

How to use a tampon

Wash your hands. Follow the directions in the box. They are easy to read and even have pictures.

Try a slender tampon at first. You'll need to relax so the tampon will slide into your vagina easily.

How to throw away your used pad or tampon

Wrap up the used tampon or pad in the wrapper or in toilet paper. Throw it in the garbage or sanitary napkin container.

Don't flush tampons or applicators down the toilet. They can clog up the plumbing!

What is TSS?

TSS, or Toxic Shock Syndrome, is a rare illness caused by bacteria that forms when the tampon isn't changed often enough. You may get a high fever, diarrhea and vomiting, or a sunburn-like peeling rash.

How to prevent TSS

If you use tampons:

- Wash your hands before you put in the tampon.
- Don't use tampons for the whole time you have your period – use mini-pads when your period is lighter.
- Change the tampon often – every 4-6 hours, or more often if you need to.
- Use a slender or regular tampon on heavy days and change it more often.

What about blood stains?

Whether you use tampons or pads, sometimes a little bit of blood will get on your underpants, sheets or pajamas during your period.

To remove the stain, run the item under some cold water as soon as possible.

How to keep track of your period

A period usually comes every 21 to 35 days. In the first few years, it is often irregular. For some, it is never regular. To see if you are starting to have a regular period, mark the first day of each period on a calendar and count the number of days between. This will help you figure out when you might expect your next period.

Charting Your Period – Calendar

Days of the Month																															
Month	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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Periods, Pads and Puberty

Are you wondering about getting your period?
Confused about what's going on?

What is a period and why does it happen?

A period is a sign that you are growing up and your reproductive system is changing.

Girls are born with millions of eggs that are stored in the ovaries. During puberty an egg is released from an ovary into the fallopian tube and travels towards the uterus. The uterus (or womb) has been producing a rich lining of blood and tissue that will be used to nourish the egg should it get fertilized.

Fertilization occurs when sperm joins the egg.

If the egg is not fertilized, the lining is not needed.

It leaves the uterus and trickles out of the body through the vagina. This flow of blood is called menstruation – your period.

When does it start?

Most girls start their period around the age of 11-13. But, it can start as early as age 9 or as late as age 16. It all depends on your body's own internal clock. It usually begins a year or so after your breasts begin to grow. You will probably also notice some whitish discharge on your underpants. Both pubic hair and underarm hair tend to grow before your first period.

How does it feel?

One day, you may notice a wet feeling in your underpants and see a brownish or reddish stain. Or, you might notice a small amount of menstrual flow (blood) when wiping after going to the bathroom. If you don't have a pad, ask a friend for one or just roll up toilet paper and put it in the crotch of your underpants until you can get a pad or a tampon.

How long does it last?

For most girls their period lasts 3 to 7 days.

The flow may start out light then get heavy and then get lighter again as your period finishes. Some girls start out having a heavy flow for a few days, then have a lighter flow towards the end. Every girl is different. Because the flow is made up of tissue and blood, it is normal to see small clumps of blood.

What about PMS and cramps?

Some girls may get a dull ache in their lower back, belly or both, just before their period. They may also feel bloated and irritable. This is called PMS (Pre-menstrual Syndrome). Some girls get cramps on the first day – or first few days – of their period. A heating pad on your belly or lower back may help relieve pain. Other girls find that regular exercise like walking, sports or stretching helps prevent cramps. Sometimes pain medication is needed. Look for medications called NSAIDs* (Ibuprofen, Advil or Motrin). If these don't work, talk to your doctor.

*NSAID: Non Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug

Pads or tampons – what's the difference?

Pads are made of absorbent material and fit inside the crotch of your underpants to catch the menstrual flow. They come in different sizes and thicknesses to suit the heaviness of the menstrual flow. When you have a heavier flow, you'll need to change your pad more often. Carrying a pad in your purse or backpack is a good idea in case your period comes.

Tampons are made of absorbent material that you put into the vagina to catch the flow of blood. They also come in different sizes. These need to be changed every 4-6 hours, and should not be worn overnight. Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) can develop if a tampon is worn longer than 6 hours.

At bedtime, wear a pad, because you probably sleep longer than 6 hours.

Some girls choose pads at first and then use tampons when they get older. Others may use tampons right away.

What you choose is up to you. Maybe this is something you can discuss with your mother or another adult. Some girls prefer wearing tampons especially for swimming and other sports.