

Periods in Adolescent Girls

When should my periods start & what changes should I expect?

Most girls will start their periods around the age of 12, which is the time you change from primary school to secondary school, but some girls may start their periods as early as 8 or as late as 15. You will start noticing some changes in your body, 1-2 years before the start of your periods. You will grow taller, have hair under your arms and pubic area, develop acne and start having breast development.

How heavy should my periods be?

Periods can vary in amount and duration in different months. Generally, you will bleed for 3-7 days and may need to change pads 3-4 times per day on the heavier days (depending on type/brand of sanitary products). If you bleed through the pads or need to change pads every couple of hours, need to use pads along with tampons, or have soakage of bed sheets at night, your bleeding is heavier than expected.

What to do if I have very heavy periods

We recommend you should eat a healthy and iron-rich diet and that you talk to your doctor as soon as possible. You may be given iron tablets to avoid anaemia and/or a medicine called Tranexamic acid for 3-5 days. You may be referred to a haematologist to check your blood clots properly.

How often should I get my periods?

For the first 18-24 months, you might not have a period every month, it may be delayed by a few days, but you could also miss a few months. Sometimes you can also get more than one period a month. Periods usually become more regular after 2 years, when you should expect a period every 25-35 days. It is useful to keep track of the days of your periods by recording them on an app. Different apps are available now, in which you can plot the days, the flow, and any other symptoms such as mood changes or tummy pain that you get during your periods.

I get very bad tummy pains during my periods - What should I do?

It's normal to get period pains which are generally worse the first 2-3 days of your periods when they are heaviest. You can take regular Paracetamol or Ibuprofen (if no allergies/asthma/stomach ulcers). Activity helps reduce pain and so it's good to remain active and drink plenty of water. For stronger pain that is stopping you from doing regular work or attend school, tablets like Naproxen or

Mefenamic acid can be prescribed by your doctor. They can also advise if there could be a different reason for your pain like constipation or other bowel problems.

Since I had my periods, I get very moody - Is something wrong?

No, this can be normal. Periods occur due to fluctuations in hormones, this can cause changes in your mood. Changes are generally short-lasting, and you gradually get used to this over time.

I am not sure what to do if I have my period in school?

Most schools are supportive, your teachers will arrange lessons in year 5 to discuss the changes girls go through during puberty (changes from childhood to adolescence). They will let you know about the school stock of sanitary products, where to find them and who you can ask to access them.

If you need to change your sanitary towel you can request a toilet pass.

If you feel unwell, you will be taken to the school nurse for support and give medicines if needed.

What should I do if I stop getting periods?

Periods can be irregular and missing few periods can be normal. Occasionally after 1 or 2 periods following menarche (very first period), there might be a gap of a few months. This is normal in the first 1-2 years. If you stop having periods after having regular periods previously, you should talk to your doctor. Periods usually start spontaneously but if you continue to have delayed periods for more than 3 months you may need some investigations (blood tests) and a referral to a specialist.

My Mum has Endometriosis, can I have it too?

There can be a family link to endometriosis, however it is less likely at your age. Usually, the pain is related to period cramps. If the pain starts a few days before the period and continues beyond the days of bleeding and normal pain relief tablets do not help, then hormonal tablets may be offered. These hormonal tablets help reduce pain and heavy bleeding.

If the pain persists despite the above treatment, then investigations for endometriosis will be considered. This includes doing scans like Ultrasound scans (jelly scan of your tummy) or rarely MR scan. Only few girls of this age will need surgery to diagnose or treat endometriosis.


I am not getting regular periods - can it be Polycystic Ovary Syndrome?

You may not have regular periods for the first 1-2 years, you may have delayed or missed periods for a few months. This is because your body is getting used to the hormone changes. Your ovaries can have multiple (poly) small follicles/egg sacs (cysts) which is normal at this age. Even if you have polycystic ovaries and irregular periods, it may not be Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS). Only if your symptoms are longstanding or you have other symptoms like dark thick skin changes to the neck, worsening acne, or excess hair growth on face or body, your doctor will do hormone blood tests to investigate PCOS.

What medicine can I take to stop periods? Are they safe?

You can stop your periods with medicine, but you need to discuss the benefits and side effects with your doctor who will do a safety check before starting you on the medication. Doctors would prescribe hormonal pills to regulate or stop periods temporarily if the symptoms are very troublesome and affect your routine activities or school attendance. Some pills might suit you better than others and you can choose to continue them if you want to avoid periods for few months to few years.

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact:

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