

# Periods



## Periods



Periods are also called 'menstruation'.

Sometimes it can feel embarrassing talking about periods – but remember, periods are normal.

You have the right to ask for the help you need to have healthy periods and to make sure you are comfortable, healthy and happy.



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.



If you are aged 26 or under or are looking for information to help a young person, you can find out more about periods on the [Young Scot website](#).



You can get period products for free in Scotland in different places.

You can contact your local council to find out where to get free products in your area or you can use the PickupMyPeriod app.



[Android - PickupMyPeriod](#)

[IOS/Apple - PickupMyPeriod](#)



From August 2022 the law says that councils and places like schools and colleges must make period products available for free for anyone who needs them.

## What to expect



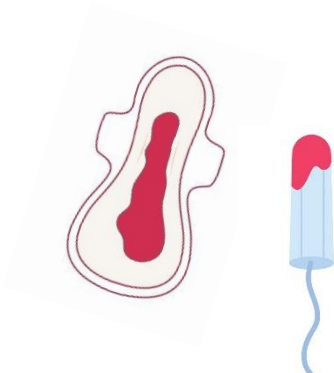
A period is the part of the menstrual cycle when women, girls and people who menstruate bleed from their vagina.

For most people this happens around every 28 days.



It is normal for periods to start sooner or later than this.

Periods usually last around 5 days.



Everyone is different.

When your period is at its heaviest, the blood will be red.

On lighter days, it may be pink, brown or black.



You will lose about 5 to 12 teaspoons of blood during your period.

Some women bleed more heavily than this.

[More information on heavy periods](#)

## When do periods start?



Periods start during puberty.

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

Periods usually begin at around the age of 12.

Some girls will start periods later, and some earlier – everyone is different.



To start with periods might not happen every month.

Most people find that their periods start to come regularly every month from when they are around 16 years old until

[menopause](#).



If you have not started your period by the time you are 16, it is a good idea to see your doctor to find out why it has not happened yet.

Starting your period late is not usually anything to worry about.

[More information on delayed periods](#)

## What is 'normal'?

Everyone experiences periods in different ways but it is important to know what is not 'normal'.



Your period should not stop you doing everyday things like:

- going to school, college or work
- taking part in sports or other activities

There is lots of help available if:



- you have any worries or questions about periods
- you have pain or are uncomfortable during your period



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

It can be helpful to keep a note of your period dates and **symptoms** using a calendar, a diary or an app.

This can help you know when to expect your period and have period products with you.

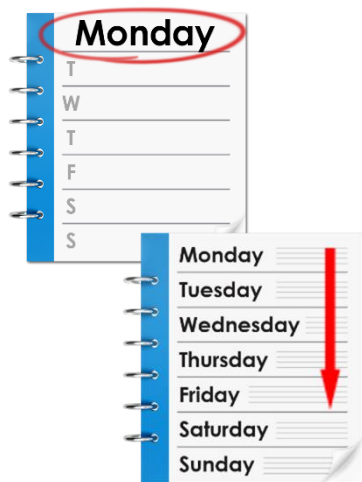
Speak to your doctor if:

- your periods are affecting your everyday life
- you are worried about your periods
- there are changes in your periods

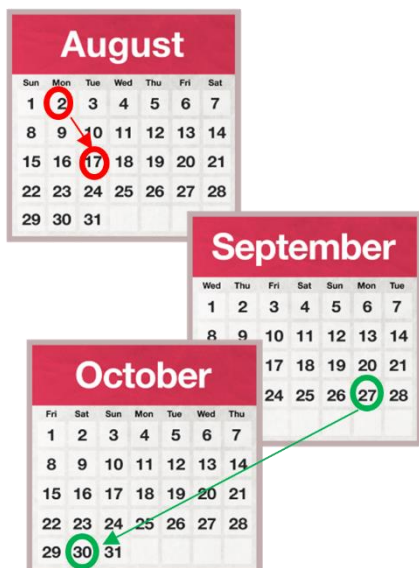


If you are seeing your doctor there are some useful things to think about before your appointment like:

- 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**.



If your doctor thinks a health condition might be causing your symptoms they will talk to you about any tests or treatment you might need and you can ask questions.

## Coping with periods



Choose which period products suit you best.

There are lots of different period products to choose from including:

- period pads
- tampons
- menstrual cups
- period pants

[More information about choosing period products](#)

## Period pain



A lot of people get pain with their periods.

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





There are lots of options for treating mild period pain like:

- a hot water bottle
- gentle exercise
- pain relief like paracetamol or ibuprofen



Always follow the instructions on the box or packet.

Speak to your chemist for advice on pain relief.



For more severe pain there are other types of medications which are only available from your doctor.

[More information about period pain](#)

## Heavy periods



Heavy periods are also called having 'heavy menstrual bleeding'.

For many people, heavy periods have no cause.

For other people heavy periods are because of a health condition.



Speak to your doctor if you have heavy periods that you cannot cope with or if they stop you doing the things you normally do.

[More information about heavy periods](#)

## Irregular periods



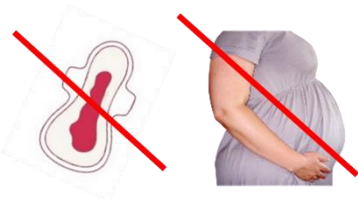
Some people may have irregular periods.

This means their periods do not come every month.

This is often the case when girls start their periods but it can also be caused by things like stress, some health conditions or pregnancy.



Irregular periods can also be a sign of [menopause](#).



**Menopause** is when your periods stop and you cannot get pregnant.



If you think you might be pregnant it is important to take a pregnancy test as soon as possible.

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



If you are not pregnant, you should speak to your doctor if you:

- have started your period but have not had one for 3 to 6 months
- bleed between your periods
- bleed after sex
- have bleeding after the menopause – when your periods have stopped



Speak to your doctor if you have other changes with your periods like:

- the number of days in between your period keeps changing
- or your periods are coming closer together or further apart than usual



[More information about irregular periods](#)

## Bleeding between periods or bleeding after sex



Some people will bleed between periods.

This is known as 'spotting'

Some people will bleed after sex.

If this happens to you, speak to your doctor.



## Premenstrual syndrome also known as PMS



PMS is changes in the hormone levels in your body before your period.

This can cause:

- physical changes like tiredness
- changes in your mood



PMS symptoms can change throughout your life.

You may not get PMS at all.



The most extreme form of PMS is known as premenstrual dysphoric disorder or PMDD.

If you experience PMDD or severe PMS it is very important to ask your doctor for help and advice.

[More information about PMS and PMDD](#)



## Periods and pregnancy



If you are trying to get pregnant, or you do not want to get pregnant, it is important to know how your period is linked to pregnancy.

[More information about periods and pregnancy](#)