



A GIRLS' GUIDE

TO PUBERTY
& PERIODS



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CHAPTER THREE
**WHAT'S A PERIOD
ALL ABOUT?**

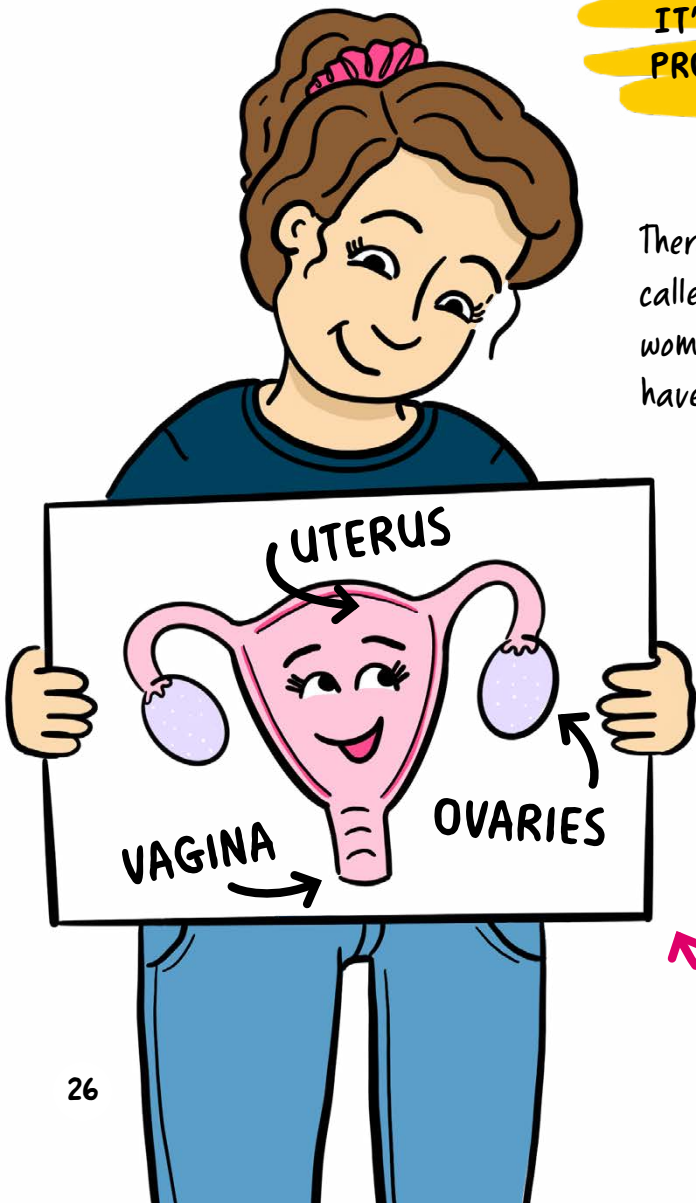
ALL ABOUT PERIODS!

A "period" is a part of something called your menstrual cycle. It happens to girls and women about once a month and you'll bleed a little bit from your vagina. It usually lasts 3-7 days. Don't worry-it's not because you're hurt!

IT'S A NATURAL AND NORMAL PROCESS THAT ALL GIRLS AND WOMEN GO THROUGH!

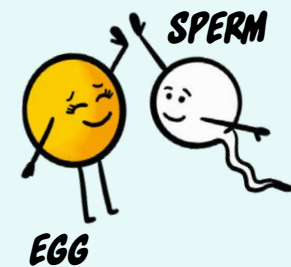
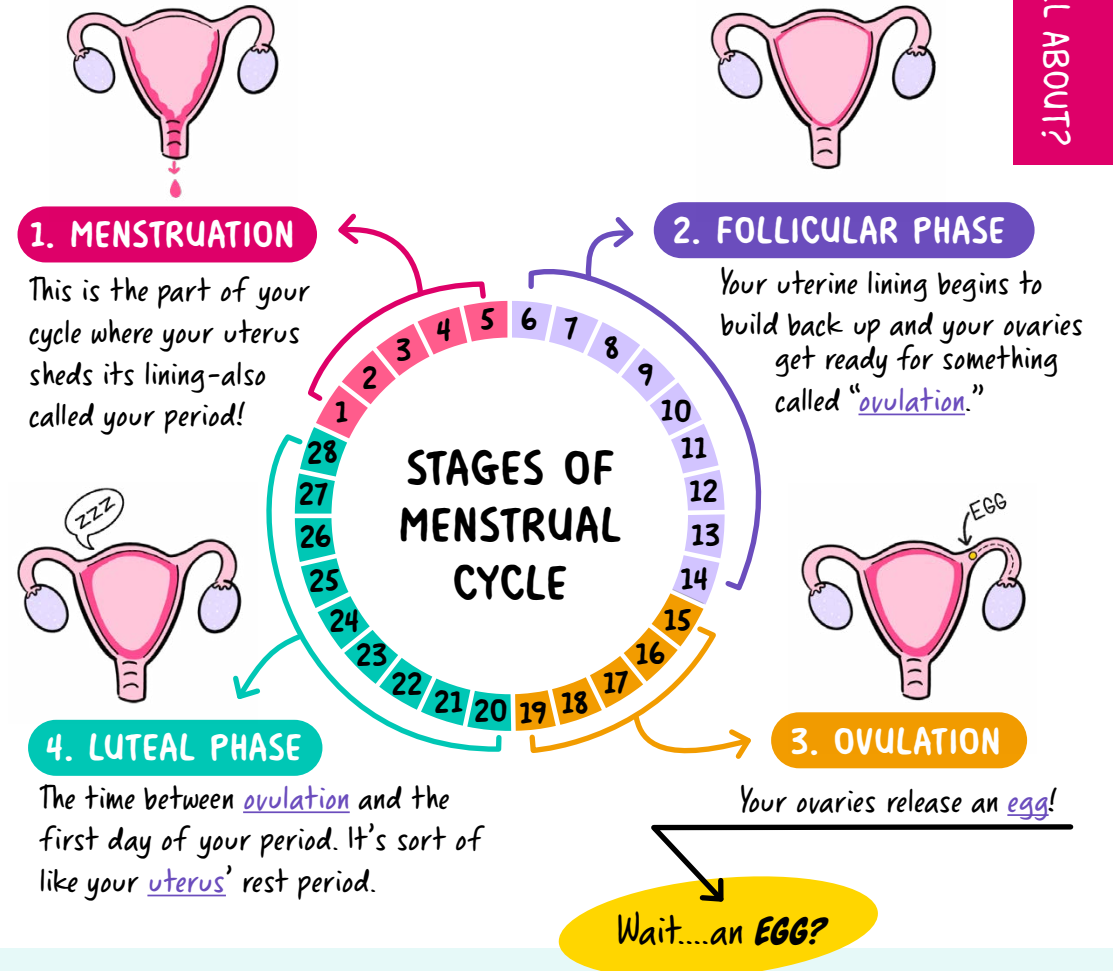
There's an organ in your body called the uterus where a woman's body prepares itself to have a baby.

During your cycle, your uterus builds up a cushy lining on the inside and then sheds it. This is where the blood you'll see comes from.



WHY IS IT CALLED A CYCLE?

Your menstrual cycle has four main stages that repeat over and over- just like a circle. A regular cycle happens on average every 21-35 days, but some girls have shorter cycles and some girls have longer ones! A cycle can also vary. So, don't worry if your period comes after 29 days one month, and after 33 days the next month.



WHAT ARE EGGS AND SPERM??

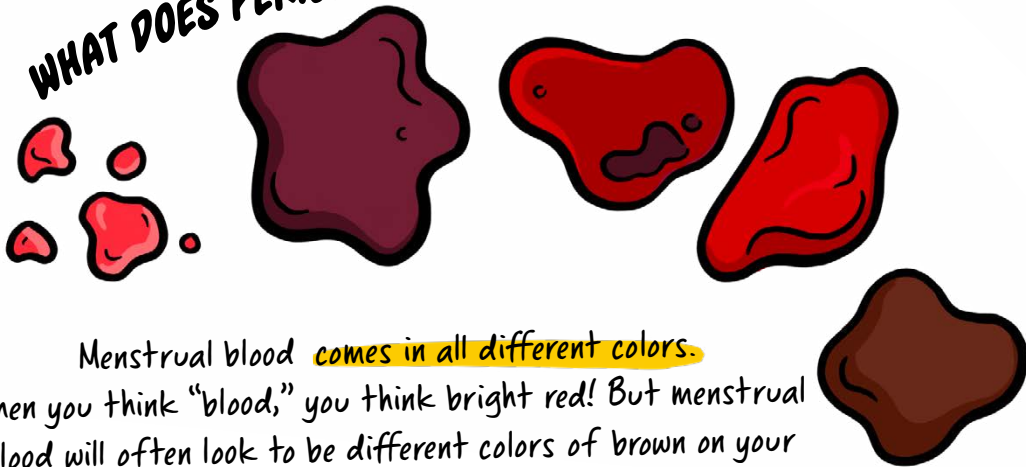
You won't be able to see it, but inside your growing body, you have "eggs" that are developing. And inside a boy's body, there is something called "sperm" that are developing. One day, when you are much older, these eggs and sperm together are what help to make a baby.

SO...HOW MUCH BLOOD WILL THERE BE?

There is no right "amount." On the first day or two it is usually a heavier blood flow. And then it slows. Usually it's about the amount of two to three tablespoons in total for your whole period. If you think you are bleeding more than this, talk to a parent or caregiver for advice.



WHAT DOES PERIOD BLOOD LOOK LIKE?



Menstrual blood **comes in all different colors.**

When you think "blood," you think bright red! But menstrual blood will often look to be different colors of brown on your underwear. And it can be very light, just small stains. Or you can see a "clot" or a "clump" sometimes.

THIS IS ALL NORMAL!

HOW DO I KEEP CLEAN DURING MY PERIOD?

Taking a shower or bath once or twice a day can help you to feel clean.

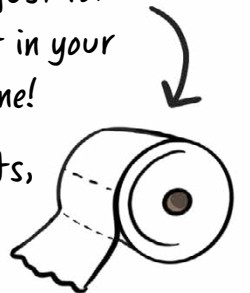


WHAT ABOUT LEAKS?



It's good to change your product every few hours. For lighter blood flow, you can change less often. If a leak stains your clothing, don't worry, **it happens to everyone!** Tie a shirt around your waist to cover the stain until you can change. And if you get your period and don't have a pad or tampon on hand, just roll up some toilet paper and put it in your underwear until you can find one!

(for more on products, see page 36!)



HOW TO CLEAN STAINS?



IT'S OK- STAINS HAPPEN!

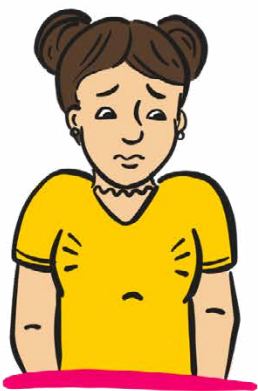
If you get blood on your underwear or clothes, don't worry! Washing them with some soap and cold water will help get the stains out.

PMS

(STANDS FOR PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROME)

It's not a disease or anything bad. Just a natural result of your body's hormones!

PMS refers to all the different things that you can feel before you get your period.



Some girls feel like their breasts are swollen or sore for a few days.



Other girls will feel like their stomach is full or **BLOATED**.



Some will also feel pain in their lower back.



PMS CAN ALSO MAKE YOU FEEL

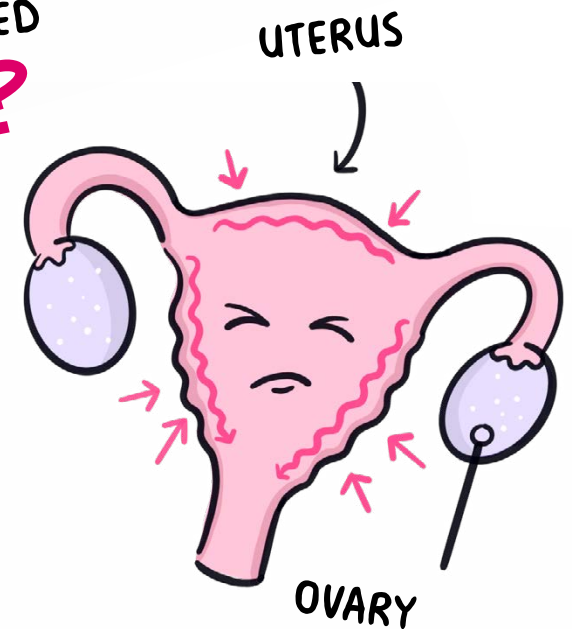
EMOTIONAL

These symptoms will go away soon after your period arrives. If you are worried about PMS, talk to an adult about it.

ALL THESE THINGS ARE **NORMAL!**

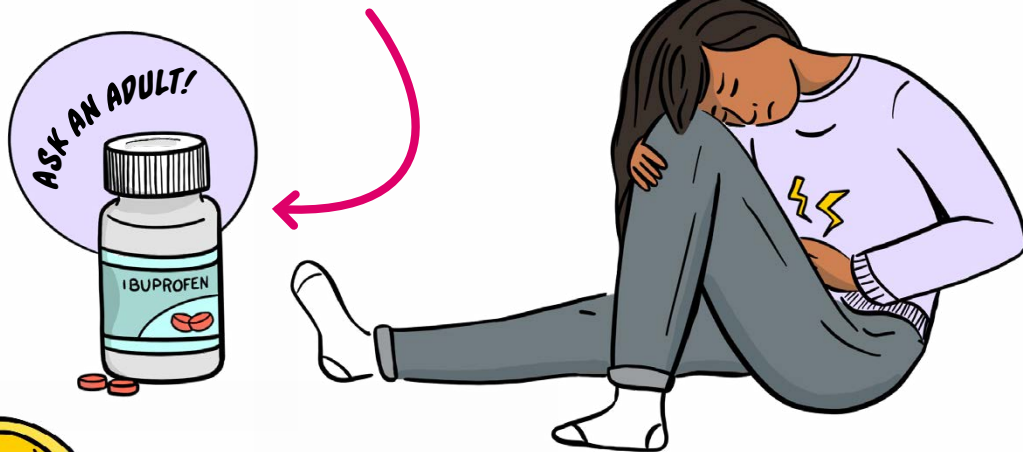
BUT WHAT ABOUT THOSE THINGS CALLED **CRAMPS?**

When your uterus contracts (or squeezes!) to push out the tissue that you see as "menstrual blood," the feeling of the muscles squeezing is called "cramps." For some girls this can be very painful, while others may not feel it at all.

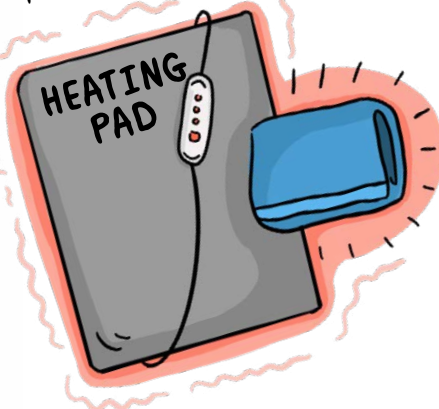


HOW DO YOU MANAGE CRAMPS?

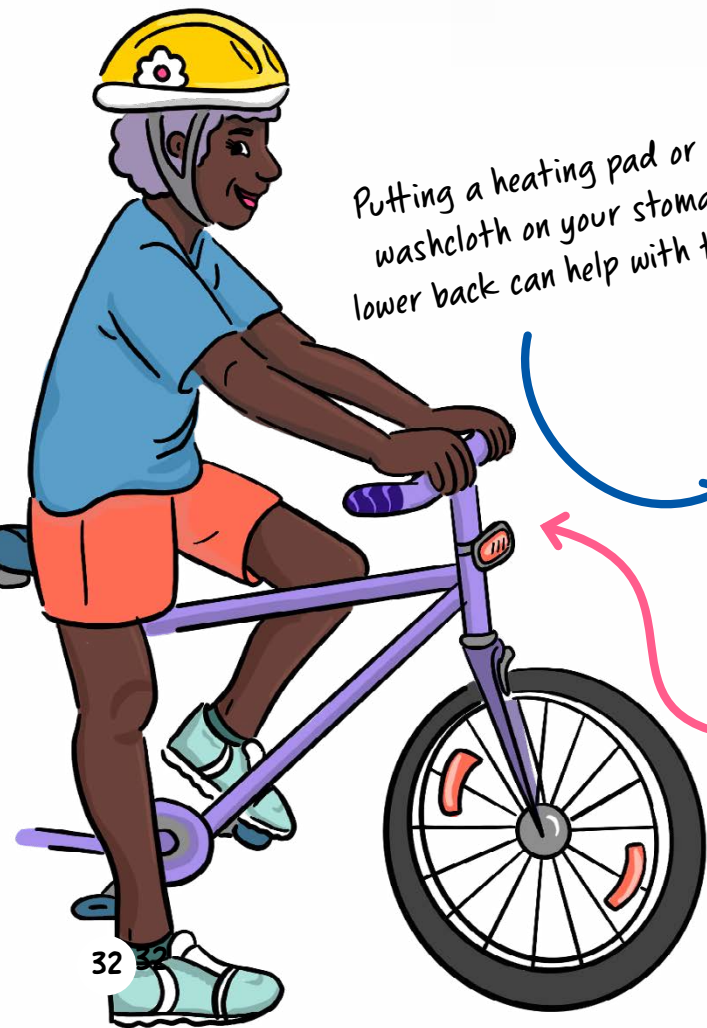
It's always good to ask someone you trust for advice on cramps. Some people like to take pain medicine, like ibuprofen (but make sure to get this from an adult!).



Putting a heating pad or warm washcloth on your stomach or lower back can help with the pain.



Some girls also find that exercise can reduce the pain too!

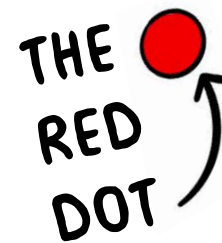


WHAT DO GIRLS ALL OVER AMERICA CALL THEIR PERIODS?

Getting your period is something to be proud of! It is an important sign that your body is growing up.

CALLING YOUR PERIOD BY ITS REAL NAME - A PERIOD! - IS GREAT!

But some girls like to give fun nicknames to their periods. Girls across the USA shared all different names for their periods that they use with friends!



JUST PLAIN OLD
PERIOD.





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