

# Period pain



## Period pain



A lot of people have painful periods.

The medical name for period pain is dysmenorrhoea.

It is said like this: dis-men-or-ee-a.



Period pain can be anything from dull achy cramps to very sore pain that you cannot cope with.

There are 2 types of painful period.

These are:

- primary dysmenorrhoea
- secondary dysmenorrhoea



Period pain should not be very bad.

Speak to your doctor if you have period pain that is affecting your day to day life for example:

- you cannot go to school or work
- you cannot take part in day to day activities that you enjoy

It can be helpful to keep a note of:

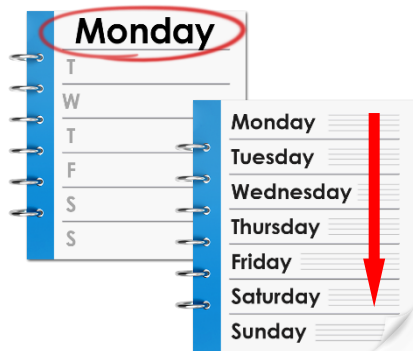
- the dates your periods start and end
- which days you are in pain
- your **symptoms**



**Symptoms** are a sign that you have an illness or health condition.

You can keep a note of this information using a diary, a calendar 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

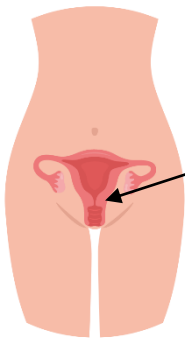




- your symptoms like period pain or having heavy periods
- how often you need to change your period products on a heavy day



If you are over 25 your doctor might also ask 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.



Sometimes other tests might be needed.

Your doctor will talk to you about this and you can [ask questions](#).

## Period pain – primary dysmenorrhoea



Primary dysmenorrhoea is period pain which is not caused by a health condition.

The pain usually begins when your period comes, but it might start slightly before.

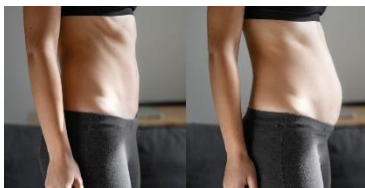
The main symptom is cramp or achy pains in your tummy.



You might also feel it in your lower back or the tops of your legs.

You may have other symptoms when you get your period including:

- feeling tired
- feeling bloated – your tummy sticks out more than normal
- diarrhoea
- headaches
- changes in your mood



[More information about mental health and wellbeing](#)

## Treatment



There are lots of options for treating milder period pain such as:

- a hot water bottle
- gentle exercise
- pain relief like paracetamol or ibuprofen that you can buy from a chemist.



Always follow the instructions on the packet or bottle.



Speak to your chemist for advice on pain relief.



For stronger pain there are other types of medications which you can only get from your doctor.

## Period pain – secondary dysmenorrhoea



Secondary dysmenorrhoea is period pain caused by a health condition.

Some women can have painful periods after years of 'normal' period pain.

If you get very bad period pain that stops you from doing everyday things, you should speak to your doctor.

It is important to get checked if you have any worries.

You do not need to suffer.

## Symptoms



**Symptoms** are signs that you have an illness or health condition.

Symptoms can be:

- a change in your experience of period pain – your periods might be more painful, or the pain might last for longer
- a feeling of heaviness in your tummy
- pain in your back
- having pain at other times, not just during your period





You might have other symptoms with the pain like:

- heavy periods
- periods that do not always come every month
- bleeding between periods
- unusual discharge from your vagina
- painful sex or bleeding after sex

If you have any of these speak to your doctor.



## Diagnosis – how they decide what your illness is



Your doctor will usually examine you if they think that you have secondary dysmenorrhoea.

This may involve an internal examination to check your womb and pelvis as well as your tummy.



As this is an intimate examination, the doctor will have another person there.

You can ask for a female doctor or a female health professional to do the examination.





The doctor will look for what could be causing your painful periods.

They may also suggest that they take some **swabs** during the examination to look for any signs of infection.

A **swab** is like a large cotton bud.

The doctor will gently wipe the swab inside your womb to get a sample of your cells which they will send to a lab to be checked.



If your doctor thinks that you have secondary dysmenorrhoea, they may refer you to a specialist.

This specialist is usually a doctor called a gynaecologist.

This is said like this:  
g-eye-na-col-o-jist.

Some of the medical conditions your doctor might test for include:



- [endometriosis](#)
- [pelvic inflammatory disease](#)
- [fibroids](#)
- [adenomyosis](#)
- [polycystic ovary syndrome](#)

## Treatment



Treatment for secondary dysmenorrhoea will depend on what is causing your period pain.

Your doctor will talk to you about the best treatment and [it is ok to ask questions.](#)

## Contraception



**Contraception** is ways to stop you getting pregnant.

Period pain can sometimes be caused by a type of contraceptive called an [intrauterine device \(IUD\)](#), especially in the first few months after it is put into your womb.

Some people might also experience pain during sex or a vaginal discharge.

After getting an IUD put in, your period might change.

It might not come every month or it might last longer than normal.

You also might bleed or have spots of blood in between periods.





If you have period pain as well as any of these symptoms after having an IUD put in, speak to your doctor as soon as possible.

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