



A Guide for those just Beginning Menstruation

Clinical Review Statement

This resource has been developed by The PMDD Project and reviewed by our Clinical Advisory Board for clinical accuracy and alignment with current evidence and guidelines.

Version: 1.2

Last reviewed: June 2026

Next scheduled review: December 2026

Reviewed by:

The PMDD Project Clinical Advisory Board

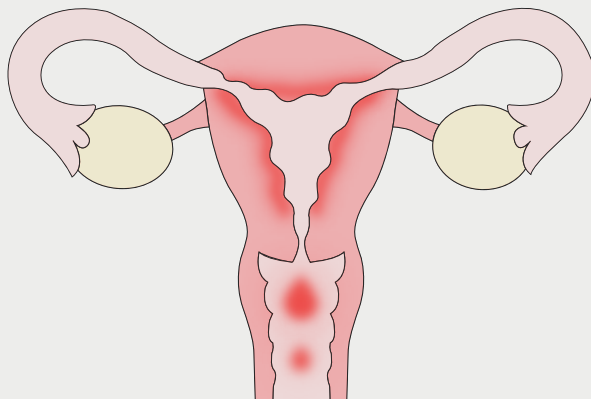
Welcome to a NEW CHAPTER of life!

Whether you're just starting to experience periods, or even if you've had a few, we're here to make sure you feel informed and supported. Periods are a natural part of life, but sometimes they bring symptoms that can feel intense, especially for those with conditions like Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD).

Let's break it down so you can feel empowered and comfortable, with all the tools you need to understand your body.

What is Menstruation?

Menstruation (your period) is when your body releases blood and tissue from the uterus through the vagina.



It usually happens about once a month and is a normal sign that your body is growing and changing.

Your first few years of periods might be *irregular, heavier, lighter, or unpredictable*. That's completely normal whilst your hormones settle.

Remember, your body is going through a big change!

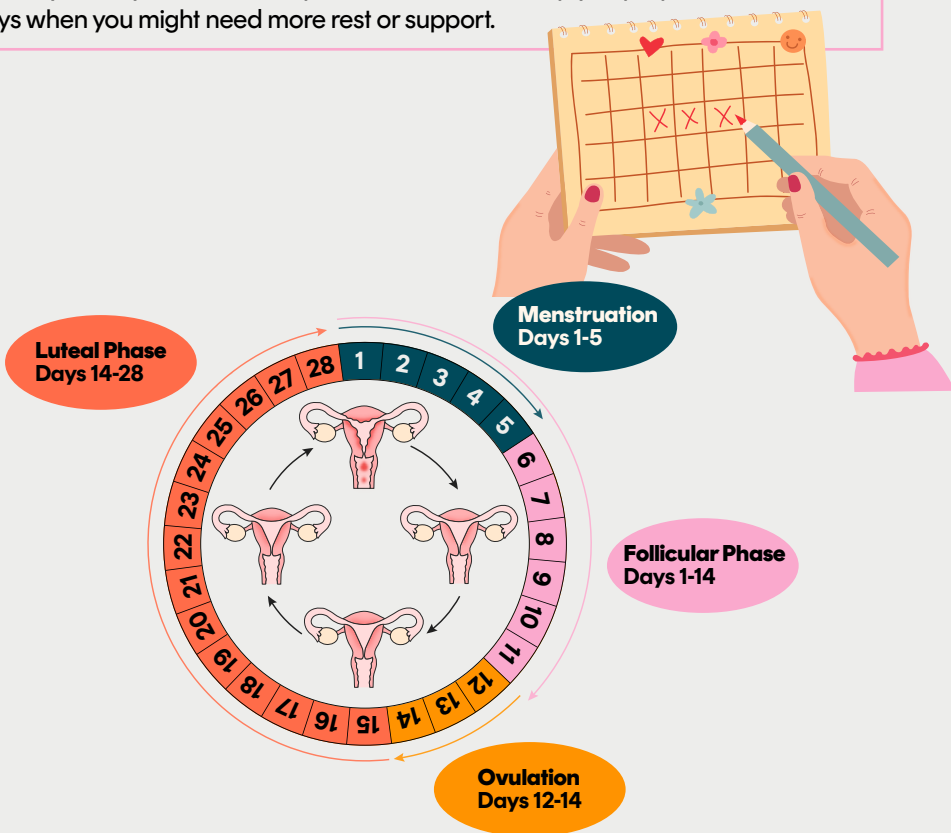
Periods are normal, and everyone experiences them differently

But every person's cycle is unique, and symptoms can be very different from one person to another.

Tracking your cycle

Keeping track of when your period starts, how long it lasts, and how you feel can really help you understand your body.

You can use a simple calendar, a notes app, or a period-tracking app. Over time, you may start to notice patterns, which can help you prepare for days when you might need more rest or support.



Typical symptoms

It's normal to feel cramps, mood swings, or tiredness in the days leading up to a period.

These symptoms can vary but are usually manageable.

More intense symptoms

Some people experience PMDD, which can cause more severe mood swings, sadness, or tiredness.

If you notice symptoms like these, you're not alone, and there are ways to manage and understand them better.

Knowing the signs of PMDD (without worrying)

If you experience intense feelings, such as anxiety, irritability, or sadness before your period, this may be part of something called PMDD.

PMDD affects a small percentage of people and can cause strong emotional and physical symptoms in the days leading up to menstruation.

What to watch out for

PMDD symptoms usually start a week or two before a period (*luteal phase*) and go away shortly after.

These might include feeling **unusually sad or stressed, strong irritability, fatigue, or changes in sleep.**

Normal or not?

Experiencing some changes before your period is normal, and it's okay if you sometimes feel off.

But if you notice a pattern of more intense feelings that make daily activities harder, **talk to a parent, friend, or trusted adult.**

If anything feels confusing, scary, or hard to handle, it's important to talk to someone about it - you don't have to figure this out alone.

Create your own safe space for comfort

Your comfort zone

Having a cosy spot where you can rest and recharge can help you feel better when symptoms hit.

Decorate it with things that bring you comfort - soft blankets, gentle lighting, or a favourite book.

Take time for you

Your body is going through a lot!

Don't feel bad if you need some extra "me time".

Listening to what your body needs is part of taking care of yourself.

Self-care during your cycle

Gentle activities

When symptoms feel intense, try calming activities like reading, watching your favourite film, or stretching.

It's all about giving yourself space to feel better without pressure.

Staying hydrated and eating well

Drinking water and eating balanced meals can help manage symptoms.

Small changes like these make a big difference in how you feel.

How to talk about your period (yes, it's okay to talk about it!)

Breaking the taboo

Periods are a healthy, normal part of life.

Talking openly with friends, family, or others you trust can make you feel more comfortable. It also helps them understand what you're experiencing.

Reach out for support

It's okay to tell someone if you're feeling overwhelmed by your symptoms. This could be a parent, carer, teacher, school nurse, or another trusted adult.

If you don't feel able to talk to someone you know, you can also reach out to places like Childline or Kooth, where you can talk to someone confidentially about how you're feeling.

Social life and self-care

No need for FOMO

If you're not up for social events because of PMDD symptoms, that's perfectly fine.

Instead, suggest alternatives like movie nights, quiet walks, or even a cosy hangout at home.

Limit alcohol

When you're of age, keep in mind that alcohol can worsen symptoms, especially during PMDD phases.

Try gentler hangouts that won't leave you feeling low for days after.

Look out for yourself: It's all about finding what works for you

Build a routine

Try out small, daily routines like keeping a journal, setting aside time for hobbies, or going for walks.

Little habits like these can make a big difference in how you feel.

Take time to rest

Remember, rest is productive!

If you need extra downtime before or during your period, give yourself permission to take it.

This is a great way to care for both your mind and body.

The PMDD Project's role in menstrual education

At The PMDD Project, we know that learning about periods and conditions like PMDD can feel like a lot.

That's why we're here to help break down the basics, provide workshops, and give you the tools you need to understand your body.

Education makes it easier to ask for what you need and makes sure that everyone's experiences are respected and understood.

You've got this!

Navigating your period and understanding PMDD symptoms (*if you have them*) is a unique journey, and it's okay to go at your own pace.

Every experience is different, and you deserve to feel supported every step of the way.

We're here to provide resources, encouragement, and guidance to help you feel empowered and informed on this path.



Need urgent support?

We know that managing PMDD can be incredibly difficult, and at times, the emotional weight can feel overwhelming. If you are experiencing severe distress, suicidal thoughts, or feel you are in crisis, please know that you are not alone and that support is available. You deserve to be heard and kept safe.

If you are in immediate danger:

Please call 999 or go to your nearest Accident and Emergency (A&E) department immediately.

Samaritans: Call 116 123 for free, 24/7 confidential support, or visit www.samaritans.org.

Shout: Text 'SHOUT' to 85258 for free, confidential, 24/7 text support.

Please note: This resource is intended for information and peer support; it is not a substitute for professional mental health care or crisis intervention. Please reach out to your GP, local mental health services, or the resources above if you need urgent help.

