

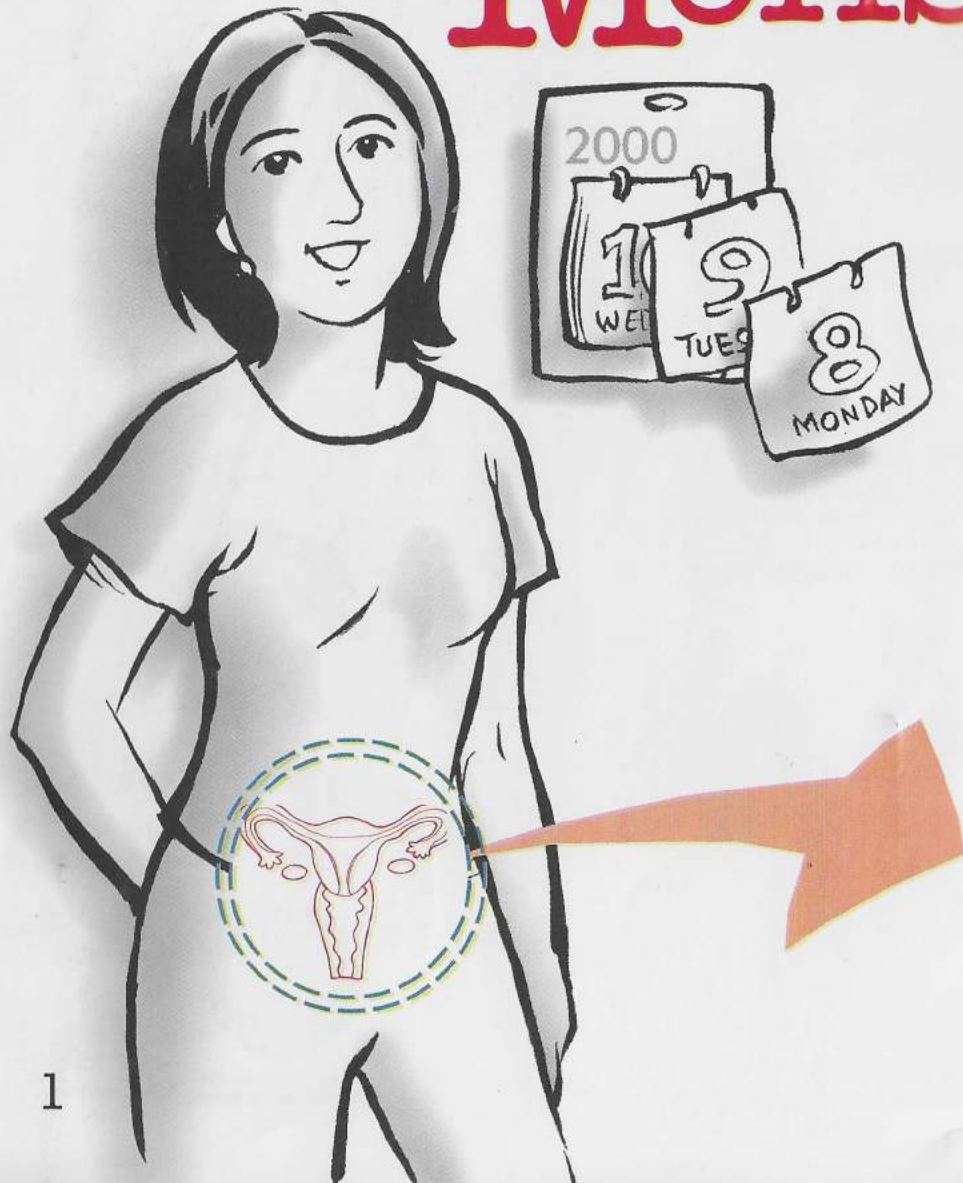
MENSTRUATION



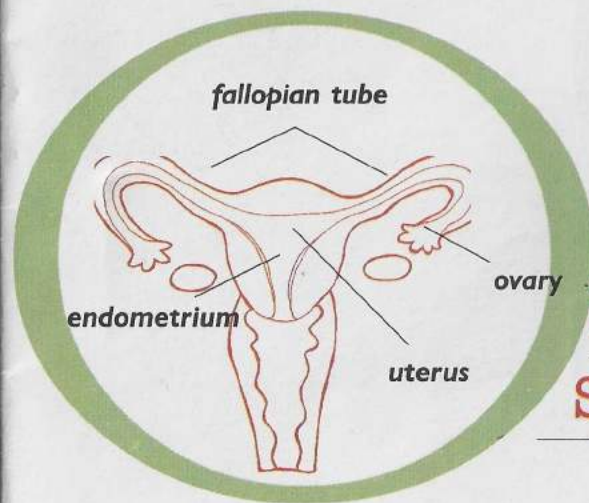
Women's Health and Safe
Motherhood Project (WHSMF)

Health ang una!

What ^{is} Menstruation?

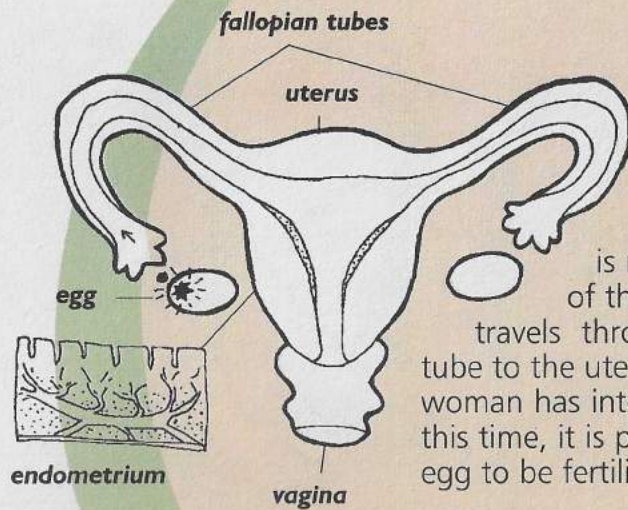


- Menstruation is the product of the female reproductive cycle.
- Its onset is a sign of the *natural* changes happening in your body.
- This happens every month from the first time you get your period until you reach your forties or fifties.



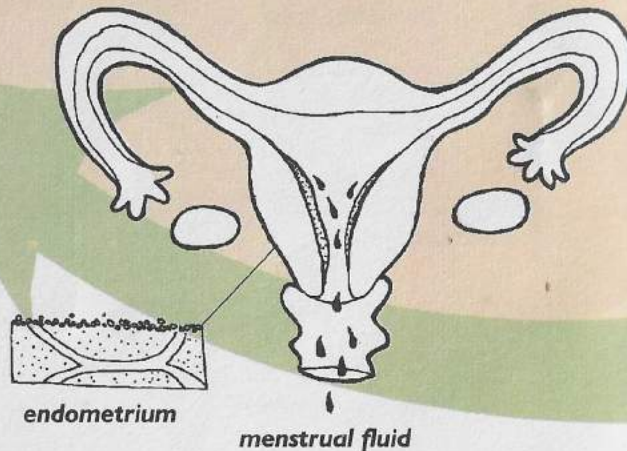
**The Female
Reproductive
System**

the Menstrual Cycle

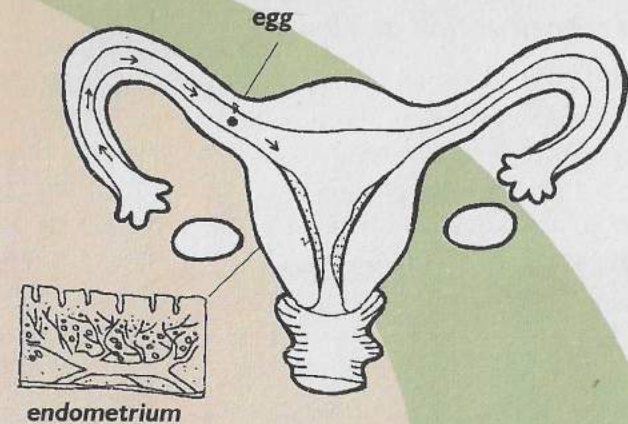


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At the start of the cycle, an egg is released from one of the ovaries and travels through the fallopian tube to the uterus. When a woman has intercourse during this time, it is possible for the egg to be fertilized by a sperm.



3



2

In the meantime, the uterus prepares for the arrival of the fertilized egg by making its lining (or **endometrium**) thick. This thickened lining will serve as a cushion and a source of food for the fertilized egg. Only when the fertilized egg implants itself to the uterus and starts to develop, that is when a pregnancy begins.

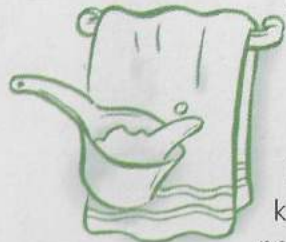
3

However, the eggs are not always fertilized. Or some fertilized eggs do not get implanted to the uterus. With no fertilized egg to nourish, the thick lining sheds itself slowly and trickles out of the vagina. This is called menstruation or the menstrual period.

4

Is menstruation an illness?

NO. It is a normal biological process. While you may develop an abdominal ache, which is sometimes known as *cramps* or *dysmenorrhea*, you are neither sick nor weak. However, if you experience something different from your normal cycle (refer to your Menstrual Calendar, p.13), consult your doctor or any other medical professional immediately.



Will I go crazy if I take a bath or wash my hair during my period?

NO. In fact, it is much more important that you keep yourself clean and fresh during your menstrual period. Your skin and hair may become extra greasy, and your sweat and menstrual fluid may develop an unpleasant odor. So a daily bath or shower is very important. Also, do not forget to wash your external genitalia with clean water.

I am told that I should avoid eating salty or sour foods when I have my period because it will stop the flow of blood or it will make my blood smell sour. Is this true?

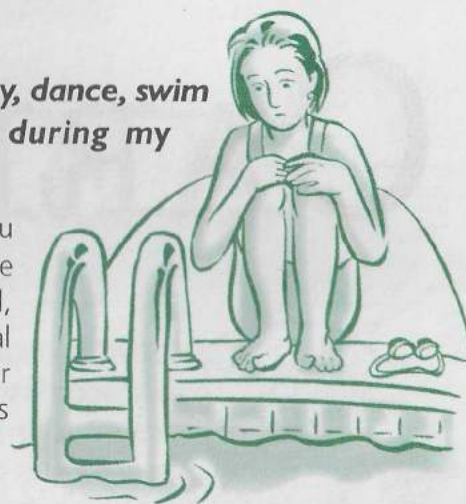
NO. However, you may want to cut down on salty foods because they contribute to water retention. This is why you sometimes experience some weight gain and swelling.



What's true,

Can I still go out and play, dance, swim or carry heavy things during my period?

YES. While it is true that you may feel less energetic for the first 2 to 3 days of your period, you can still do all your normal activities. You will regain your usual energy once you pass this early stage.



what's not

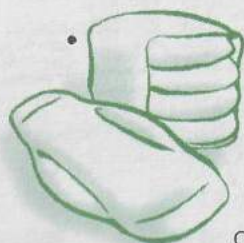
If I use a tampon, will I lose my virginity?

NO. You will not lose your virginity by using a tampon.

My menstrual period has been delayed for days now, am I pregnant?

NOT necessarily. Menstrual cycles differ with every woman. And in every woman, menstrual changes also happen along with other changes happening in your body. These changes can be caused by many factors in your life. Many women also have irregular periods, or periods that do not come at the same time every month. That may also be the case with you. If you are not sure, do not delay in taking a pregnancy test. If you are pregnant, getting sufficient health care during the first three months of your pregnancy is most crucial.

CARE *and* HYGIENE



- **USING NAPKINS OR TAMPONS** — Make sure you change your pads or tampons every 3 to 4 hours, even on days when your flow is light. Changing frequently keeps the napkins or tampons from developing bacteria that may give you an infection, or a slight odor.

- **USING A PASADOR** — Some of you may prefer to use a folded piece of cloth instead of the napkins. Just make sure the piece of cloth is not used for anything else and is clean once you put them on. Wash and iron them well after use.



- **BATHING AND CLEANSING** — As long as you bathe daily, wear clean underwear, and change your pads, tampons or your *pasador* frequently, there is no need to worry about developing bacterial infections or being smelly. The use of commercial feminine washes is not necessary because you can keep yourself clean with plain, clean water.



- **HEALTHY EATING** — Fruits and vegetables, combined with foods rich in fiber and complex carbohydrates can also help you feel good overall.

- **WEARING COMFORTABLE CLOTHING AND SHOES**

- **EXERCISING** — Generally, it keeps you healthy, even when you don't have your period. Specifically, it helps relieve tension and raise the level of **endorphins** in your body to help you combat mood swings, improve alertness and, to a certain extent, reduce painful cramps.

- **GETTING ENOUGH REST** — Make sure you get enough sleep.



PMS

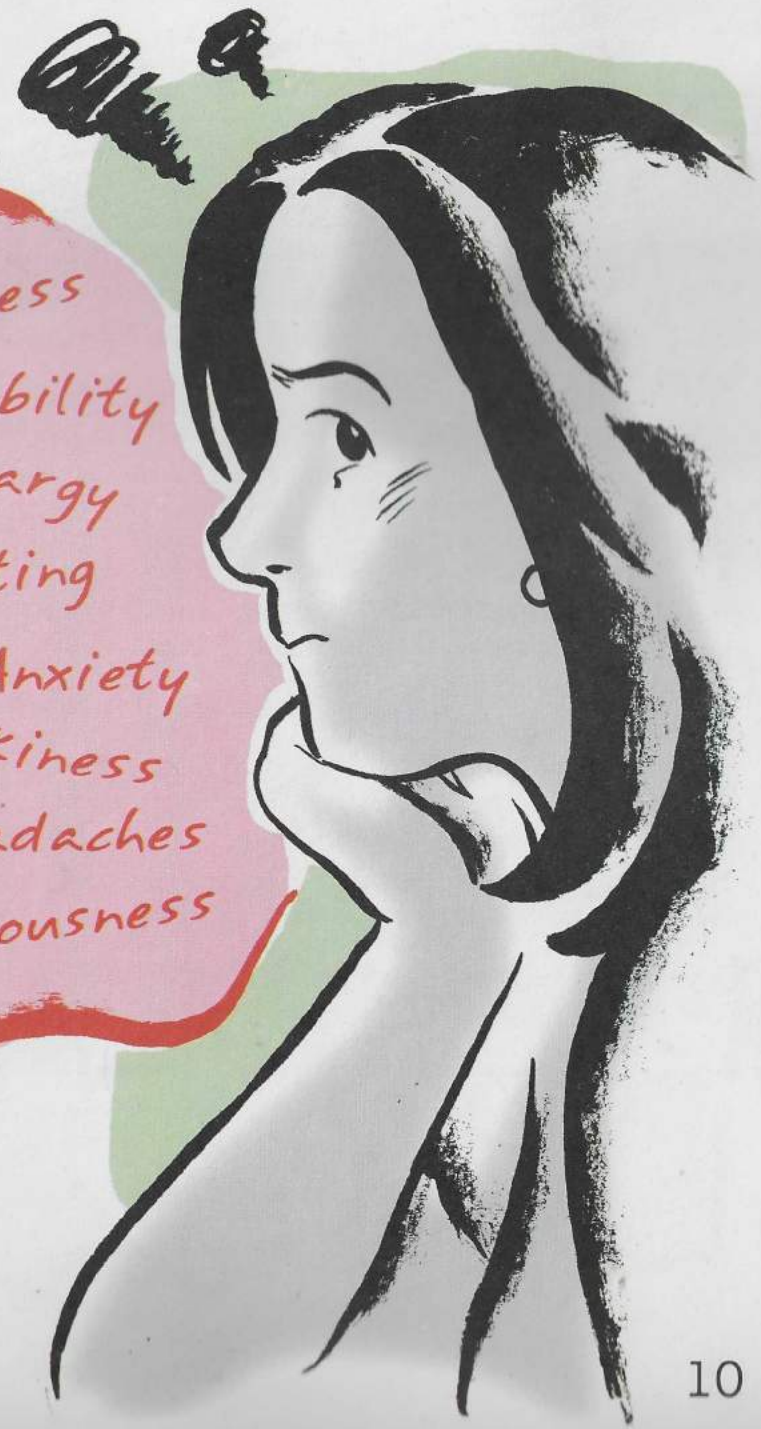
Pre-menstrual Syndrome

Do you experience any of these symptoms before or at the start of your menstrual period?

IF YOU DO, DO NOT WORRY.

You are neither sick nor are you going crazy. You may have what is called **pre-menstrual syndrome** or **PMS**. It is a set of physical and emotional changes that happen usually a week or a few days before your menses begin. And you are not alone — up to 90% of women experience PMS. While bothersome, these symptoms are normal and temporary, and will usually pass once your period starts.

Insomnia
Breast tenderness
Palpitations
Emotional sensitivity
Muscle pain
Mood swings
Food cravings
Weight gain
Sadness
Irritability
Lethargy
Bloating
Anxiety
Crankiness
Headaches
Nervousness



What to do



If you are having PMS:

- Limit your salt intake to reduce the bloating or swelling, as well as the temporary weight gain.
- Reduce your caffeine intake (like coffee, non-herbal teas, chocolates or dark-colored softdrinks) to prevent headaches, irritability, anxiety, nervousness and insomnia.
- Exercise regularly to relieve tension, improve your mood, your alertness and your overall feeling of well-being.
- Get a dose of Vitamin B6 everyday.
- Help other people understand what PMS really is. Explain to your family, friends, your boyfriend, classmates or co-workers that there is nothing wrong with a person when she has PMS.
- Do not use PMS as an excuse for behaving unpleasantly or turning out less than satisfactory work. Learn to deal with everyday challenges without resorting to scapegoats.
- Know and remember that this is a *manageable*, temporary condition and should not be used as a reason to discriminate against you in school or in the workplace.

the Menstrual Calendar

Keeping Track

Menstrual cycles differ with every woman. To know what yours is like, it will help if you keep track of your period every month. This is so you'll know what is normal for you. It can also help you determine your fertile and infertile periods and help you plan and manage your activities.

How do I use the Menstrual Calendar?

- Mark the first day of your menstrual period on the calendar, and continue doing so until the end of your period for that month.
- Keep track of your period for at least 12 months to give you an idea of your monthly period's pattern. This will help you know what to expect in your next period and how long they will be.
- Note down the days when you have unusually light or heavy flow, experience spotting, more intense pain than before, and other changes in your cycle. Once you notice something that differs from the pattern, it's time to see a doctor or health worker.

Year

DAYS

COMMENTS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
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☒ Normal

☒ Heavy

☐ Unusually light

☐ Spotting

MENSTRUATION is a cycle women go through every month for a substantial period of their lives. That is why it is important that you know why it happens and how. Once you understand what it is, you will begin to appreciate your bodily processes and learn how to take care of yourself more.

It takes time and practice, but the more you learn about what to expect as your body goes through its own menstrual cycle, the easier it will be to handle having your period.



Brought to you by:

