

Managing Menstruation

KNOW YOUR
OPTIONS

Disposable Pad

A single-use pad designed to absorb blood. It is placed in your underwear and usually held in place by a sticky adhesive. Comes in different shapes and sizes for heavier or lighter bleeding.

- 👍 Easy to use, effective even when exercising, does not require washing
- 👎 Not reusable, can be costly over time



Reusable Pad

A sewn cloth pad designed to absorb blood. It is placed in your underwear and usually held in place by snaps. Comes in different sizes, shapes, and materials. Can be purchased or self-sewn. Comfort, absorbency, and ease of use vary.

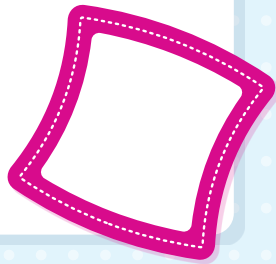
- 👍 Reusable, less likely to leak or move out of place than cloth, becomes more affordable with continued use
- 👎 Has to be washed and dried after each use



Cloth

Pieces of fabric, folded into layers and placed in underwear or tied around the waist, to absorb blood.

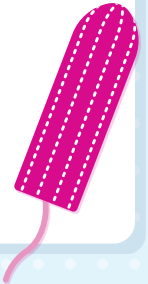
- 👍 Affordable, can be reused several times if properly cleaned
- 👎 Has to be washed and dried after each use, can be hard to keep in place



Tampon

A single-use cotton or rayon plug inserted into the vagina to absorb blood, with a string to help with removal. Comes in different sizes for heavier or lighter bleeding.

- 👍 Effective even when exercising, does not require washing
- 👎 Not reusable, can be costly over time, can take a few attempts to get comfortable inserting and removing



Menstrual Cup

A bell-shaped silicone device inserted into the vagina to collect blood. Comes in different sizes, shapes, and degrees of firmness.

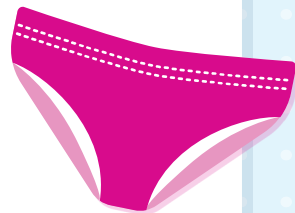
- 👍 Reusable for up to ten years, becomes affordable with continued use, effective even when exercising
- 👎 Expensive initially, can take a few cycles to get used to, has to be washed and disinfected



Period Panty

A special type of underwear designed to absorb blood. Comes in different sizes, shapes, and materials.

- 👍 Reusable, becomes affordable with continued use
- 👎 Expensive initially, has to be washed and dried after each use



Reusable options result in less waste and are more affordable over time.



All products are safe if used, washed, and dried appropriately. Do not use products for longer than suggested in package instructions. Cloth can be used for 2-4 hours. Depending on which option(s) you choose, you may also need water, soap, underwear, and containers for washing and storing.

Pain Management

If menstrual pain makes it hard for you to engage in day-to-day activities, talk with a doctor, nurse, or other health care provider. They may have other ways to help you manage the pain, such as hormonal contraceptives (see below). They may also be able to determine if you have a more serious condition, such as endometriosis or uterine fibroids.

You may experience abdominal pain, cramping, headaches, and/or other changes in your body in the days before or during your menstrual bleeding.

Self-care options include



Light exercise, yoga, or stretching



Apply heat, such as a hot water bottle



Take ibuprofen or naproxen



Rest or lie down

Menstruation and Contraception

If you use hormonal contraception or a copper IUD, you may experience changes in your menstruation. These changes are normal. They may affect how you choose to manage your menstruation. Everyone is different; it is hard to predict what changes you will experience when using a specific contraceptive method.

Your menstruation will return to its normal pattern and your fertility (ability to get pregnant) will return after you stop using the contraceptive method.

Menstrual changes due to contraception can include:

- ✓ Lighter or less bleeding
- ✓ Less frequent and/or shorter bleeding
- ✓ Spotting or bleeding when you do not expect it
- ✓ Paused or no bleeding while using the method
- ✓ Heavier bleeding
- ✓ Less cramping and pain

Hormonal & IUD contraceptives



Injectables



Implants



Pills



Hormonal IUD



Copper IUD



To learn about the contraceptive methods that might be right for you, contact a doctor, nurse, or other health care provider.

Period Tracking

Some people find it helpful to keep track of their menstruation on a calendar or phone app. This enables them to better estimate when their next period may start. The time from the first day of one period to the first day of the next period is usually between 21-35 days. Bleeding generally lasts 3-7 days.

During puberty and perimenopause, periods are often irregular. Some contraceptive methods also cause irregular periods.

