

For Parents | 28.03.22

Hey Boys!

The stuff you need to know about periods

Hey Boys – Hey Girls team here. We've set out a few Q&As that you may have about periods. So trust us when we tell you that we don't bleed blue, we don't take to the streets on roller skates wearing white jeans, and the first sign that a period is starting is definitely not like popping a champagne cork then trying to plug a high-pressure hose. One guy even asked us "can't you wait till you get home and then start?" Oh if only...

Our hope is that some of these answers will help explain the physical and psychological side of what's going on for us when we are ON, and then hopefully help you take a better course of action when faced with what might seem like totally unreasonable bunny-boiler behaviour.

1. Do you get any warning that your period is going to start?

OK. Cycles vary from person to person and from cycle to cycle. Irregular period cycles could be caused by stress, travelling between time zones, strenuous exercise, illness and drastic changes in weight and diet. As our bodies don't run like the clockwork a period can turn up a few days early or a few days late. However, our bodies do tend to give us a few warning signs like mood changes, greasier hair, and cramps. These all tend to make their presence known before the period starts.

2. What's with the whole "Arghh! I've just come on" thing?

The first day of a period is usually the worst – it tends to be the day when the flow is the heaviest. Some people will report a serious backache, others will have tender nipples, others get cramps that can be felt in the legs, lower back, and tummy. This cramping is usually caused by our body's response to a hormone called prostaglandin, which causes the muscles in the uterus to contract. The same hormone can also be the cause of headaches before a period.

3. How much menstrual blood loss is there during your period and do you need loads of rest?

The average person (not that there is such a thing) loses about an eggcup full of blood during their period but this depends on the person and which stage they are at in the cycle. We know that the clotting action of blood and the shedding of the uterus lining mean that blood flow and texture will differ considerably throughout their period.

4. How long does a period last?

About 3 to 7 days. There is a small amount of blood at first and getting heavier for the first few days and then less blood until it stops. Sometimes the blood is a rusty colour and quite watery and sometimes it can be dark red and thicker.... we know, we hear you but it's OK we are used to it and, to us it's not yucky.

5. Can we have sex during a period?

Sex during a period is fine as long as you and your partner are both consenting, but remember that having a period doesn't prevent the risk of pregnancy. Worth knowing it's usually between 5 to 7 days from the beginning of a period to the end. Many people experience lesser bleeding a couple of days either side but sex whilst menstruating can be a little messy so expect to change the bed sheets.

6. Can you lose your virginity by using a tampon?



Right, listen up. Virginity is a “status” that can only be changed by having intercourse so the only time virginity can be lost is when you actually have sex; that’s it. It’s a very common myth among many people, and it’s due to a misunderstanding about the nature of the membrane inside the vagina in virgins (the hymen). The truth is that the hymen radically differs in thickness from one to another and that it’s actually more like a perforated piece of paper.

7. Is it really painful?

Okay, so imagine you’ve eaten two Christmas dinners – one round at their mum’s and straight round for one at yours – your belly is swollen, sore and feels like it’s going to burst then imagine that someone pokes you in it – not a quick prod but a long hard push that feels like it’s never going to end. Well, that’s how it feels. Don’t forget that we also have a backache, sore nipples, a banging headache and we’re bleeding.

8. So there’s tampons and pads to plug or soak up the blood. What else?

We use period pads (disposable or reusable) or tampons to protect our underwear. Or we can use a menstrual cup.

Period pads fit inside our knickers by means of a sticky strip, which keeps the pad in place. There are different types of pads and it is a matter of choice which we go for. With and without wings so if you have been sent shopping it’s worth checking before you just grab a packet. Some are for daytime or regular flow, others for heavy days or night time. Reusable pads are just the same except you wash and dry them each time, then reuse.

Tampons are also available in different sizes to suit the amount of blood loss. Some tampons are digital – yep confused us too when we first heard the term – inserted using a finger, other tampons have a cardboard or plastic applicator to help insert it into the vagina.

Menstrual cups are small, flexible cups made of silicone or latex rubber. Instead of absorbing the flow, like a tampon or pad, it catches and collects it. Cups are more expensive than other products, but they are simply rinsed and reinserted and one cup lasts for years. Good for the environment too as no waste each month.

9. This all sounds really expensive – How many tampons or pads do you get through in a month?

A box of 16 tampons costs around £2.00, organic cotton are a little more but worth it, and your average pack of period pads costs around £2.50. Cotton or Bamboo pads cost a little more at around £3.00 but they don’t contain Chlorine and Dioxin bleach and are free from plastic and chemical nasties, so it’s worth the little extra not to have chemical near your VJ when it’s swollen and painful.

You’ll love this bit – According to a recent study we in the UK spend as much as £18,450 each on our periods over the course of our lifetime. We use about 22 pads/tampons per period. A total of 24% use only tampons, 31% use only period pads, 39% use both tampons and period pads, and 6% use a menstrual cup. So if we are going to break that down:

- Pads/tampons/panty-liners/menstrual cups – £13
- New underwear (due to spillages) – £8
- Pain relief – £4.50
- Chocolate/sweets/crisps – £8.50
- Other (magazines/toiletries/DVDs etc.) – £7

Taking these monthly estimates into account, researchers were able to work out that the average period costs £492 annually. With the average woman menstruating 450 times, the total cost of a period during a lifetime was worked out at a whopping £18,450. Thankfully the 5% VAT on products – know as the Tampon Tax or luxury tax – has now been removed. Does anything we’ve shared with you so far sound luxurious? NO, it does NOT!!

10. What can I do to help?

Over the counter pain relievers will help if the pain prevents them from doing their usual activities. If you want to be a superstar offering a hot water bottle or wheat bag may help to ease the cramps

Other than that there’s not much you can do about the actual symptoms, so behave how you normally would. Gifts of chocolate, hot drinks and cuddling up to watch all those Netflix movies that you hate is also a great way to win points. But don’t go getting all amorous if it’s not welcome – you may just get your head bitten off.

11. My partner gets moody, a bit on the aggressive side and annoying as hell when on their period. What should I do?



Top tip would be for you to think of ways to diffuse rather than engage, there's a chance that something that seems like a really big deal right now will be less important later on. We know you are googling things like – why is my partner mental? So just consider for a moment what's going on for them during their menstrual cycle and hang on in there. Remember, just because they're a bit more emotional than normal, doesn't mean that you can ignore them or that their emotions are invalid!

Men Explain Periods

As/Is



Watch on

So that's you all set – to be a loving, supportive, deeply empathetic and well-informed partner. And, if you want to be a total Rock Star go to the [donation page](#) and donate for a UK person in need.

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"we want to get people having
conversations that do away with stigma and
taboos around menstruation and
ultimately help to end UK period poverty."

box of plant based tampons with a cotton
branch beside it

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community



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female hands pulling out a hey girls tampon package from a bag

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