

PERIODS.

WHAT ARE THEY?

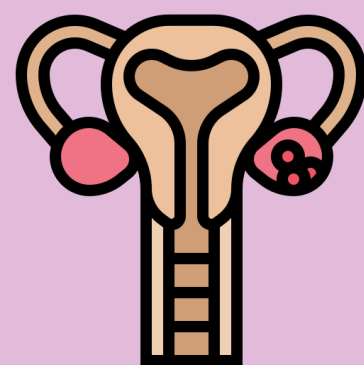


SO WHAT ACTUALLY IS A PERIOD?

A period is when blood leaves the vagina for about 3-7 days each month. Periods are also called the menstrual cycle because it is a cycle that happens each month. Usually periods happen around every 21 days (at a similar time each month). BUT! Everyone's body is different and so everyone's period might be slightly different too.

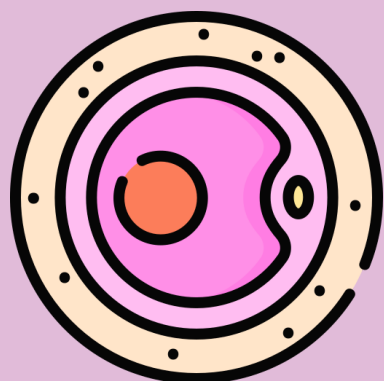
WHAT STARTS IT ALL OFF?

The ovaries (there are two of them on each side of the uterus) start producing hormones called estrogen and progesterone. These hormones start the menstrual cycle. The first thing they do is start to build up the lining in the uterus - this lining is built up with tissue and blood.



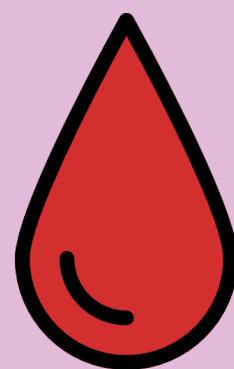
BLOOD BUILDS UP, THEN WHAT?

Halfway through the menstrual cycle, your hormones tell one of the ovaries to release an egg (this is called ovulation). These eggs are so tiny they can't be seen by the human eye. Some people can feel ovulation. They might have a little bit of bleeding, some bloating or some pain on one side of their lower tummy.



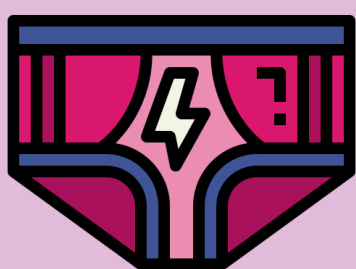
WHAT HAPPENS TO THE EGG?

The egg is released from the ovary and travels along the fallopian tube towards the uterus. The uterus lining comes away when the egg enters the uterus and leaves the vagina as blood. And there we have it - a period!



PERIODS.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



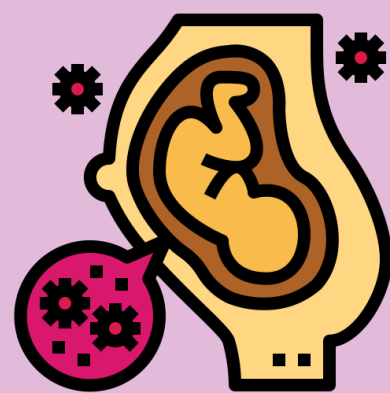
HOW DO I KNOW WHEN I'LL START MY PERIODS?

On average periods usually start from ages 8 - 13. But everyone is different, some people's periods might not happen until they're older than 13. There are some signs that periods might be about to begin:

- there is discharge (white/clear fluid) from the vagina which you might notice in your underwear. This starts about 6 months/1 year before periods start.
- boobs usually start developing around 2 years before periods start.

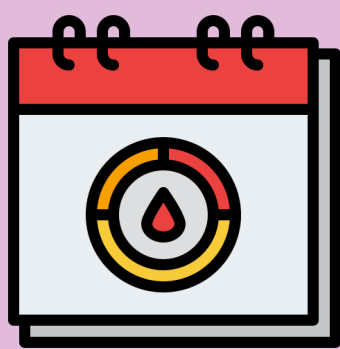
WHAT IS THE POINT OF THE UTERUS LINING AND EGG?

Okay, so the point is basically pregnancy. This does not mean everyone who has periods will want to be pregnant in their life or that having your period means you are ready for pregnancy. It's just the body doing some biology. To get pregnant the egg needs to meet a sperm (a sperm comes from another person's penis) in the fallopian tube. The egg is fertilised. It travels into the uterus and attaches itself onto the uterus lining where it will grow into a baby. That's pregnancy.



WILL I HAVE PERIODS EVERY MONTH FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE?

Not necessarily. On average people who don't have children have around 480 periods in their lifetime. However, every single person is different. Some people's periods stop due to health issues, some people stop their periods with the pill or other hormones. Sometimes periods are irregular - they can come one month and not the next. Over time you will become familiar with your period. You can use apps to track your period as well.



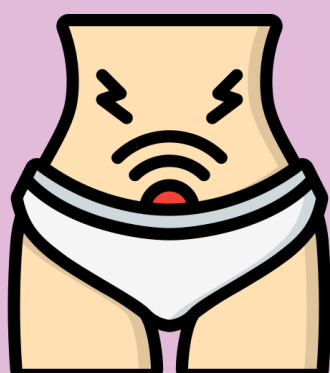
HOW DO I PREPARE FOR MY PERIOD TO START?

If you haven't started your period yet, it's a good idea to carry some period products with you (if you can). Schools should have things like pads etc. incase your period comes in school. If you can, talk to a trusted adult at home about getting some period products. It can feel embarrassing, but periods are just part of our biology and nothing to be ashamed of. It is a sign of your body maturing - that's it! Look at our Period Products factsheet to find out more.



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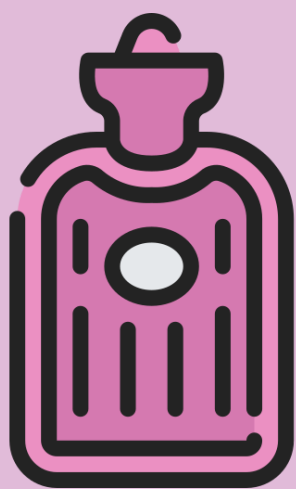
DO PERIODS HURT?

Period pain is pretty common. The pain is usually felt around your lower tummy and/or back. It's caused by the uterus contracting. The pain can be sharp or dull. These are called cramps. The actual blood leaving the vagina is not painful but it can feel uncomfortable or just "different".

ARE THERE SYMPTOMS OF GETTING YOUR PERIOD?

Once you start having periods, there are definitely signs that your period is arriving. Some of the symptoms of periods are:

- sore or tender boobs
- bloating around your stomach
- tiredness and difficulty concentrating
- mood swings (very common!)
- cramps in your lower stomach



IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP WITH SYMPTOMS?

Some people do find their periods difficult, especially if they're very heavy or painful. There are different ways to help with symptoms and over time you'll find what works best for you.

- Painkillers like paracetamol (check with parents/carers before taking painkillers).
- Hot water bottles can help ease cramps.
- Gentle exercise (very gentle!)
- Warm bath or shower.
- Some chocolate or a nice treat for yourself.

Common Youth provides free Relationships and Sexuality Education to young people (from 11 to 25 years) across the whole of Northern Ireland. We also have a sexual health clinic which offers a safe, knowledgeable and accepting environment for young people to talk and to access sexual health services. For more information about accessing our services you can contact us on 02890 328866. You can also follow us on social media.

BELFAST

MONDAY..... 14:30 - 17:00
 TUESDAY..... 14:30 - 17:00
 WEDNESDAY..... 14:30 - 17:00
 THURSDAY..... 17:30 - 20:00
 FRIDAY..... 14:00 - 16:30
 SATURDAY..... 13:30 - 16:00
 SUNDAY.....13:30 - 15:00

COLERAINE

MONDAY..... 14:30 - 17:00
 TUESDAY..... CLOSED
 WEDNESDAY..... CLOSED
 THURSDAY..... 14:30 - 17:00
 FRIDAY..... CLOSED
 SATURDAY..... CLOSED
 SUNDAY..... CLOSED

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