

#HAPPYPERIOD PRESENTS

# SELF

A GUIDE TO PERIODS

POWERING A YOUTH-CENTRIC  
PROGRAM FOCUSED ON MENSTRUAL  
HEALTH AND SELF-EFFICACY



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

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A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE ARTIST  
THAT MADE THIS GUIDE BEAUTIFUL:

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# IN MEMORIAM



MARY BEATRICE DAVIDSON KENNER

Pioneering inventor of the sanitary  
pad belt and tissue paper holder.

## **UNIT ONE: SELF CARE**

**MENSTRUATION  
YOUR BODY IS POWERFUL  
WHAT TO USE**

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PMS & DISORDERS  
TRACKING YOUR PERIOD**

## **UNIT THREE: SELF LOVE**

**LOVE YOURSELF  
FEEL BETTER  
HEALING**

## **UNIT FOUR: SELF EMPOWERED**

**YES YOU CAN  
SELF ESTEEM  
SELF- EFFICACY**

## **GLOSSARY**

**WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?!**

A large, stylized graphic of a human eye, rendered in a light beige color, centered on the page. The eye is composed of several concentric, rounded shapes that form the iris and pupil area, with a thick, curved line representing the eyelids. The overall shape is symmetrical and elongated horizontally.

# **UNIT ONE: SELF CARE**



# 02 MENSTRUATION

**YOUR PERIOD IS COMING.  
EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE OKAY, BOO!**

**Menstruation, or simply your period, is the days of the month when you begin to shed tissue and blood from your uterus and out of your vagina. This lasts between 1-7 days, and comes every 21-31 days.**

Understand, every body is different, so periods can be longer or shorter from person to person. Plus, we get our first periods at different times, during puberty. Then every month your body goes through a cycle to prepare for an opportunity to create life. This happens throughout adulthood, until you've reached your mid 50s.

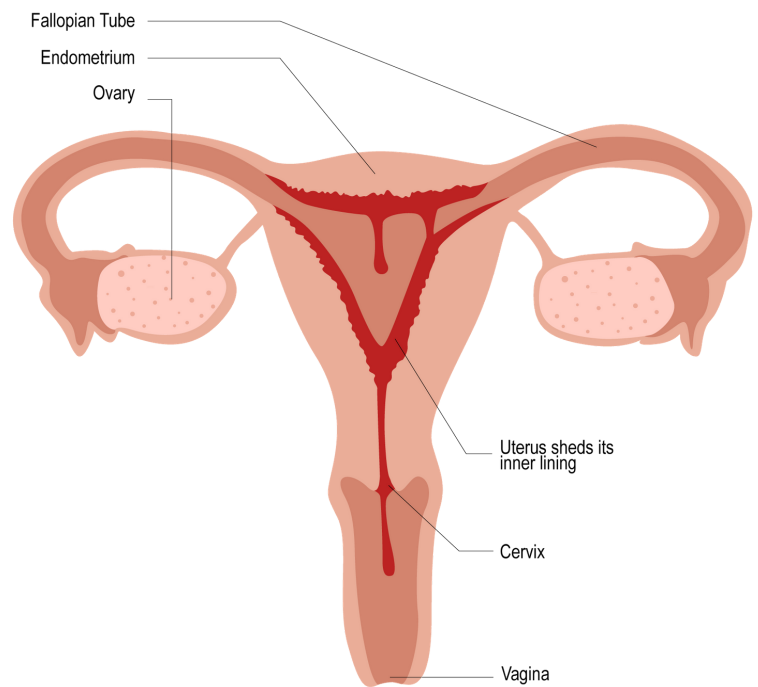
# YOUR BODY IS POWERFUL!

Let's breakdown the four stages of the menstrual cycle.

Inside your body, you have two little sacs called **ovaries** that contain thousands of tiny eggs. Each month **estrogen** (which is a hormone) tells your body to release one of these eggs. While this is happening, the **uterus** lining (called the **endometrium**) starts to thicken.

**Ovulation** occurs when a mature egg is released from the ovary. After the egg is released, it travels along the **fallopian tube** to the thickening endometrium. One of two things can happen here: the egg could be fertilized by sperm, which is the male reproductive cell, result; a baby develops. If there is no fertilization, no baby will develop.

When the egg is not fertilized, it breaks down and the nutrient-rich endometrium is no longer needed. As a result, hormone levels in the body drop and peak. This causes the endometrium to shed, and can also cause people to experience a set of symptoms known as **Premenstrual Syndrome** (also known as PMS).



The endometrium leaves the body through the **vagina** as a fluid containing blood and tissue. This substance can be thick, watery, brown, gooey, red, or translucent. This is your period! Menstruation looks different depending on where you are in your cycle. For many people, day 1 and day 2 have the heaviest flow. That means on those days your body will expel the largest amount of fluid, whereas on day 3 many people have very little fluid. It's different for everyone, but there are ways to know what to expect and keep yourself ready!

# PERIOD PRODUCTS TO USE:

Everybody has a different flow. It could be light, regular, or heavy. Some days could be light while others might be heavier. What you choose to use will depend on your unique period. Period products or menstrual hygiene products are what we call the products you use before, during, and after your period. They help absorb the flow of menstrual fluid.

## PAD

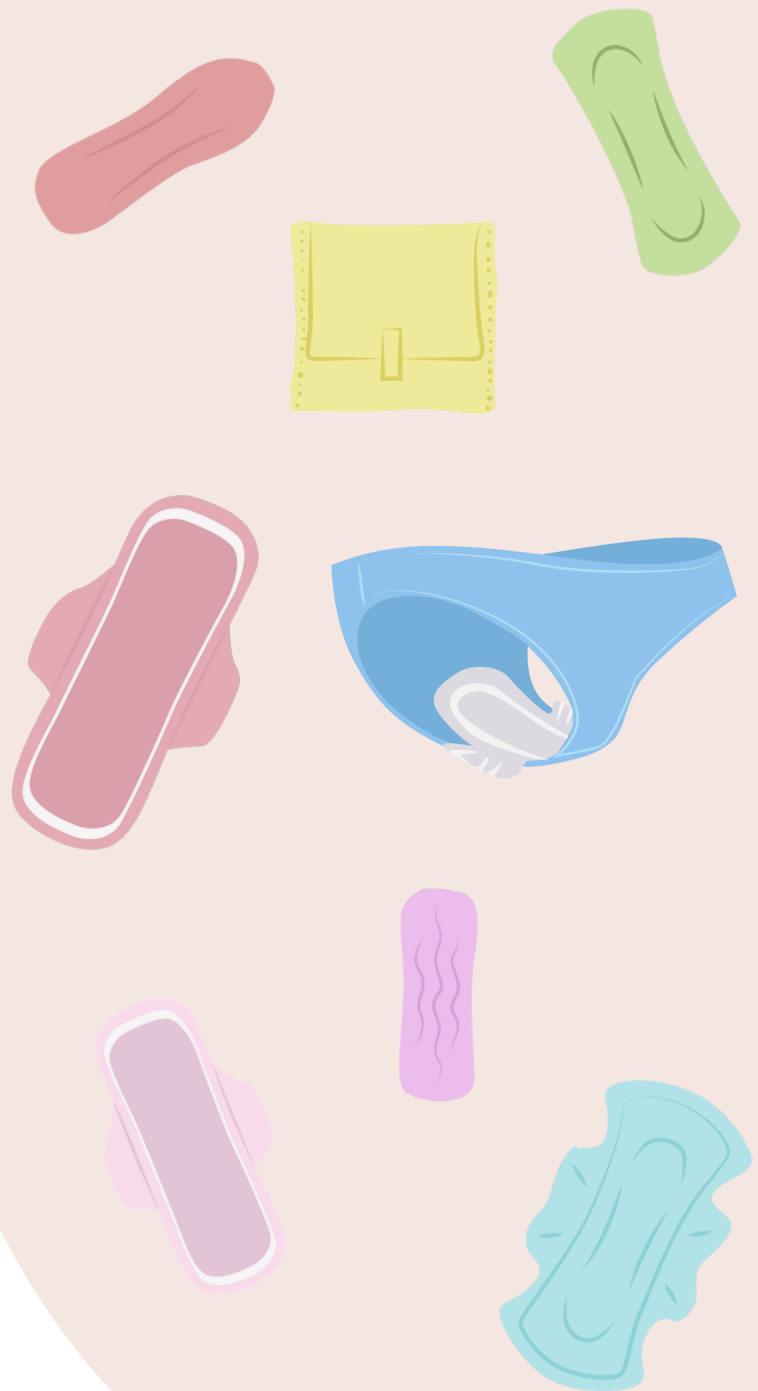
External protection that you wear in your underwear. One side of a pad is coated in a sticky tape that helps to attach it to the inside of your underwear. The other side is soft and very absorbent. This part is worn right against the vulva and can help catch and absorb your period.

## REUSABLE PAD

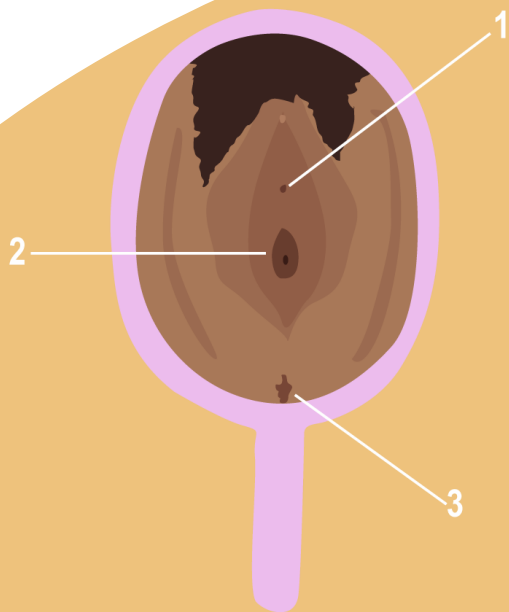
Worn inside the underwear just like a regular pad, but made of fabric with a snap button to help attach it in place. These pads absorb menstrual fluid into the fabric (often fleece or flannel), and are washed after each use.

## PANTY LINER

These are the least absorbent style of pad. They are often quite thin and used during light periods, spotting (before or after your period starts), or worn with tampons for extra protection.







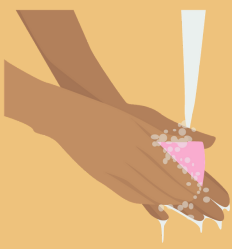
## TAMPON

Small cotton plug that is worn inside the vagina to absorb menstrual fluid. Tampons hold different amounts of period blood depending on their size (light, regular, super, overnight). Your flow determines when you change your tampon. If your tampon is leaking, soaking through, or beginning to smell, then it's time to change it. To be safe, tampons should always be changed within 4-6 hours of use.

## HOW TO INSERT A TAMPON

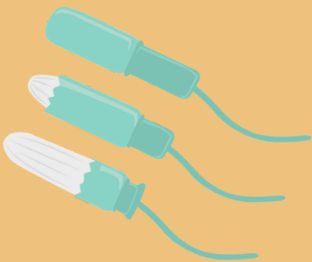
Using a tampon requires you to become familiar with your body. Use a hand-mirror to look at your vulva. You'll notice three holes: your urethral opening (1), vagina (2), and your anus (3). The vagina is where menstrual fluid will be coming out of, and where you'll insert your tampon.

Wash your hands. Find a position that's comfortable for you. You can try having a leg raised while resting on the bath ledge or toilet seat, or squatting slightly. Remove the packing of your tampon of choice.



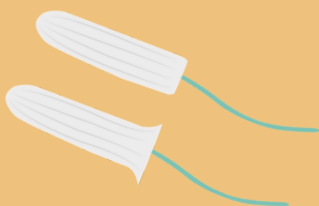
## WITH AN APPLICATOR

Find your vaginal opening with the tip of the tampon applicator, begin to insert the top section of the tube. Once that's in approximately 2 - 2.5 inches, push the bottom of the tube up so it's hidden. Remove the applicator and leave the tampon string hanging out!



## WITHOUT AN APPLICATOR

Use the top of the tampon to find your vaginal opening, begin to push upwards and slightly toward your lower back until the tampon is completely inserted, comfortable, and the string is hanging out.





## MENSTRUAL CUPS

Reusable, silicone cups that are worn inside of the vagina to collect menstrual fluid. They are flexible washable, and can last up to 10 years. You should empty it every 4-12 hours (depending on your flow), wash it in the sink, and then reinsert as needed. After your period is over, you should sterilize the cup by sitting it in boiling water for about 10 minutes.

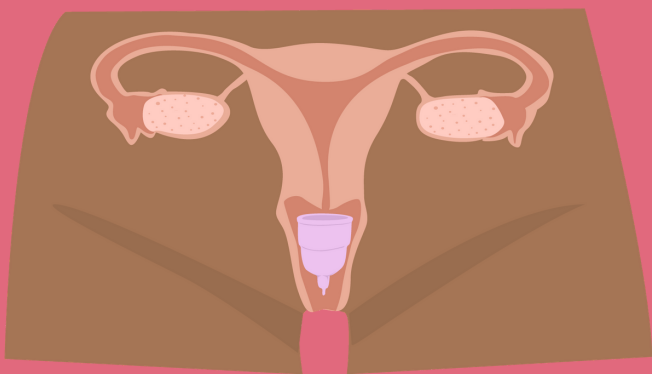
## HOW TO INSERT A MENSTRUAL CUP

### FOLD STYLES



Cups can be folded in many different shapes to make it easy for insertion into the vagina. It should sit comfortably at the top of the vaginal canal, suctioning itself against the cervix. At the bottom of all cups is a stem, which is necessary for removal.

Start by folding your menstrual cup into a small, narrow, shape. Insertion is similar to that of a tampon. It should feel comfortable and sit in your body as shown.



To remove, simply pull the stem downward until you can reach the base of the cup. Pinching the base will release the seal which will allow it to come out easily!

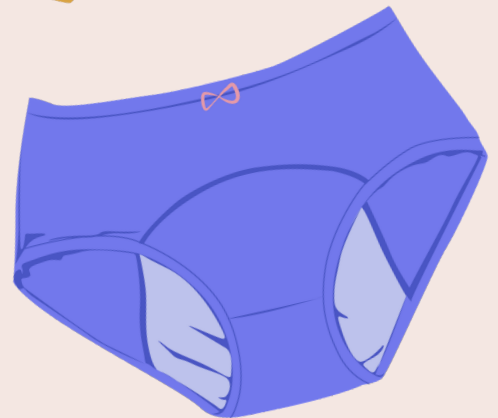
## PERIOD PANTIES

Period panties are absorbent pairs of underwear that can be worn throughout the day (and night), outfitted with specific technology to absorb your flow & wick away moisture, all while fighting bacteria, odor and leakage to keep you dry and fresh, no matter the time of day (or month).

Just like reusable pads, you can wear them over and over again (for up to two years) as long as you wash them after each use. While these undies can totally replace disposable products, some women prefer to wear them as a back-up while using a tampon or pad.

To clean, put in the washing machine on the cold/delicate setting without fabric softener or bleach.

When choosing period panties, our brand of choice is Modibodi - check them out at [www.modibodi.com](http://www.modibodi.com), use code HAPPYPERIOD15 for 15% off.





# **UNIT TWO: SELF AWARE**



# 09 LEARN YOUR BODY

**YOUR PERIOD CAN TELL YOU  
A LOT ABOUT YOUR BODY.**

**During your period you will experience a group symptoms, or physical signs from your body. It's your body's way of letting you know what's happening on the inside.**

There is no normal way for a period to look, because periods are different for everybody, and can be different every month. Pay attention to what's happening with your body during your period. Some experiences can be abnormal, and should be taken more serious. Go see a doctor about anything you feel is abnormal, and don't be scared. It's going to be okay.



# PMS

PMS is a set of possible physical and emotional responses to the hormone levels changing in our bodies as we approach menstruation. PMS symptoms are not the same for everyone, and can change throughout your lifetime.

**Headaches and body pains**, caused by hormones, are frequently experienced as PMS symptoms.

**Cramping** is caused by the contractions of the uterus as it sheds tissue. For some people cramps can be very painful and unbearable. If your cramping is severe please visit a doctor!

**Bloating** right before your period is caused by our bodies retaining excess water. If you're feeling bothered by bloating, you can help to lessen the sensation by watching what you eat.

**Cravings** of unhealthy fatty foods, sweets and carbs during PMS are caused by peaks in our stress hormones. Indulging in these a lot can make you feel tired and sluggish.

**Acne** is caused by rising levels of the hormone progesterone. Progesterone produces a natural oil in our skin that can clog our pores and cause breakouts.

**Constipation** and other changes in bowel movements are caused by progesterone as well! Progesterone can slow down digestion in the intestines which can lead to constipation.

**Mood swings** can make us feel sad, angry, anxious and stable. Not feeling like you have control over your emotions can be very difficult.



# DISORDERS

It is possible to develop illnesses involving your menstrual health. On top of PMS, there are common reproductive system disorders, as a result of imbalances and improper care of your womb.

**Amenorrhea** is the absence of menstrual periods, possibly caused by stress, excess exercise, premature menopause, pregnancy, or hormone dysfunctionality.

**Dysmenorrhea** is the condition of having painful period cramps, often resulting from uterine contractions during an ovulatory cycle. This can also be caused by fibroid tumors or endometriosis.

**Menorrhagia** is excessive duration of amount of menses, accompanied by pain, discomfort, lasting 7- 10 days ,or longer if severe.

**Vaginitis**, caused by bacteria or yeast infection, is an inflammation of the vagina. Signs of this include vaginal burning, itching, yellow or white discharge, and foul smelling discharge.

**Bacterial Vaginosis** results from overgrowth of vaginal bacteria, likely caused by sex or genital cleansing (washes, douches) products.

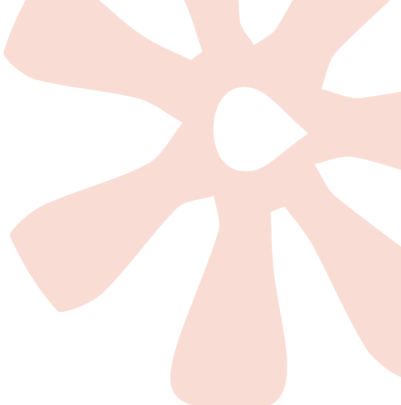
**Endometriosis** is the break away and growth of endometrial tissue inside the uterine cavity, within the pelvis, ovaries, appendix, bowels, and/or bladder.

**Fibroids** are tumors of rapidly dividing cells that invade surrounding tissue, robbing normal cells of nutrients.

**Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)** is a hormonal disorder that causes infrequent or prolonged periods, and enlarged ovaries with small cysts on the outer edges.

# TRACKING YOUR PERIOD

Tracking your cycle is simple and important for learning about your body. In this example, the first day of bleeding (day 1) falls on the first day of the month. The menstruation continues for 5 days, and the full cycle in this example goes on for 30 days! On the calendars below, fill in your period. If you have a smartphone, download a period tracking app!



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	1	2	3	4

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	1	2	3	4

29	30	31	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	1



# PERIOD PLANNER

EVERYTHING IS OKAY.

DATE

---

FLOW



Light



Medium



Heavy

I EXPERIENCED

☐

Bloating

☐

Insomnia

☐

Constipation

☐

Cramping

☐

Diarrhea

☐

Nausea

☐

Fatigue

☐

Mood Swings

☐

Headache

☐

Face Breakout

NOTES AND REMINDERS

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# **UNIT THREE: SELF LOVE**



# 12 LOVE YOURSELF

**THIS IS THE ONLY BODY  
YOU'LL EVER HAVE.**

**It's super important to love your body and treat it well. Think of your body as a home, that you own, and have complete control over.**

Always remember your body is unique and beautiful. We show love to our bodies by how we treat it. You have the power to take action when you don't feel good. Self-care is important to practice, even when you're not on your period.

# FEEL BETTER

Yes, sometimes our periods can be painful, or even make us sad, and feel not so good about ourselves. However, you can feel good during and after your period. Let's cover what you can do to feel better, and have a better period.

To relieve constipation, bloating, and cravings, it's best to look at your diet. Fiber is an easy way to relieve discomfort. Fiber can be found in fruits, vegetables, and whole wheat bread! Eating more fibre-rich foods, nuts, and proteins, while keeping active are all good for our bodies.

Having more, smaller, meals during the day can help fight cravings. Other things to help with constipation are: increased water intake, less sugar, and less salt.

If you're feeling bothered by bloating, you can help to lessen the sensation by watching what you eat. Salt and salty foods will make your bloating feel worse - so try.

caffeine if you usually consume it (caffeine can be found in coffee, tea, some sodas, and candy bars! If you are going to have tea, try something that has valerian root in it.

Hormonal acne can only be treated from the inside, so talk to your doctor if you experience frequent acne right before your period. From the outside, you can help your skin by eating healthy and washing your face twice daily with a gentle cleanser.





# HERBS & OILS

**Black Cohosh** calms the nervous system and balances hormones; menstrual pain relief.

**Castor** helps balance hormones, fights skin problems like acne and sun burns.

**Chamomile** fights most PMS symptoms, aids anxiety, insomnia, and is anti-inflammatory.

**Cinnamon** strengthens the immune system, regulates your blood sugar, and lowers cholesterol levels. Also good for weight loss and digestion.

**Dong Quai** is the "queen of all female herbs." Addresses all menstrual related illnesses.

**Frankincense** helps relieve anxiety, stress, inflammation, and aches.

**Ginger** strengthens your immune system, and treats nausea and vomiting.

**Lavender** has a calming effect, and helps with sleep.

**Lemongrass** can help relieve sore muscle, cramps, spasms, and nausea.

**Nettle** cleanses and helps control heavy menstrual bleeding.

**Peppermint** soothes aches and pain from cramps, gas, heartburn, indigestion, and diarrhea.

**Red Raspberry** helps with leg cramps, anemia, morning sickness, diarrhea, and even gingivitis.

# HEALING

Try to recognize the way you're feeling throughout the month and think about why you might be feeling that way. By paying attention to your body and taking care of yourself, you can heal pains and make yourself feel better.

Ask yourself, what can I do for my mind (meditation, deep breathing, keeping a journal)? What can I do for my body (stretch, exercise, eat healthy)? What can I do for my happiness (things you love and enjoy)?

Do you have a favorite sport or activity that involves exercise? Exercise releases hormones called endorphins. **Endorphins** can help us feel less pain, feel happier, and have a positive effect on our bodies! For the cramping, doing pelvic stretches is also helpful. Yoga is a great way to stretch your muscles and become stronger.

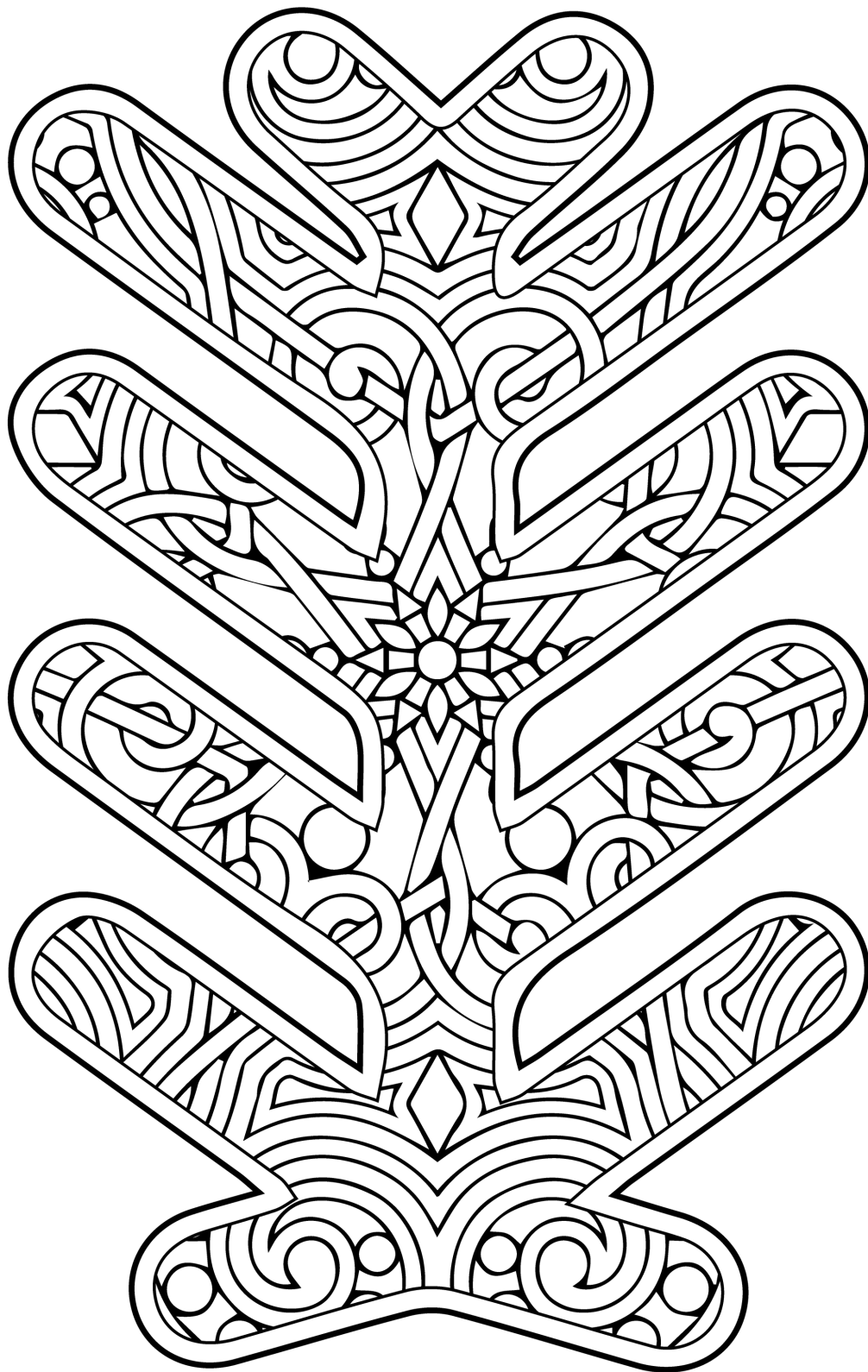
The best way to fight headaches and aches is to relax and avoid stress. So try to relax and not do any hard activities. Try taking a bath, drink lots of water, or take a nap. Get as much sleep as you feel you need. Drinking tea with valerian root in it, is a natural way to feel sleepy.



During your period you may feel upset, irritated, sad, and uncomfortable. You may want to do something to feel better or get away from those feelings for a little while. Try reaching a book or watching movie or tv show. It's a great way to take our minds off of the things around us.

Journaling or writing down how you feel and why you think you feel that way, is something you can try to help you relax and care for yourself. Meditation, or sitting in silence and taking deep breaths, can help calm your body and mind.

# COLORING EXERCISE





# **UNIT FOUR: SELF EMPOWERED**





# 10 YES YOU CAN!

## YOU CAN FEEL GOOD ABOUT HAVING A PERIOD.

**With all of the knowledge you have about your body and how to take care of yourself during your period, you have full power to have a good experience.**

Self-care isn't just important during PMS and your period, it's important to practice self-care every day of your life! This period guide was created to help you make your own choices for your body. You have full control of your body and mind. It all starts with how you feel about yourself on the inside.

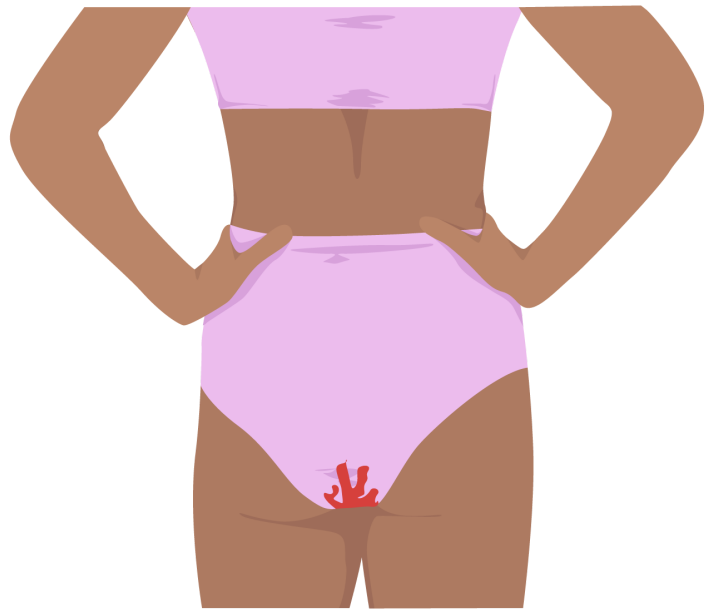
# SELF-ESTEEM

How do you feel about yourself?  
What do you think about yourself?  
Do you feel good about your body?

Sometimes other people may say things to us that are not kind, it's important to not let their words make you feel bad. Or someone may treat you badly, but you shouldn't let that keep you down or make you sad. It's important to feel good about yourself, inside and out.

**Shame** is a feeling of disgrace, guilt, or embarrassment. Periods are nothing to be ashamed about. Never let anyone shame you or try to make you feel bad about your body. Just because you have a period doesn't mean you are less than or not worthy of love and respect.

Your period may come unexpectedly, or a when you didn't plan for it to come. It's common to stain your clothes when your period comes. A blood stain may be embarrassing, but remember that it is okay and it doesn't mean that you did anything wrong.



**Self-esteem** is your judgment of self, or how you think about yourself. It's also called self-respect. You can develop and keep a healthy self-esteem by practicing self care during and after your period.

Our periods may sometimes have us feeling gross or tired, and not so good. Always remember that it's temporary, or will last a short period of time. And if you don't feel good, you have the power to change that. It's up to you!

Treat yourself well by thinking good thoughts about you and your body. Be kind to yourself.

# SELF- EFFICACY

You have a huge responsibility of self-care when it comes to your period. It is only your job to take your body when you're on your period. Using this guide, you have all of the information you need to have a healthy menstrual cycle.

With this guide, and everything you know about menstruation, are you confident that you will be able to manage your period care? To be confident means to believe in yourself. **Confidence** is to having trust or good belief in your powers or abilities. It's knowing that you can do it!

**Self-efficacy** is your belief in your ability to succeed in challenges, goals, and tasks. It is your confidence in yourself when working to solve a problem or perform a task.

Managing your menstrual health is a life-long responsibility. Every time your period comes, set a goal to have a better experience. Challenge yourself to stay ready. Keep a small bag of pads in your locker or backpack. Use a calendar or app to track your period. Use all of the tools you've learned in this guide.

We believe that you can make your own decisions about your body. Do you believe in yourself? Are you confident that you can take care of your self when your period comes? If your answer is yes, then that is good self-efficacy! If your answer is yes, then that is healthy self- esteem.

# JOURNAL WRITING EXERCISE

Name:

Date:

Writing a journal helps you recognize your own feelings.  
Write down at least 10 things that made you feel good today.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines or other markings on the page.

A light pink, stylized graphic of a hand with fingers spread, holding a heart shape in the center. The hand and heart are rendered in a simple, rounded style. The background is a solid, slightly darker shade of pink.

# **COMMON QUESTIONS**

# COMMON QUESTIONS

**Can anyone tell I'm having my period?** No! Not unless you tell them, that is.

**Can I exercise during menstruation?** Yes! It's actually recommended to. Light stretches and workouts can help reduce cramping and make you feel happier, too.

**Can I take a bath during my period?** Of course! Because of the water pressure, when you're in water your menstrual fluid won't actually go outside of your vagina.

**Can I go swimming during my period?** Yes. When you go swimming you should be using a tampon and not a pad. Tampons will absorb your menstrual flow, not the water in the pool!

**Can anyone smell my period?** If you change your pads and tampons regularly, nobody will be able to tell!

**Why's there white fluid on my underwear?** That is vaginal discharge, which is normal as it's our bodies natural way of cleaning the vagina. If your discharge starts to smell or change into a colour that isn't white or clear, then talk to your doctor about it. You can wear a pantyliner to help collect excess discharge.

**At what age can I use tampons?** You can use them whenever you feel ready! Choose whatever product works for you.

**Can the tampon get lost or fall out?** Definitely not! Your cervix blocks the tampons from traveling any further than where you inserted it. Tampons are held in place by the muscular walls of your vagina, so once it's in, it will not fall out. If for some reason your tampon string is no longer sticking outside of your body, use a clean finger to feel for it inside the vagina.



# **GLOSSARY**



# GLOSSARY

**ANUS** The opening where the gastrointestinal tract ends and exits the body.

**CERVIX** The narrow passage forming the lower end of the uterus.

**ENDOMETRIUM** The mucous membrane lining the uterus, which thickens during the menstrual cycle in preparation for possible implantation of an embryo.

**ESTROGEN** Any of a group of steroid hormones that promote the development and maintenance of female characteristics of the body. Such hormones are also produced artificially for use in oral contraceptives or to treat menopausal and menstrual disorders.

**FALLOPIAN TUBES** A pair of tubes in the reproductive system which allow eggs to travel from the ovaries to the uterus.

**FERTILIZATION** The process of combining an egg (ovum) with sperm to create a zygote.

**HORMONE** A chemical substance produced in our bodies that helps to control and regulate our cells, organs, behaviour, and mood.

**IRREGULAR** An abnormal variation in length of menstrual cycles.

**MENARCHE** The first occurrence of menstruation.

**MENSES** Blood and other matter discharged from the uterus during menstruation.

**MENSTRUATION** One of the stages of the menstrual cycle in which the lining and tissue of the uterus is shed through the vagina.





# GLOSSARY

**MENSTRUAL CYCLE** The process of ovulation and menstruation that we experience repeatedly from menarche to menopause.

**PERIOD** Another way to say menstruation.

**PRE-MENSTRUAL SYNDROME** The physical and emotional symptoms that some people experience in the weeks leading up to menstruation.

**PROGESTERONE** A steroid hormone that stimulates the uterus to prepare for pregnancy.

**PUBERTY** The time in which adolescents reach sexual maturity and become capable of reproduction.

**OVARIES** A part of the reproductive organ that contains and produces eggs.

**OVA / OVUM** The singular and plural names for the eggs in the ovaries. They can be fertilized by sperm eventually turning into an embryo.

**OVULATION** The process of an egg leaving the ovary.

**SPERM** A reproductive cell found in the male reproductive organ. To create a baby, a sperm cell needs to fertilize an egg in the uterus.

**SELF-EFFICACY** Your own belief in your ability to succeed in specific situations or to accomplish a task or achieve a goal.

**SELF-ESTEEM** How you think or feel about your self-worth or personal value.



# GLOSSARY

**TIME OF THE MONTH** Another way to say menstruation (as many people's cycles are roughly a month long).

**UTERUS** The reproductive organ, where ovulation and menstruation happens, and where babies grow.

**URETHRAL OPENING** The opening where the urethra (a tube) connects the bladder. This is where pee comes out of.

**VAGINA** The muscular canal that extends from the vulva to the cervix. This is where menstrual fluid exits the body during menstruation, where sexual intercourse leading to reproduction takes place, and where babies exit the body during childbirth.

**VAGINAL DISCHARGE** A combination of fluid and cells that are continuously shed through the vagina. Normal discharge helps keep vaginal tissues healthy, provides lubrication and protects against infection and irritation. The amount, color and consistency of normal discharge varies from whitish and sticky to clear and watery. It depends on the stage of your menstrual cycle. Abnormal discharge (having an unusual appearance or smell) may be a sign that something is wrong.

**VULVA** The external genitals. Many people will refer to the external genitals as the vagina but that is incorrect. The vagina is the canal inside of our bodies, though it is visible as a small hole from the outside.

**WOMB** Also known as the uterus, located at the lower belly.

**YONI** Another word for the vulva, vagina, womb, or female genitalia in general.



## FROM THE FOUNDER

It doesn't make sense to me, that we're not taught anything about our periods in school. I had an amazing teacher for my 5th grade year, the year I got my first period. Ms. Lucy Jackson had the biggest heart and she didn't take no mess or negativity. My Mama had given me the period talk, and I was confident about it coming. Ms. Jackson assured me everything was cool, there was nothing to fear. I would give her a look if I had to go to the restroom. She would keep extra pads in her desk, and answer any questions we had. She gave us a safe space to process what was happening with our bodies, then a chance to develop confidence. I want that for every body that has a period. To know you have the power!



# Help bring this curriculum to light!

WE NEED THE SUPPORT OF PARENTS,  
TEACHERS, AND OTHERS AFFILIATED WITH  
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

Make a donation or connect with us to facilitate a workshop in your community. Encourage a school or community center to get involved, and help ensure all students and staff—regardless of sex or gender—understand the menstrual cycle.

[HASHTAGHAPPYPERIOD.ORG](https://hashtaghappyperiod.org)

