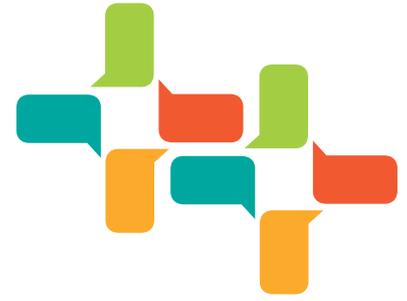


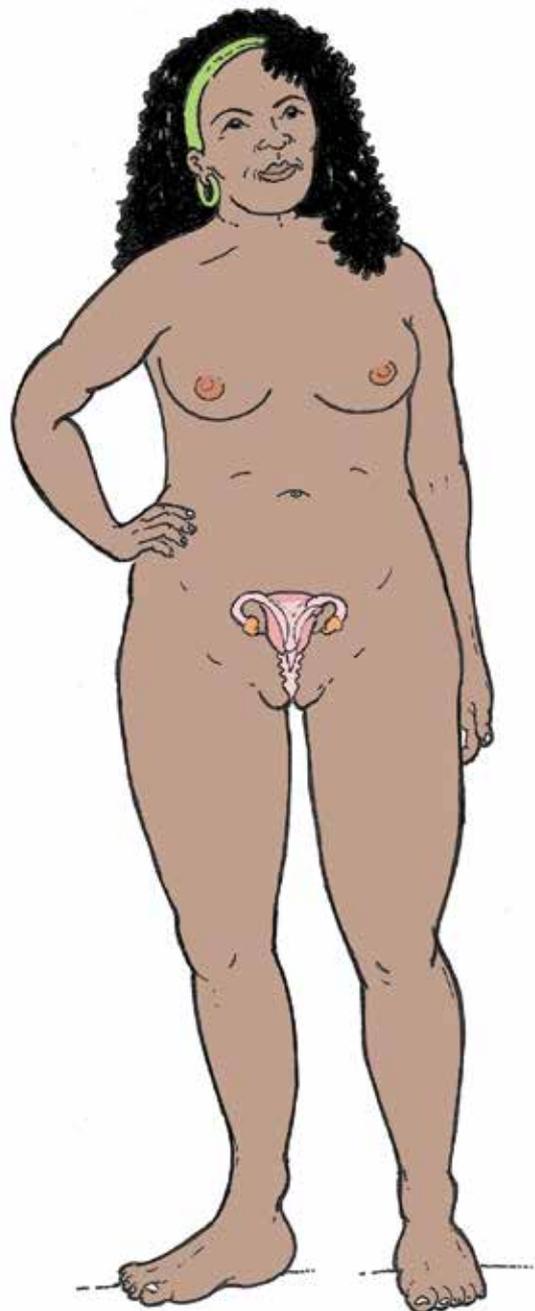
Fact Sheet

Periods



Getting periods is a sign that a woman's body is healthy. Another word for periods is menstruation. Periods are when blood comes out of a woman's vagina. A woman usually bleeds once a month for about 3 to 7 days.

Most women get periods. Periods usually start when a girl is between about 9 and 16 years old. Men's bodies are not like women's bodies so men do not have periods. Only women have periods.



What happens when a woman gets her periods?

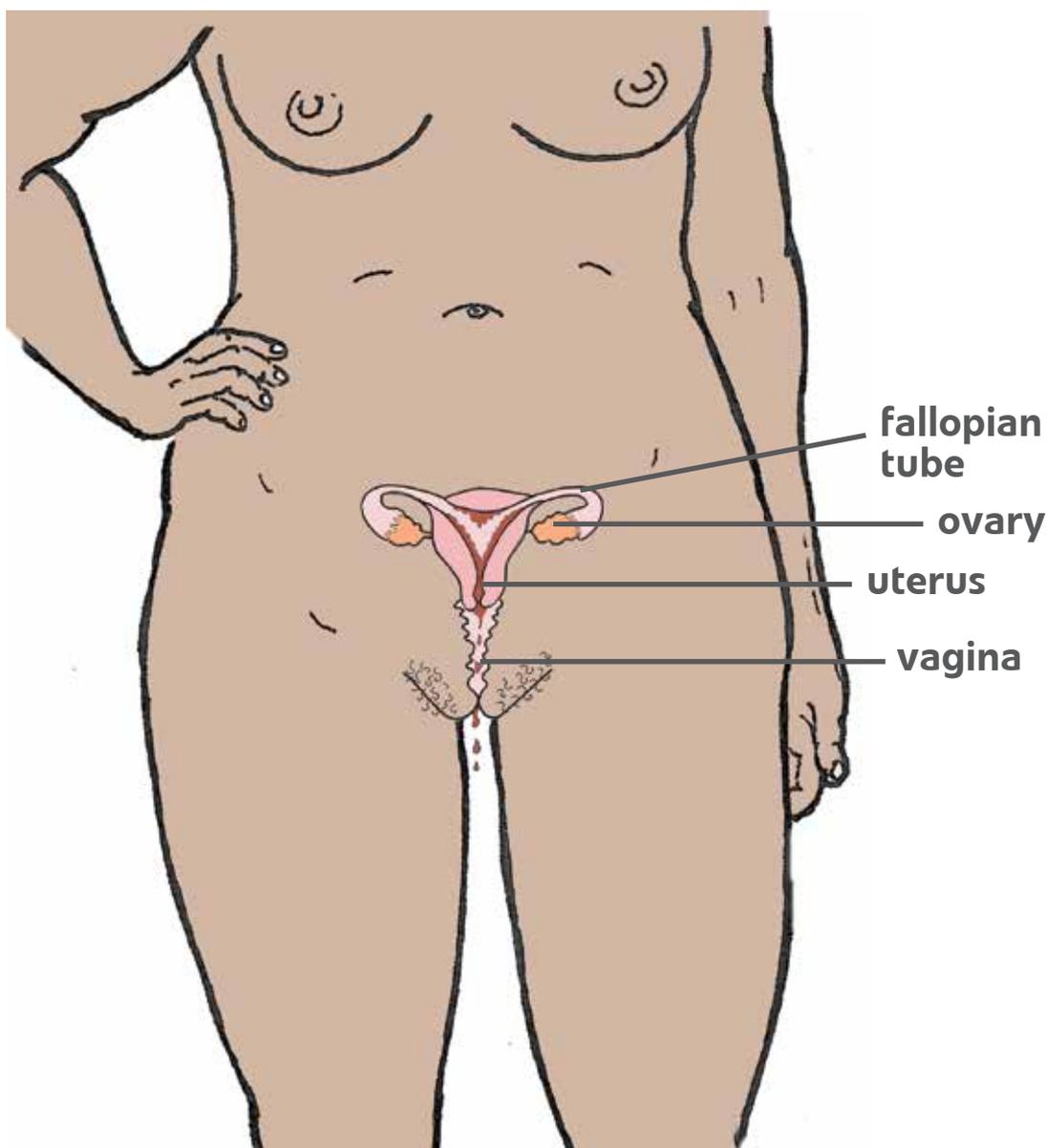
Inside a woman's belly (tummy) is her uterus (womb). On each side of her uterus is a small sac (bag) of tiny eggs, called an ovary. The uterus and the ovaries are connected by a thin tube called the fallopian tube.

The uterus, the ovaries and the fallopian tubes are all on the inside of a woman's body. A woman cannot see these body parts as they are covered by her skin.

Every month a tiny egg comes out of an ovary. It travels down the woman's fallopian tube to the uterus. During this time the lining inside the woman's uterus thickens with blood.

If the woman gets pregnant with a man's semen, the egg grows into a baby inside the woman's uterus. The woman stops getting her period. For more information go to the fact sheet called 'Pregnancy and birth'.

If the woman does not get pregnant, the egg disappears and the lining of the uterus comes away. The woman has her period every month.



How do women feel when they have their periods?

Women have different feelings just before their periods. Some feel angry or upset or feel like crying. Some women feel just the same as they always do. Some women feel very well. Others feel fat in the belly.

When their periods are starting some women get period pains. These can feel like cramps inside the uterus. There are some medicines that a woman can take to help with period pain. Another thing a woman can do is to lie down and put a hot water bottle on the part of the belly that hurts. If the cramps hurt a lot, a woman should tell someone that she trusts or go to see a doctor. A doctor should be able to help.

Some women have a lot of bleeding when they get their periods, and others have a little. If a woman has a lot of bleeding and this is stopping her from doing normal activities she should tell someone that she trusts or go to see a doctor.

Some women stop getting periods

A small number of women do not get periods. This might be because the woman has had an operation to remove her uterus. This is called a hysterectomy. Some types of contraception may also stop a woman from getting her periods. For more information go to the fact sheet called 'Contraception'.

Sometimes a woman can have periods every month and then the next period does not come. This might be because the woman has become pregnant but there are other reasons too. If this happens, she should tell someone that she trusts or go to see a doctor.

Periods usually stop when a woman is between the ages of 45 and 55. This is called menopause. For more information go to the fact sheet called 'Menopause'.

Pads and tampons

When a woman gets her periods, she has to use a pad or tampon to catch the blood before it gets on her clothes. If a woman wants to know how to use a pad or tampon, she should ask another woman that she trusts to show her.

Some women use pads

Pads are made of cotton or other materials and are worn inside a woman's underpants next to her vagina. They stop the blood from getting on her clothes. Pads have a sticky strip that helps them stay in place in a woman's underpants. Some women like using pads and some women find pads a little uncomfortable.

Anyone can buy pads at the supermarket or the chemist. Pads come in lots of different types and sizes. The biggest size is called 'super' and there is a smaller size called 'regular'. If a woman has a lot of blood, she will need the super size.



Some women use tampons

Some women use tampons instead of pads. Tampons are put inside the vagina to soak up the blood. A piece of string hangs down outside the woman's vagina so that she can pull the tampon out.

Anyone can buy tampons at the supermarket or the chemist. Tampons come in lots of different types and sizes. The biggest size is called 'super' and there is a smaller size called 'regular'. If a woman has a lot of blood she will need the super size. Some women have a lot of blood and like to wear a pad and a tampon at the same time. This is OK.

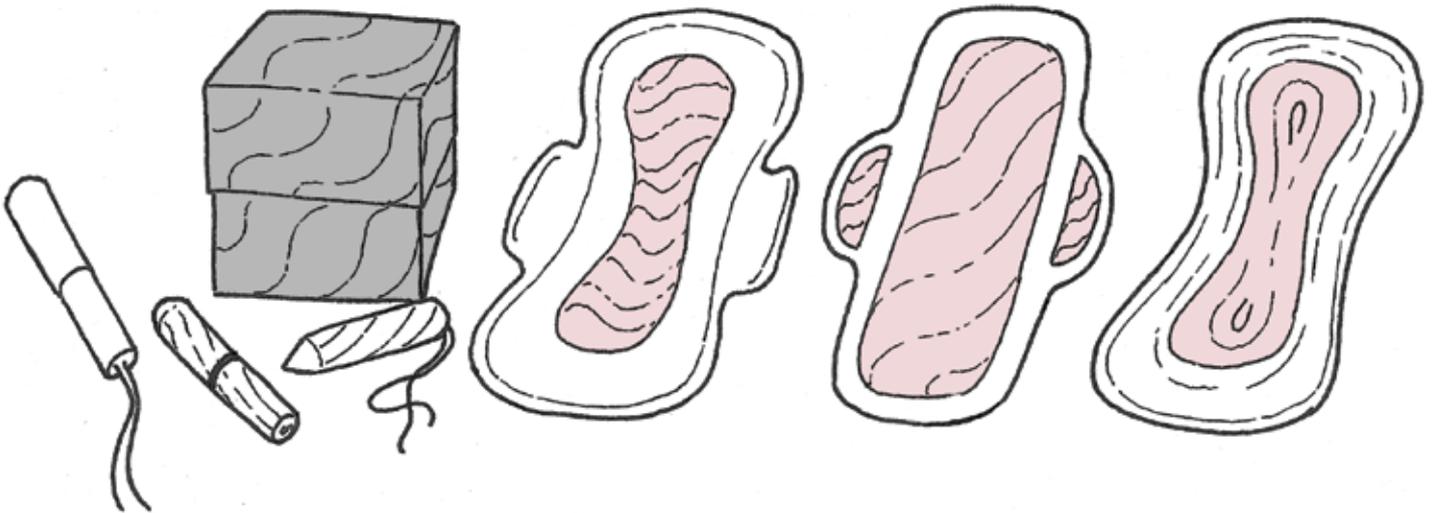


Tampons and pads should be changed often

A woman should change her pad or tampon at least 4 times a day and always wash her hands before and after doing so. She should change her pad or tampon more often if she bleeds a lot. Some women change their pad or tampon before or after breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea or dinner. This helps them to remember to change their pad or tampon.

Women should change their pad or tampon in a private place. Most women change their pad or tampon in the toilet or bathroom. When changing a pad or tampon, wrap it up with toilet paper and put it in a bin. Do not put it down the toilet, as it will block the toilet.

When a woman has finished changing her pad or tampon, she should wash her hands with soap and water. Sometimes women may get a little blood on their pants or clothes. Don't worry. It will wash out with cold water and soap.



Periods do not stop women from doing things

Periods are a very natural thing for a woman. Most of the time when a woman gets her periods she can do all the things she usually does – go to school or work, go shopping, go dancing, take a bath and go swimming. A woman should not wear a pad when she goes swimming. It is better to use a tampon then.

Sometimes women may notice a different smell coming from their vagina when they are having a period. Women should continue to have a bath or a shower every day while they are having a period.

Periods are private and usually women do not talk to other people about having their periods. Women should only talk about their periods in a private place with someone they trust. If a woman has a problem with her periods, she should tell someone that she trusts or talk to a doctor.



What you need to know:

- Getting periods means that a woman's body is healthy
- Most girls have their first period when they are between 9 and 16 years old
- It is normal for a woman to experience lots of different feelings when she has her periods. A woman may laugh, cry, feel sad or angry before she has her periods
- A woman should use a pad or a tampon to stop the blood getting on her clothes
- A woman should change her pad or tampon at least 4 times a day
- A woman should wash her hands before and after changing her pad or tampon
- If a woman has period pain or a lot of bleeding, she should talk to someone she trusts or go to a doctor. A doctor should be able to help
- There are medicines a woman can take to help with period pain
- If a woman has a problem with her periods or her periods stop coming, she should talk to someone she trusts or go to a doctor

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