



WHAT TO EXPECT

Getting Your First Period

Getting your first menstrual period is one of the most visible signs that you are starting puberty. Puberty usually happens for girls some time between the ages of 9 and 16. There is nothing wrong with you if you get your period later or earlier than your friends get their periods.

What is it?

The blood that leaves your body during your period is the blood and tissue that build up as the lining of your uterus each month. Your period flow can be light, heavy, or somewhere in between. Your periods may also vary in color. Sometimes menstrual blood will be light red and sometimes, dark red. It may also be heavy the first day or so of your period, and then get lighter. Periods usually last between three and five days, but it is normal to have periods that are either shorter or longer. It is also normal if your periods are not the same number of days each month.

How does it happen?

Your ovaries release or let go of one egg about once a month. If the egg does not become fertilized by male sperm, then the egg and the lining of your vagina drain out of your vagina as your period. If the egg does become fertilized by male sperm (from sexual intercourse), it will attach itself to the lining of the uterus and grow into a baby.

When does it happen?

Menstrual cycles take place over about one month (around 23 to 35 days), but each woman is different in the number of days this lasts. The cycle includes not just your period, but the rise and fall of hormones and other body changes that take place over the month. At first, your periods may not be regular; you may have two in one month, or have a month without a period at all. Periods will become more regular in time. Not all women are the same in the number of days in between periods and how long periods last.

How do I take care of my period?

There are two types of products you can use for your period: sanitary pads and tampons. You might decide one or the other is best for you, or you may want to use a combination of both. No one can see that you are wearing either a tampon or a pad, although you may find some pads to feel a little bulky. You just have to find the right products for you. Whichever ones you use, it is important to follow the instructions on the packaging and wash your hands before and after use.

Also, there are pain relievers, like PAMPRIN, that are designed to help alleviate some of the discomfort that may be associated with your period, such as cramps, bloating and irritability.

For more information see: (1) <http://women.webmd.com/pms/premenstrual-syndrome-pms-topic-overview>; (2) <http://www.4women.gov/FAQ/pms.htm>; (3) www.menopause.org. This information is not intended to replace the advice of a doctor. Chatterm disclaims any liability for the decisions you make based on this information.