



## MENSTRUATION

Menstruation is a woman's monthly bleeding, often called your "period." During your monthly menstrual cycle, your uterus lining builds up to prepare for pregnancy. If you do not get pregnant, your hormone levels (estrogen and progesterone) begin falling. Very low levels of estrogen and progesterone tell your body to begin menstruation. When you menstruate, your body discards the monthly buildup of the lining of your uterus (womb).

**Q: How long is a typical menstrual cycle?**

A: Your menstrual cycle is counted from the first day of your period up to the first day of your next period. The typical menstrual cycle is 28 days long, but each woman is different. Also, a woman's menstrual cycle length might be different from month to month.

**Q: What is ovulation?**

A: Ovulation is when the ovary releases an egg so it can be fertilized by a sperm to make a baby. A woman is most likely to get pregnant if she has sex without birth control in the three days before and up to the day of ovulation. It may be difficult to know when you ovulate, but you can watch for signs. A few days before you ovulate, your vaginal mucus or discharge changes and becomes more slippery and clear. Some women feel minor cramping on one side of their pelvic area when they ovulate. More than 90 percent of women say they get symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMS) in the time after ovulation and before their period starts.

**Q: When should I see a doctor about a period problem?**

A: See your doctor about your period if:

- You have gone three months without a period and are not pregnant, breastfeeding, or in perimenopause or menopause.
- You get irregular periods (your period happens more often than every 24 days or less often than every 38 days, or lasts longer than 8 days).
- You feel dizzy, lightheaded, weak, or tired, or you have chest pain or trouble breathing during or after your period.
- You bleed through one or more pads or tampons every one to two hours.
- You suddenly get a fever and feel sick after using tampons.
- You have menstrual pain that doesn't get better with over-the-counter pain medicine, such as ibuprofen or naproxen.
- You have period pain, cramps, or heavy bleeding that makes you miss work, school, or other daily activities.
- You get a migraine around your period or your regular migraine treatment stops working.
- You have blood clots in your menstrual flow that are larger than a quarter.
- You have bleeding after sex, more than once.