

PERIOD FACTS

Menstruation may be inconvenient but it's a fact of life, and it's not always regular or predictable. Keep reading for some explanations and tips to keep your period in check.

WHY ISN'T MY PERIOD THE SAME LENGTH EVERY MONTH?

There is no such thing as a “normal” period. Menstrual cycles can vary from woman to woman and from month to month, and there isn't always a particular reason. However, stress, weight loss or gain, a new birth control prescription, exercise, travel, changes in routine or diet, or more serious issues like a thyroid condition, anorexia or ovarian cysts can all affect your period's duration.

WHY DOES THE COLOR OF MY PERIOD BLOOD CHANGE?

Menstrual blood may become dark brown or almost black as you near the end of your period. Totally normal. It has been in your uterus longer than your first day flow, and it changes color over time.

WHAT'S WITH THE CRAMPS?

Many women experience cramps during their periods. You may feel pain in your lower abdomen, back, or upper legs. Cramps are usually caused by hormone-like substances called prostaglandins that trigger the uterus to contract and expel its lining every month. Higher levels of prostaglandins are associated with more severe menstrual cramps. Other monthly symptoms include bloating, tender breasts, headaches, nausea and fatigue.

Exercise, warm baths, a heating pad or an over-the-counter pain reliever containing ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB) or naproxen sodium (Aleve) can help ease discomfort.

CAN I GET PREGNANT IF I HAVE SEX DURING MY PERIOD?

You are less likely to become pregnant while menstruating, but it's still a possibility, especially without any contraception. It's always recommended to use some form of contraception at any time in your cycle. Condoms are a great choice, and they also protect you from STIs.

I'VE BEEN REALLY STRESSED OUT LATELY. CAN THAT TAKE A TOLL ON MY PERIOD?

Stress can temporarily alter the functioning of your hypothalamus — an area of your brain that controls the hormones that regulate your menstrual cycle. Ovulation and menstruation may slow down or even stop as a result. Regular periods usually resume after your stress decreases. Being a student can be stressful. Try these [Stress Relief Strategies](#) or attend an [NYU Stressbusters](#) event.

WHEN SHOULD I SEE A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER ABOUT MY PERIOD?

- Your periods suddenly stop for more than 90 days
- Your periods are less than 21 days or more than 35 days apart
- Your periods become erratic after having been regular
- You bleed for more than 7 days
- You bleed more heavily than usual or soak through more than one pad or tampon every hour or two
- You bleed between periods
- You bleed during sexual activity but do not have your period
- You develop severe pain during your period
- You spike a fever and feel sick after using tampons

ARE THERE ANY ALTERNATIVE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS BESIDES PADS AND TAMPONS?

There are many safe and eco-friendly products that you can use for your period. The products listed below are manufactured with a minimum of harsh chemicals, create less trash than traditional products, and are budget friendly.

- [DivaCup](#) - reusable menstrual cup
- [SoftCups](#) - offer both reusable and disposable menstrual cups
- [Lunette](#) - reusable menstrual cup
- [GladRags](#) - reusable cloth pads & menstrual sea sponges

