



Your Period. Your Power.

WORKBOOK 1

Welcome to "Your Period, Your Power," your guide to menstruation and reproductive health! This book is all about breaking down the barriers and myths surrounding periods. Periods are a natural and powerful part of life, showing that your body is working perfectly. Let's dive in, learn the facts, and celebrate the amazing things your body can do!

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Embracing Your Period Power

Periods have been treated like a secret for far too long, but there's absolutely no reason for that. Menstruation is a natural, healthy part of life! Let's smash those taboos and embrace the truth:

- **Periods Aren't Gross:** Menstrual blood is just blood mixed with tissue and other fluids. There's nothing dirty or shameful about it.
- **Talking About Periods is Normal:** It's important to talk openly about periods, whether with friends, family, or teachers. The more we talk, the more we understand, and the more we can support each other.
- **No More Whispering:** You shouldn't have to hide your period products or feel embarrassed about buying them. They're as normal as buying toothpaste or shampoo!

Remember, your period is a sign that your body is healthy and doing exactly what it's supposed to do. So, let's celebrate it, not hide it!

Own Your Period

Remember, your period is a sign of health and strength. There's no reason to feel ashamed or embarrassed about it. The more you learn about your body and its natural rhythms, the more empowered you become. So talk openly, ask questions, and try different products until you find what works best for you.

Every period is different, just like every person is different. Embrace your period power, and let's keep the conversation going—because periods are powerful!

GIRL POWER

Hey future period pro! Your first period is like a surprise party—exciting and full of anticipation. Don't worry, your body will give you clues about when it's coming. Let's play detective and spot the signs!

The Growth Spurt: If you've had a recent growth spurt and your clothes seem to be shrinking, it could be a sign that your period is on its way. Your body is preparing for big changes, including starting your period!

Breast Buds Begin To Bloom: If your chest feels tender and you notice small bumps under your nipples, these are breast buds—early signs of puberty. As your breasts develop, your period might be coming soon.

The Hair Affair; If you've noticed more hair growing under your arms or around your pubic area, it's a sign your body is gearing up for your first period. This hair growth indicates that your hormones are preparing for the changes ahead.

Discharge Detective: About a year before your first period, you might notice clear or whitish discharge in your underwear. This is normal and helps keep things clean. It's also a strong sign that your period is coming soon.

The Big Day - Be Prepared: You're now a period detective with all these clues! While you can't predict the exact day, keep period supplies like pads or period panties in your bag so you're ready. Getting your first period is a normal part of growing up, showing your body is working as it should. Stay calm, curious, and excited about this new chapter—**you've got this!**

Managing Period Cramps Like a Pro

Let's be real—period cramps can be a real pain, literally! Cramps happen when your uterus contracts to help shed its lining. While not everyone experiences cramps, many do, and it's totally okay to need some relief (although if you experience pain for long periods without relief, you should see a doctor or nurse). Here are some ways to manage them:

- **Heat:** A warm heating pad or a hot water bottle on your lower abdomen can work wonders to relax those muscles.
- **Exercise:** It might be the last thing you want to do, but gentle exercise like walking or yoga can help reduce cramp intensity.
- **Hydration:** Drink lots of water. Staying hydrated can help lessen bloating and discomfort.
- **Pain Relief:** Over-the-counter pain relievers like ibuprofen can help ease the pain, but always check with an adult if you're unsure.
- **Relaxation:** Stress can make cramps worse. Take some time to relax with deep breathing, meditation, or your favorite book or movie.

1 Phase 1: Menstruation 'It's Period Time!'

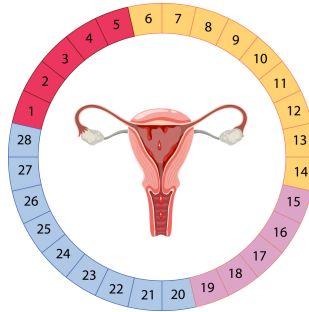
During this phase, you bleed. Your body sheds the thickened lining of the uterus because there's no pregnancy. This shedding is what we call your period, and it typically lasts 3-7 days.

- **What's Happening:** Your body is cleaning up by breaking down and releasing the uterine lining as blood and tissue.
- **How You Might Feel:** You might experience cramps, bloating, fatigue, or mood swings, all of which are completely normal.

2 Phase 2: Follicular Phase (Days 1-14) 'Body Prep Model!'

This phase starts during your period and continues for about a week after. During this time, your body prepares to release an egg.

- **What's Happening:** Your brain signals your ovaries to start preparing eggs, with one maturing inside a follicle. Meanwhile, the uterine lining begins rebuilding in case of pregnancy.
- **How You Might Feel:** After your period, you might feel more energized and upbeat, although you probably won't notice any physical changes yet.



4 Phase 4: The Luteal Phase (Days 15-28) 'Waiting Game!'

This phase is all about your body preparing for a possible pregnancy, and if it doesn't happen, it gets ready to start the cycle again.

- **What's Happening:** After releasing an egg, the empty follicle (now called the corpus luteum) cranks out hormones like progesterone to make your uterus extra cozy in case of fertilization. If no pregnancy occurs, the corpus luteum breaks down, hormone levels drop, and your body preps for your next period.
- **How You Might Feel:** With shifting hormones, you might experience PMS symptoms like mood swings, bloating, cravings, or tiredness. Some people feel emotional or get headaches, but everyone's different!

3 Phase 3: Ovulation (Around Day 14) 'Egg Drop!'

Ovulation is the star of your cycle—it's when your body releases a mature egg.

- **What's Happening:** Around the middle of your cycle, one of your ovaries releases an egg, which then travels down the fallopian tube, waiting to see if it will meet any sperm. If not, the egg just dissolves.
- **How You Might Feel:** Some people feel a little twinge or cramp on one side of their lower belly during ovulation. You might also notice your cervical mucus getting clearer and stretchier—this is your body's way of saying you're in your fertile window. This is the time to be extra careful if you're avoiding pregnancy. Always remember to be safe!

What Is Ovulation and How Do I Track It!

Ovulation is when your ovary releases an egg, usually about halfway through your cycle. This is when you're most likely to get pregnant if you have sex. Remember, though, you can still get pregnant at other times, so always use protection if you're not planning to get pregnant.

How to Track Ovulation:

1. **Determine Your Cycle Length:** Count the days from the first day of one period to the first day of the next. Most cycles are about 28 days. Use a calendar to keep track.
2. **Track Your Period:** Mark the first day of your period on a calendar and continue tracking each day until it ends. Do this for three months to identify a pattern.
3. **Identify Ovulation Dates:** Count 14 days from the first day of your period to estimate when you'll ovulate. Ovulation lasts 24 hours, but the two days before are your most fertile. You might notice a creamy discharge during ovulation.

EXAMPLE CALENDAR

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
25	26	27	28	29 Period Day #1	30 Day #2	01 Day #3
02 Day #4	03 Day #5	04	05	06	07	08
09	10 X	11 X	12 X	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26 Day #1	27 Day #2	28 Day #3	29 Day #4
30 Day #5	31	01	02	03	04	05

Period Products – What's Out There?

When it comes to managing your period, you have options! Let's explore some of the most popular ones:

- **Pads:** These are worn in your underwear to absorb blood. They come in different sizes and absorbencies, so you can choose what works best for you.
- **Tampons:** Inserted into your vagina, tampons absorb blood before it leaves your body. They're discreet and great for activities like swimming.
- **Menstrual Cups:** Made of soft silicone, these cups are inserted into the vagina to collect blood. They're eco-friendly and can be worn for up to 12 hours.
- **Reusable Pads:** These cloth pads can be washed and reused, making them an environmentally friendly option.
- **Period Panties:** These are special underwear with built-in absorbency. They're comfy and can be worn alone or with other period products for extra protection.

No matter which product you choose, it's all about finding what makes you feel comfortable and confident.



The menstrual cup is a game-changer for many people. Here's why you might want to give it a try:

- Eco-Friendly: You can use it over and over again. One cup can last for 10 years!
- Cost-Effective: You buy it once, and it lasts a long time, saving you money in the long run.
- Long-Lasting Protection: You can wear a cup for up to 12 hours, even overnight. Perfect for those long school days or busy weekends.
- Comfortable: When inserted correctly, you won't even feel it. You can do all your usual activities without worrying about leaks.



How to Use and Care for a Menstrual Cup:

- Clean: At the beginning of your period, sterilize the cup by boiling it in water for 3-5 minutes. Wash your hands thoroughly.
- Fold: Fold the cup in a C-shape or punch-down fold (see image below)
- Insert: Gently insert it into your vagina using your index finger and thumb. It will pop open and form a seal.
- Wear: Go about your day! When it's time, remove the cup, empty it, rinse /wipe it, and reinsert.
- Store: At the end of your period, wash your cup with gentle body soap and store it away from the sunlight in a cotton bag/sock. When your next period comes, repeat this process.

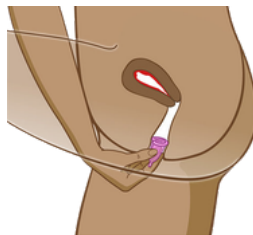
A menstrual cup is inserted into the vagina by folding it in a manner that creates a smaller diameter at the rim. There are various folding methods and two of the most beginner-friendly folds are:

1. The C-fold method.
2. The punch-down fold method

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How to use and care for your Reusable Pads and Period Panties

Reusable period pads and period panties are an eco-friendly, washable alternative to disposable sanitary pads, lasting 3-5 years with proper care. Our pads and panties are made from soft, absorbent cotton made with antimicrobial fibres which reduce chance of infections. They are designed to provide you with reliable protection during your period, saving you money and reducing waste.

How to Use Reusable Period Pads:

1. Place the Pad: Position the absorbent side of the pad facing up in your underwear.
2. Secure the Pad: Snap the wings around your underwear to keep the pad in place.
3. Change as Needed: Change the pad every 4-6 hours, depending on your flow.

How to Use Reusable Period Panties:

- Wear Like Regular Underwear: Put on your period panties just like you would with any other pair of underwear. They're designed to absorb your flow without needing additional products like pads or tampons.

How to Wash Your Reusable Pads and Period Panties:

1. Soak: Soak the pads in cold water for 15 minutes to break down any buildup. Avoid using fabric softeners and bleach, as they can reduce absorbency and cause irritation.
2. Wash: Wash your pad with soap, like you would your underwear.
3. Dry: Air dry the pads by laying them flat or hanging them up. Avoid direct sunlight to preserve the waterproof layer.
4. Deep Cleaning: Every Few months you can soak the pads in a mixture of 1 part white vinegar or baking soda to 4 parts cold water for 15 minutes for a deep clean.



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When to See a Doctor: Recognising Abnormal Menstrual Symptoms

If you experience certain menstrual symptoms, it's important to see a doctor as they could indicate an underlying health issue. Here's when to seek medical advice:

- **Very Heavy Periods:** Soaking through pads or tampons every hour for several hours or periods lasting over 7 days could signal heavy bleeding, which may lead to anemia or suggest other health concerns.
- **Severe Menstrual Pain:** If cramps are so intense they interfere with daily activities or require frequent pain medication, it could indicate conditions like endometriosis or fibroids.
- **Irregular Periods:** If your period is consistently irregular or you miss three or more periods in a row (and aren't pregnant), it's important to get checked out as it may be due to hormonal imbalances or other conditions.
- **Missing Periods (Amenorrhea):** Missing several periods, especially if you've never had one by age 15, could be linked to hormonal issues, stress, or other health problems.
- **Other Concerning Symptoms:** Symptoms like fever, extreme fatigue, or dizziness during your period warrant immediate medical attention, as they could indicate a serious condition.

If you notice any of these symptoms, reach out to a healthcare provider for diagnosis and treatment. Taking care of your health is crucial, and seeking help when something feels off is a sign of strength

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Q:** Is it normal to have an irregular cycle?
• **A:** Yes! Especially in the first few years after you start menstruating, it's normal for your cycle to be irregular.
- **Q:** Can I exercise during my period?
• **A:** Absolutely! Exercise can actually help with cramps and improve your mood. Just listen to your body.
- **Q:** Is it safe to use a tampon or menstrual cup overnight?
• **A:** Yes! Just make sure to change your tampon every 4-6 hours or empty your menstrual cup after 12 hours.
- **Q:** Will I lose my virginity if I use a menstrual cup?
• **A:** No
- **Q:** Can a menstrual cup get lost inside my body?
• **A:** No
- **Q:** Where will my pee go when my cup is inserted?
• **A:** Pee comes from a different hole
- **Q:** Can I play sport/swim with my cup in?
• **A:** Yes
- **Q:** Can people tell when I'm on my period?
• **A:** No one can tell unless you tell them. Periods don't come with a sign, so there's no need to worry.
- **Q:** Is it normal to feel emotional during my period?
• **A:** Yes! Hormonal changes can affect your mood. It's all part of the cycle, so be kind to yourself.
- **Q:** Are reusable period pads and period panties hygienic?
• **A:** Yes, when properly washed and cared for, they are hygienic and safe to use.
- **Q:** Can I wear them overnight?
• **A:** Yes
- **Q:** Do they leak?
• **A:** Reusable period pads and period panties are designed with a leak-proof barrier, but it's important to change them regularly to avoid leaks.
- **Q:** Are they bulky?
• **A:** Modern reusable pads are designed to be thin and discreet while still providing excellent absorbency.

Legal Disclaimer: If you have or are experiencing any gynecological problems please discontinue using your menstrual products and consult a doctor. If you are experiencing any pain or discomfort while wearing your menstrual products, discontinue use and consult a doctor. Our content is for reference purposes and is not intended to substitute for advice given by a physician, pharmacist, or other licensed healthcare professional. You should not use this information to self-diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Contact a healthcare provider immediately if you suspect that you have a medical problem. **National Health Hotline: 24/7 - 5 languages, Free call: 0800 029 999, Email: healthhotline@health.gov.za, WhatsApp: 0600 123 456**