



What is?

Periods

and how to deal with it?

By

Dr. Varshali Mali

MBBS, DNB (Obstetrics & Gynecology)

Diploma in Gynecological Endoscopy – Germany

www.drvarshaliclinic.com

© Copyrights: 2018 – Current. All material in this document is, unless otherwise stated, the property of Dr. **Varshali's Gynecology Clinic**. Copyright and other intellectual property laws protect these materials. Reproduction or retransmission of the materials, in whole or in part, in any manner, without the prior written consent of the copyright holder, is a violation of copyright law.

Copies of the document are made available for review. Individuals must preserve any copyright or other notices contained in or associated with them. Users may not distribute such copies to others, whether in electronic form, whether for a charge or other consideration, without prior written consent of the copyright holder of the materials. Contact information for requests for permission to reproduce or distribute materials available through this document is listed below:

Dr. Varshali's Gynecology Clinic

www.drvarshaliclinic.com/contact-us



Your body goes through a lot of changes when it goes from kid to adult age. Out of many changes, starting periods is the most prominent ones and probably a little scary for you as a teen. Getting periods is a sign of puberty and is a normal part of growing up. As this change is happening to your body, you might have a lot of questions about it. What is periods, why do you get them, does it hurt, should you talk about it to someone, etc. This article answers all such questions that can help you deal with this change you are experiencing.

What is puberty?

Before we see the details about periods, let's try to understand the word "Puberty," which you may hear from people who will advise you during this change.

Puberty (**pronounced as pyoo.br-tee**) is the name for the time when your body goes from being a kid to an adult. Puberty is the process of physical changes through which a child's body matures into an adult body. Your body goes through many changes during this time, and it will grow faster than any other time in your life (except when you were a baby).

Some of the similar words for puberty you might hear are "adolescence," "teen," "teenage," etc. Puberty doesn't happen all at once. It's the continuous process in which your body gets developed. The experience might be a little different for each girl, but this happens to every boy or a girl. On average, girls begin puberty at ages **10–11** and complete puberty at ages **15–17**; boys generally start at ages **11–12** and complete puberty at **16–17**. So, if you are a little early or a little late, it's OK.

Hormonal signals initiate puberty from the brain to the gonads, the ovaries in a girl, and testes in a boy. During this period, your body may act a little strange. You may get pimples on the face; you will start sweating more, hair grows under your armpits and pubic area. The boys may gain a deeper voice, girls breasts develop and get bigger, hips get wider, and your body may become curvier. These are signs of puberty, and remember that these changes are regular and happen with each girl and a boy.



What is periods?

In girls, starting a period is a significant change that happens to the body during puberty. A period is nothing but a **release of blood from a girl's uterus**. Just imagine that period is the process of releasing the tissue your body no longer needs. The body removes this tissue and a small amount of blood as a part of becoming physically mature.

When do girls start getting their periods?

Girls start getting periods during puberty. It typically begins between the age of **12 to 15 years**. Most of the time girl gets her period about two years after her breasts start to develop. Another sign that your periods may start is a fluid discharge that you might see or feel on the underwear. This discharge usually begins about six months to a year before you will have your first periods. Your growing underarm and pubic hair is also one more sign that you will get your periods.

Every girl's body is different. So, each girl might get a period at different age. Typically, during 10 to 15 years of age, most of the girls get their periods. A delay in starting periods isn't usually a cause for concern. To understand the reason for the delay, you may **visit the gynecologist** if periods do not begin before 16 (and other body development like breast development, armpit, and pubic hair developed). If you do not have body development by 14, it is also advised to **visit the gynecologist**.

Why do girls get periods?

Your **menstrual cycle** is what makes your periods come every month, so let's understand this cycle.

Giving birth to a child is a significant part of our living. For the baby's protection, the body develops many protective layers. The menstrual cycle prepares a woman's body every month for getting pregnant. Typically, the menstrual cycle is of 28 days and consists of three phases.



First phase: This is the phase where bleeding happens. Typically, this period lasts for **5 to 7 days**. During this period, there is shedding of your endometrial lining (a protective shield for your baby) to form a new lining later.

Second phase: This is the time during which a protective uterus lining build. Usually, it lasts for **seven days**.

Third phase: Your uterus waits for the pregnancy to happen. If the pregnancy does not occur, then the protective lining starts to degenerate. Finally, it starts shedding, which forms a new cycle of menstruation.

So, to summarize, your body **prepares for pregnancy every month**. The lining of your uterus gets thicker as preparation for nurturing and protecting a baby. If pregnancy does not happen during a menstrual cycle, a protective lining build by your body is released every month, which we call periods. This process makes way for a new protective lining, and get ready to protect your baby if you get pregnant. Although the pregnancy may happen few times in your lifespan, your body does not know when. So, it keeps preparing you every month for this. So what trouble you are going through every month gives you the ultimate happiness of being "mommy."

Frequency and duration of periods

Now we have little understanding of what periods are. Let's understand how frequently you get it and the duration of periods.

A normal menstrual cycle is 28 days, so expect that you will get your periods after every 28 days (4-5 weeks). The regular periods should last for about 5 to 7 days. So, **5 to 7 days of periods every 28 days**.

You will stop getting the periods when you reach the **menopause stage** at around 45 to 55 years of age. As there are many deciding factors, the age to get menopause may vary. You will also not get the periods when you are pregnant and a few months after birth to a baby. Some contraception methods may reduce the chances (about 20 to 70%) of getting the periods.



Regular and irregular periods

The menstrual cycle typically comes every 28 days. The **regular periods usually last for 5 to 7 days**, and you may experience moderate bleeding. For the first few years after a girl starts her periods, it may not come regularly. These irregular periods are acceptable at first. In about 2–3 years, the periods should become normal and **come after about 28 days**.

In some cases, you may experience an abnormal menstrual cycle and periods. So, **keep an eye on the following symptoms**:

- Periods that occur less than 21 days or more than 35 days apart.
- Missing three or more periods in a row.
- Menstrual flow that is much heavier or lighter than usual.
- Periods that last longer than seven days.
- Periods accompanied by pain, cramping, nausea, or vomiting.
- Bleeding or spotting that happens after your periods.

Irregular periods can be caused by some medicines, exercising too much, having a very low or high body weight, or not eating enough calories. Hormone imbalances can also cause irregular periods. For example, thyroid hormone levels that are too low or too high can cause problems with periods. Some girls have extra androgen hormone, which can cause hair growth on the face, chin, chest, and abdomen. Excess androgen can also make girls gain weight and have irregular periods.

Irregular periods are not of significant concern, but the advice is to **visit a gynecologist** to verify that everything is normal. As mentioned before, having irregular periods is perfectly normal at first. As you grow, this will get settled.

What should I do during my periods?

First, understand what periods is and get aware of the symptoms. Many things happen when you get the periods. It is a strange feeling, especially when you just started getting the periods. You can **prepare yourself** to



make these 5–7 days a little comfortable. Following are few things you can think of:

- Keep the stock of enough sanitary pads handy. If you are traveling or going out, keep a few of them in the bag.
- Carry a disposal bag whenever you are going out. It may come in handy to throw used sanitary pads.
- If you are feeling any pain, use hot water pads, take a warm water bath.
- Eat healthy food. Try eating more nutritious snacks like fruits and vegetables and avoid processed food. A rich protein food like fish and chicken will also help you in the periods.
- Try to limit your caffeine intake, which may irritate your stomach. You may rely on a cup of hot ginger or green tea.
- Get plenty of rest. Period fatigue is real. If you're feeling tired during your period, getting good rest can help your body and mind repair. Aim to get at least 8 hours of sleep a night, especially while on your periods.
- Get out and get the fresh air. You may not want to get out of bed, but going out will help reduce your stress.

Most importantly, find a friend (and especially your mother, the best friend during the periods and throughout your life) to whom you can talk about this. Remember that you are strong enough to deal with this independently but sharing your feelings and pain with your close ones will help you. In case of any difficulty, or doubt, you may [visit the gynecologist](#). There is nothing to hide, and this is normal and happens with every girl.

What is PMS, and how to deal with it?

Premenstrual syndrome, also known as PMS, is an **emotional and physical symptom** that happens before or during the periods. PMS is normal, and the majority (about 90%) of girls get PMS. Some girls get their periods without any signs of PMS or only very mild symptoms. For others, PMS symptoms may be so severe that it makes it hard to do everyday activities like school.

Physical PMS symptoms include swollen or tender breasts, constipation, gassy feeling, cramping, headache, backache, clumsiness, and lower tolerance for noise or light. **Some emotional PMS symptoms** include



irritability, hostile behavior, feeling tired, sleeping too much or too little, food craving, trouble with concentration, depression, feeling sad, and mood swings.

Having PMS is normal, but if it is too much for you, the following may help to relieve PMS symptoms:

- Take advice from [your gynecologist](#); she may suggest pain-relieving medicines. Do not take medicine without consulting [a doctor](#).
- Do little aerobic exercise like brisk walking, swimming, or activity that gets your heart rate up.
- Do breathing exercises, meditation, or yoga.
- Get plenty of rest and at least 8 hours of sleep.
- Have healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, limit fat, salt, sugar, and caffeine consumption. Have a diet rich in vitamins and calcium.

Although the exact reason for PMS is not known, it typically happens [due to hormonal changes](#) in your body during periods. There is no definite method to test for PMS. Still, you can [talk to your gynecologist](#) to understand what is periods, PMS, and their symptoms. She will provide all the advice and medication if required.

What are cramps and how to deal with them?

If you feel pressure in your lower abdomen, lower back, or thighs during your periods, these might be [symptoms of menstrual cramps](#). These cramps are entirely normal and can start a day or two before your periods and last for the first few days of your periods. Muscle contractions cause cramps within the uterus. The uterus contraction makes the lining come off the walls and helps get it out of your body.

Cramps are one of the [most common symptoms](#). They can be super painful for a few, and a few, just a little annoying. If your symptoms are mild, following home steps may help you reduce the cramps:

- [Talk to your gynecologist](#). She might suggest pain-relieving medication to deal with cramps. Do not take medicines without consulting the doctor.



- Use a heating pad on your lower abdomen or lower back.
- Take a warm bath.
- Place a hot water bottle on the lower abdomen or lower back.
- Massage your abdomen.
- Take appropriate rest.
- Acupuncture and acupressure.
- Do an easy exercise like yoga, walking, or swimming to help increase blood flow.

Cramps are typical symptoms you will experience during the periods. If you cannot tolerate your period pains, and if home steps do not help you, [make an appointment with your gynecologist](#). She can help you with other ways to manage the pain and check to see if something more serious is going on.

Problems to watch for

Along with understanding what is periods, it is also good to know what typical problems you need to watch for. Having periods is a normal thing for every girl. Every girl gets them. But there are **few problems** you need to keep an eye on and [consult your gynecologist](#). Talk to your doctor in case :

- Suppose you are 15 and haven't started your period. Remember that periods should typically begin between the age of 12 to 15 years.
- If your periods are started for more than two years and still don't come regularly (about every 28 days).
- If you have bleeding between periods. Remember that you should have bleeding during the first 5 to 7 days of your menstrual cycle.
- Suppose you have severe symptoms of cramps and PMS. These are normal, but if you cannot cope up with it, get help.
- If you have heavy bleeding, which requires you to change your pad faster than every 1 hour.
- Suppose your bleeding lasts for more than a week. Remember that typically it should last for 5 to 7 days.

Note that many girls experience even the above problems. You are not the only one, so it's OK. Share this with your close one (mother or friend) and get [help from your gynecologist](#).



These are most of the details about what is periods and how to deal with them. There are many related topics and questions on periods. So, if you have any questions, feel [free to ask the gynecologist](#). Below are few more common questions you may have as a teen having the periods the first time.

Few common questions from teens?

1. Does having your period smell?

Yes. [Your periods may smell](#). The periods consist of the shedding of blood and uterine lining tissues. So, it's normal for this combination to have a slight odor. Healthy periods can have little smell of blood, and it may even have a slight metallic smell from iron and bacteria. Periods odor is not noticeable to others, and a good hygiene practice can also combat typical period odor. But a strong odor during the period may be a sign of some infection. So, [consult your gynecologist](#) in case if you feel something abnormal about the smell.

2. Does having your period hurt?

Girls may have cramps and other symptoms which [may hurt](#). Having painful periods is a condition called dysmenorrhea. It is the most reported symptom during the periods. It is typically due to the hormones your body releases during menstruation that cause the uterus to contract to release the lining. This pain typically lasts for one or two days every month.

3. I got my period. Should I talk about it and with whom?

Having a period and especially the first one is a challenging experience. It's something private, and you may feel not sharing it with anyone. But remember that you may need help to understand what is periods and how to deal with them. It's not only you, but many girls feel uncomfortable sharing this with others. Remember that [your mom will be your best friend](#) to answer all your questions. She has already gone through this. So, start sharing this with her. Know that she is your mom and will understand your condition better than anyone else in the world.



Your aunt, your friend's mom, or your older sister might be few people you can share this with. Your gynecologist might be a good friend with all medical knowledge. So, find [a good gynecologist near you](#) and talk to her about your periods and other growing-up problems.

4. What hygiene things should I follow during my period?

Hygiene is essential in general but most important during your periods. Your body is discharging things, and you need to remain clean and avoid any infections. So, keep taking a nice warm bath. Keep your lower portion clean. Keep using good-quality sanitary pads and avoid any homemade pads or cloths.

5. Can I continue my regular life or avoid doing something?

Periods are perfectly normal and **should not stop you from doing things you regularly do**. You can still go to your school, see your friends, play sports, and do everything you usually do. Remember that you may have minor cramps and other symptoms during the periods. So, if you are not comfortable doing anything, do not force yourself. Listen to your body and go with it.

6. Will someone notice that I am having my periods?

No. **No one will notice** anything. Unless you tell, it will feel like nothing is happening with you. But I suggest you tell your close one, like mom, so that she will be available if you need any help.

So, these are few things about what is periods and how to deal with them. I know that this is difficult for you, kiddo. I can feel you. Remember that we as a girl gets periods at some point of time. Periods are how our body gets prepared for the best gift in the world, "being a mother." So, take this as a regular part of your life. Talk to your mom or near once about this, get their help. If you need any [medical advice and support](#), ask your parents to make [an appointment with a gynecologist](#). Be brave and remain healthy. And know that as [a gynecologist](#), I am there with you always. Feel free to call or [drop a message](#). I will try my best to help you during your growing phase of life.



Author

Dr. Varshali Mali

MBBS, DNB (Obstetrics & Gynecology)

Diploma in Gynecological Endoscopy – Germany

Dr. Varshali Mali is an Obstetrician and Gynecologist. She did her MBBS from Dr. D. Y. Patil Medical College, Pune, DNB (Obstetrics & Gynecology) from Jehangir Hospital, Pune, and Diploma in Gynecological Endoscopy from the University of Schleswig Holstein – Kiel Germany. She has several years of experience working as a gynecologist, pregnancy doctor, and lecturer. Through her clinic located at Life Republic township near Marunji, she provides gynecology and pregnancy care solutions to the women around Hinjewadi, Wakad, and nearby Pune. She is known for her welcome nature, smiley face, supportive attitude, intelligence, and in-depth knowledge about gynecology and pregnancy in her patient community. Mother of two daughters, she believes that motherhood is the best gift one can get. As her contribution, she puts her best efforts into making the pregnancy journey most enjoyable for her patients.

[Book an appointment](#)

[Ask a question](#)

