](#)
- [adenomyosis](#)
- [polycystic ovary syndrome](#)
- [an underactive thyroid](#)
- [an overactive thyroid](#)

In rare cases, irregular periods may be a sign of cancer of the womb or the neck of the womb.



These cancers can cause bleeding in between periods or during sex.

If you are worried, speak to your doctor.