



 Periods or menstruation happens to girls and others with vulvas. They are part of the reproductive cycle and start during puberty. This is different for every girl but is usually between the ages of 10-14. The average age is approximately 12. Females have periods until their menopause, generally around the ages of 45-55. The average female will have 500 periods in her lifetime.

Periods are a normal part of life. They are not something to feel ashamed or embarrassed about.

The menstrual cycle is as follows:

- An egg comes from the ovary and travels down the fallopian tube into the womb.
- The lining of the womb (the endometrium) has been thickened and is ready to receive the egg.
- As long as the egg is not fertilised, hormonal changes cause the endometrium to slip away and menstruation occurs from the womb through the vagina.
- This lasts from 3-7 days depending on the person.
- Each period starts around every 28 days (although some females have shorter or longer cycles) as long as the egg is not fertilised.

The blood which results from a period is actually the lining of the womb together with a little fresh blood from breaking of very fine blood vessels. The amount of blood lost due to the normal monthly period is usually less than 80ml.

Some females can experience a lot of discomfort from their periods and others none at all. Some symptoms can include:

- pains in the abdomen.
- pain in the vagina.
- feeling nauseous and generally unwell.
- diarrhoea.
- sweating.
- fatigue.

Exercise can help with period pains, although if a female is in a lot of pain she may not feel like running around. Keeping the abdomen warm with a hot water bottle can also help, as can relaxing and avoiding stress.