

# KNOW ABOUT MENSTRUATION

## What is Menstruation?

Menstruation or having the period is the shedding of blood and tissues from vagina. It means a girl's body is growing up and physically maturing for the future when she might decide to get pregnant and have a baby. It is a normal phenomenon in a girl's body and there is nothing to feel anxious, scared or embarrassed about.

## Why do girls menstruate?

Girls have thousands of immature eggs in their ovaries when they are born. Every month, an egg matures and is released by the ovary, into the fallopian tubes and reaches the uterus. During this time the lining of the uterus increases in thickness; if the egg does not get fertilized and pregnancy does not occur, the uterus sheds its extra tissue lining, blood, and the unfertilized egg out of the vagina and out of the body. This bleeding is the menstrual period and it generally lasts for 3 to 5 days.

## What is a menstrual cycle?

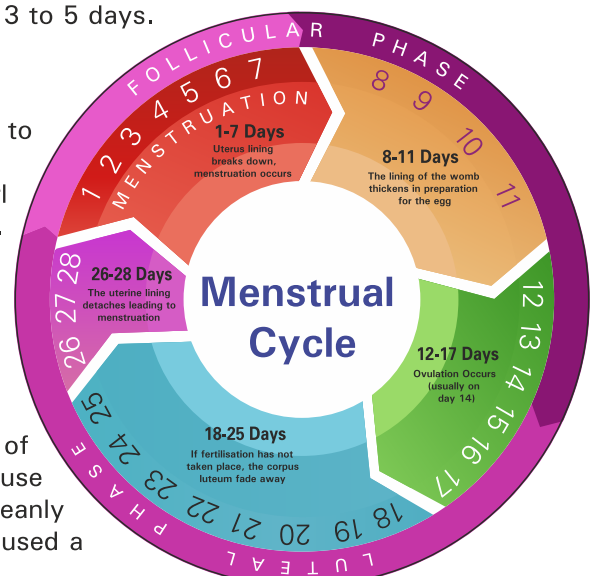
The time between the first day of a menstrual period bleeding to the first day of the next period bleeding is referred to as a menstrual cycle. Length of the menstrual cycle varies from girl to girl. For most girls, the menstrual cycle is close to 28 days. For some girls, it can be as short as 21 days while for some it can be as long as 42 days.

## What are the different ways to manage menstrual flow?

Girls and women use different ways to prevent staining of clothes due to menstrual blood. Many girls/women use traditional cloth napkins/pads during their period. If washed cleanly and dried properly under the sun, these cloth pads can be re-used a few times.

A disposable sanitary napkin/sanitary pad is a specially made pad to absorb the menstrual fluid so that it doesn't get on the clothes and can also be disposed off after use. Sanitary pads come in different sizes, with different capacities to absorb for days of heavy and light menstrual bleeding. Government of India runs a programme for promotion of Menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls. Under this, sanitary napkins are made available to adolescent girls from ASHA Didi and through schools.

Nowadays, there are other options also available like tampons and menstrual cups (bell shaped cups) which are placed inside the vagina to collect menstrual flow. Menstrual cups can be washed and reused.



## How is a sanitary napkin used?

A sanitary pad is worn on an underwear in such a way that the absorbent middle part of the pad exactly covers the opening of the vagina. In most cases, pads have adhesives that stick to the underwear, and may have wings that wrap under the panties to keep the pad in place. Sanitary pads are generally changed after every 4 to 8 hours to avoid them from getting over soaked and staining clothes.

## How to dispose off a used sanitary napkin?

A used sanitary napkin must be wrapped in a paper and thrown into dustbins which are emptied daily. If no garbage collection takes place, the used napkins should be disposed off by burying them in a deep pit. Burning the used napkins in an incinerator is also a good option, provided it meets the safety standards.

Used sanitary napkin should never be flushed down the toilet as it can easily clog the drainage system and lead to flooding of the toilet. It should also not be thrown under bushes or out in the open. Sanitary napkins if left out in the open looks unsightly and can become a site where bacteria can multiply and pose health hazards.

## What are the hygiene measures to be taken care of during periods?

Some important hygiene measures to be taken care of are as follows:

- » Bathe at least once a day
- » Change disposable pads/cloth pads regularly
- » Wash your genital area with plain water after using the toilet. Make sure to wash it from the front towards the back.
- » Don't use any cleaning agent like soap or deodorant inside the vagina.
- » Use clean undergarments and change them regularly
- » Wash your hands before and after changing a sanitary napkin
- » Carry extra napkins while travelling

### MYTHS

- Menstrual blood is impure, dirty and unclean
- You became weak because you lose menstrual blood
- Normal daily activities such as offering prayers, entering kitchen, wearing new clothes, touching people should be prohibited during periods
- A woman loses a lot of blood during menstruation
- Menstrual cramps are due to cold drinks or showers or baths
- Missing a period always means pregnancy
- Foods like curd, tamarind and pickles disturb the menstrual flow
- A girl should not talk about her periods in public. If she does so she will be shamed publicly

### FACTS

- Menstrual blood is clean, consisting of blood and body tissues.
- You remain healthy and fit even when you are having your menstrual period
- Menstruation should not be seen as an obstacle to daily activities. Practices such as these must be discouraged
- In case of normal bleeding that lasts for 5 days, she loses only 2 - 4 tablespoons of blood, which is enough to cause anemia, if proper nutrition is not taken
- Menstrual cramps are because the uterus is contracting to shed the uterine lining and blood. One should take a daily bath during menstruation to maintain hygiene
- No, the Menstrual cycle can also be affected by stress, illnesses, poor nutrition or exercise
- The food you eat does not decide the flow of your periods
- Periods are a completely natural phenomenon. There is no need to be ashamed of it. You can talk about periods openly