

# ALL ABOUT YOUR PERIOD

## Be Your Own Best Friend

---

Does your period get in the way of things you normally do? Do you sometimes have pain, a heavy blood flow, or mood swings? If your period makes you feel so miserable that you can't do things you normally do, don't worry. You don't have to suffer every month. You can help yourself with the following suggestions, or by working with a health care provider, such as a doctor or a nurse.

### Caring for yourself

Try to eat healthy foods and get enough sleep and exercise. Healthy choices are especially important before and during your period. For less bloating and pain, try to avoid salty foods, or eat fewer of them. Also, stay away from drinks with caffeine.

**Calm your cramps:** Take a hot bath. You can use a heating pad, but don't use a heating pad in the bathtub! Do you want to consider using over-the-counter pain medicine? If so, talk to a parent, pharmacist, or your health care provider. They can tell you the best way to use them. Options include ibuprofen, such as Advil®, Motrin®, etc. Or, you might use naproxen, also known as Aleve®, etc.

**Ease your stress:** Try to relax. Talk to a friend, go for a walk, do yoga, meditate, or do simple breathing exercises.

### Track it!

What exactly is happening each month? Keep track of when you get your period and let your health care provider know how you feel. Track your symptoms with a pen and paper, or use a paper calendar.

- When did your period start and end? How long does it usually last? How many menstrual products (tampons or pads) do you use in an hour when your flow is heaviest?
- During your period, do you ever have constipation or diarrhea? Do you ever feel like you are going to throw up?
- Do you feel emotional or have physical pain a few days before your period starts? Symptoms can include mood swings, crying easily, having food cravings, being upset or sad, having sore breasts, or feeling bloated or swollen.

### Talk to your health care provider

Tell your health care provider about your symptoms and anything else that concerns you. Here are tips to start the conversation.

- Is what I'm experiencing normal?
- Is there anything I can do to feel better?
- My cramps are so bad that I sometimes miss school. I want to know what I can do so that I don't have this much pain.
- If the doctor doesn't offer treatment, you can ask, "Why do you think I don't need any treatment for my symptoms?"
- If the doctor offers treatment, you can ask, "How soon will I feel better? Are there side effects?"
- You can ask the doctor, "What happens if the treatment doesn't work?"
- If they are checking your blood or urine, you can ask, "Why are you doing this test?"

### Do you have the right health care provider?

Your health care provider should take you seriously, treat you with respect, and protect your privacy. Your sexual and reproductive health is personal, including your period health. If you don't feel respected, or you're not getting the help you need, you have the right to look for a new provider. Talk to your parent, guardian, or an adult you trust about why you want a new health care provider.

If you are sexually active, there is also help. Some health centers specialize in reproductive health or "family planning." They may be able to offer teens free or low-cost service, including care for menstrual problems or concerns. Visit the following link for a list of health centers in New York State counties: <http://bit.ly/health4youth>.

### Need to find a health care provider?

Ask for help from a trusted adult, parent, guardian, or school nurse. If you or your family need health insurance, call New York State of Health at 1-855-355-5777.

This handout is part of the "All About Your Period" series on menstrual health. For more information and helpful resources, visit: <https://health.ny.gov/TeenHealth>.