



She's the *first*

BEYOND BLEEDING

BY SHE'S THE FIRST
GIRL ACTIVIST FELLOWS
(all 14-22 years old!)



The Realities of Menstruators Around the World

Not everyone has access to period products or safe spaces to manage their periods. If you've ever struggled to buy tampons or pads, or had to miss school or work because you didn't have what you need to keep yourself comfortable, **you're not alone, and it's not your fault.**



In some areas of the world, girls use rags or leaves, not because they want to but because they don't have access to safe period products. **But girls deserve better!** This can lead to health issues such as infections or discomfort, and no one should have to go through that because of something natural.

Sometimes, girls face restrictions during their periods. They might not be allowed to participate in school activities, play sports, or even enter certain areas. That's unfair and it shouldn't be that way.

Menstruation is treated as shameful in many cultures and countries. That period stigma makes many girls feel like they have to hide or be scared, even when there's nothing to be ashamed of!

But here's the truth: period poverty and stigma are real, but so is **our power to change that.**

All around the world, girls and allies are working to **make menstruation a right, not a privilege**, because upholding dignity shouldn't be a luxury. **It's important to have open conversations about periods to normalize them.**

Don't be afraid to talk about your period — especially to your mom, sister, aunts, grandmas, and friends!

13.

Know Your Flow: Quick Terms!

Uterus	The organ in female bodies where babies grow.
Menstruation or Period	The body's way of cleaning out the uterus every month to prepare for a baby! Perfectly normal and healthy.
Follicular Phase	The follicular phase is when your period starts and your body prepares an egg while rebuilding the uterus lining.
Ovulation	Ovulation is when the ovary releases a mature egg, ready for fertilization.
Luteal Phase	The luteal phase is when the body prepares for a possible pregnancy by thickening the uterus lining after ovulation.
Hormones	Special tiny messengers in your body that control how you feel, grow, and change.
Estrogen	A hormone that can make you feel happy and energetic.
Progesterone	A hormone that helps you stay calm but also moody.
Pre-Menstrual Syndrome (PMS)	Feelings like being tired, cranky, or sad before your period starts.
Tampon	A small cotton tube to put inside your body to catch period blood.
Pads	Soft, absorbent items you wear in your underwear to catch period blood.
Menstrual Cup	Small and reusable cups to put inside your body to catch period blood.

First Period Stories

Growing up in a conservative household, periods weren't spoken about. It was considered taboo and too private to discuss openly, so I really had no idea what was going to happen to me. And then I got my very first period. I was about 12 or 13, I remember sitting on the bathroom floor and crying for hours and hours on end telling my mom I wasn't ready. But here I am, years later. Turns out, I was a lot more ready than I realised. And that is the coolest thing about being a woman, you don't even realise how strong you are. If you're scared or nervous, I promise every little girl has been there and you will get through it, just embrace it because being a woman is the strongest thing you could be!

~ Sheema.



I was 13, ready for high school but not quite ready for what my body was about to teach me. When my first period came, it felt like a quiet secret. At home, periods were invisible. The silence around them was heavy. Still, I found the courage to tell my mom. She didn't say much. She simply handed me a pad and said, "You are now a woman, my dear." I didn't have a guidebook, just fragments from school science classes. My body was changing, growing, becoming. But the questions came too, Will it hurt? Will people notice? Can I manage this without shame? Even in that silence, I knew I wasn't alone. Now, I know it's okay to be scared, to wonder, to not have all the answers right away. Your body is strong. And so are you. That moment? It was just the beginning of my journey into womanhood.

~Boke



I got my first period the day my results came out for my 10th grade final exams! I was so worried for the results that I didn't even notice at first that I'd gotten my period. It also lasted only 2 days, and then I went a whole 4 months without getting my period again! I was 16 years old, which, at the time, I thought was really late to start your period, but since then I've learned that it is totally normal, and some girls get their period later than others. ~Ananya

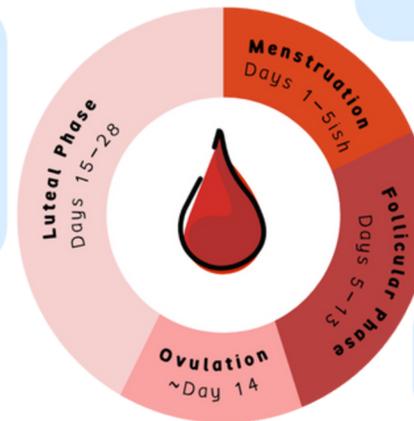


11.

What is the period cycle?

Your period isn't just about the days you bleed, it's a full cycle, typically lasting 21–35 days. It's divided into four phases:

Hormones shift, PMS (pre-menstrual syndrome) symptoms may kick in, and if no pregnancy happens, **the cycle resets.**



The uterus **sheds its lining**, and you get your period.

Hormones **rise**, preparing your body for ovulation.

An **egg is released** when you're most fertile (able to have a baby).

Fun fact: The average person menstruates for about **2,400 days (almost 7 years!)** in their lifetime!



4.



What advice do YOU have to share?

What helps you on your period? Did you believe any myths that you later learned weren't true? **Pass this page around to your friends and ask everyone to write down their advice for one another.**

Big Sister Hacks for Period Days

1. **Stay hydrated!** Drink lots of water to ease bloating.
2. Keep a **heating pad** handy for cramps.
3. **Snack smart:** dark chocolate helps with mood swings.
4. **Track your cycle** in a way that works for you, whether it's using an app, calendar, or journal, so you're never caught off guard. (hint: She's the First has a free, printable tracker at shethfirst.org/period-diary)
5. **Wear what makes you feel comfortable!** If you are worried about stains, you can keep spare bottoms or a layer to tie around your waist.



Choosing the Right Products

- **Pads:** For light to heavy flow, including overnight use. It's a good idea to start with pads when you're just starting your period journey!
- **Tampons:** Good for active days, such as when you go swimming, but change every 4–6 hours. Tampons are discreet and let you move freely, but they go inside the body, so it may take some time to get used to them.
- **Menstrual Cups:** Good for when you are out of the house for a long day and have a moderate to heavy flow. Reusable and eco-friendly, they can last up to 12 hours. Menstrual cups hold more blood than a pad or tampon would.
- **Period Underwear:** Good for light flow. Comfy and absorbent, great backup for peace of mind. Wear up to 8–12 hours, depending on flow.
- **Reusable Sanitary Towels:** Good for comfort and those with sensitive skin. Change every 4–6 hours.



Hey you!



Yes you! the curious soul, the one who dares to ask,
"Why don't we talk about this more?"

We know that you have many questions about menstruation. What is it? Why do we have it? Why does our mood change? **In this zine, you'll find many answers to your questions (finally)!**

Welcome to **Beyond Bleeding**, where we spill the tea (and the blood) on all things menstruation: no shame, no stigma, just real talk, real stories, and real empowerment. **Let's go beyond the cycle and break the silence together, sister to sister.**

Need a little more information?
No problem!
You can use My Period Diary to help.
Visit shesthefirst.org/period-diary
or scan the QR code to download it.



Your period is a **POWERFUL** part of your life. It's a symbol of **strength and resilience** that can never be taken away from you. **Embrace it, celebrate it, and never let shame define it.**

She's the First teams up with grassroots leaders to make sure that girls everywhere are educated, respected, and heard.

To learn more, visit:
shesthefirst.org

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Menstruation 101: What's Happening?

Your period is your uterus's way of cleaning the house. If no pregnancy occurs, the uterus says, "Welp, time to refresh!" and sheds its lining, leading to the bleeding we call a period. It can last anywhere from 3 to 7 days and comes with symptoms like cramps, mood swings, and fatigue.

It's normal, natural, and powerful.

A **regular** period or pattern means your menstrual cycle comes around the same time each month.

An **irregular** period or pattern means your cycle might be different each time, maybe it skips a month or comes earlier, or later.



If you haven't gotten your first period (**menarche**) by the age of 17, it's a good idea to talk to a trusted adult or a doctor.

There can be many reasons why it is delayed; most of them are usually harmless, but it's important to check in and understand what's going on because your health matters!

For example, I always get my period in the first week of every month, which means it's a regular period! But it wasn't always this way.

When I was younger, I used to get my period every other month, which is an irregular period. It's normal to have an irregular period every once in a while, but if it becomes a pattern, you should talk to a trusted adult about it.



3.



What's YOUR period story?

Do you remember the first time you had your period? Are you still waiting for yours to arrive? How do you feel about it? **Write your own period story here, and invite your friends to share theirs, too!**

Emotions and Hormones

Did you know you might experience different kinds of emotions depending on what part of your cycle you're in??

To put it simply, hormones are like messages that different organs release. Your body receives different messages during the four stages of your cycle. Estrogen, progesterone, and even testosterone change throughout your cycle, affecting mood, energy, and even hunger.

That random crying session before your period? **Blame the hormones.**
Feeling extra confident mid-cycle? **Thank ovulation.**

Understanding this can help you work with your body instead of fighting it. Let's dive into it!

Menstruation Phase: There is a drop in levels of estrogen and progesterone, which may make you feel irritated, tired, or sad. Some people might also feel bloated and have cramps (like a stomach ache).

Follicular Phase: There is a rise in estrogen levels, which can make one feel very happy and motivated to do many things! Nevertheless, some people face mood changes and experience episodes of anxiety as the estrogen levels change.

Ovulation Phase: In this phase, you may feel very confident about yourself. You feel happy and extroverted! You may want to hang out more with friends or wake up earlier to complete all of your tasks!

Luteal Phase: The last phase of your cycle. Progesterone is released, which can lead to relaxation and calmness. Some women can experience PMS (Pre-Menstrual Syndrome) during this phase, leading to irritability, anxiety, and a decrease in happiness.

5.

First Period Stories

Your first period story **can be different from other people**, and that's okay! Every person has their own unique story to tell. Here are a few of ours!

I grew up with an older sister, and pads were always around the house, so I already knew what a period was from a young age. When I got my first period, I didn't tell anyone at first. I was excited when I saw my blood-stained underwear because I thought it meant I was finally a woman. Little did I know, it was just one small step in growing up! I was so excited to finally try on a pad, they always appeared like fluffy pillows. Even though I was thrilled to have my period, I had no idea about the pain and cramps that would come with it. I was only 9 years old when I got my first period, and I can't even remember how this tiny 9-year-old me managed the pain. But somehow, I did, and you can too!

~ Elle



I was twelve when I got my first period. I knew some info about menstruation that I learned in school and at home but the day I got it, I completely forgot all the things I learned. I thought I was having an hemorrhage. I was so scared, and I told to my mom that I needed to go to the hospital. She told me to not worry and reminded me that it was my first period. ~Ariadna.

When I first got my period I panicked I thought something was wrong with my body. I asked my mom what it was since it was never brought up in our household and she explained to me that it was only my period. Not only did she teach me how to take care of myself physically but also allowed me to embrace this part of girlhood and helped turn my fear into empowerment!

~Rahwah



10.



Myths vs Facts

MYTH	FACT
You can't exercise on your period.	Exercise can actually help with cramps and boost your mood.
Period blood is dirty.	It's just as clean as the blood from a cut; your uterus isn't a toxic wasteland.
If you use a tampon, you lose your virginity.	Virginity is a social construct, and tampons don't change your body's purity in any way. Tampons might stretch or tear the hymen, but the hymen can also stretch naturally from physical activity, like dancing or biking!

7.



Myths vs Facts

MYTH	FACT
If you don't have your period yet, something's wrong with your body!	Everybody grows at their own pace. There's no need to rush — some girls get their periods early, while some get them late!
You can't swim when you're on your period	You can swim during your period! Just make sure to use a pad, tampon, or menstrual cup to stay clean and comfortable!
Our emotions don't matter when we are on our period	Our emotions during our period matter as much as they do on any other day. Hormones can make us feel heavy emotionally, but it's important to acknowledge what we think.

8.