

Her Story, Her Health, Her Power.

A Complete Guide to Menstrual Health & Wellness



800M+

Women menstruate daily

1 in 5

Women has PCOS in India

70%

Lack proper period info

Menstrual Health

PCOS & PCOD

Hygiene

Mental Wellness

Myth Busting

Self-Care

ShakTide Menstrual Health Initiative

shaktide.com | Breaking Stigma. Spreading Science. Empowering Lives.

For teenagers, young women, parents & communities across India

A Warm Welcome from ShakTide

Hello, beautiful soul. Whether you are a teenager navigating your first period, a parent supporting your daughter, a young woman living with PCOS, or simply someone who wants to learn — **this booklet is for you.**

Menstrual health is not just a women's issue. It is a **human rights issue**. Millions of girls across India face shame, silence, and misinformation about something completely natural. At ShakTide, we believe **knowledge is power** — and every person deserves accurate, compassionate information about their body.



Your period is not a curse. It is a sign of life, strength, and the incredible biology that makes you who you are.

— ShakTide Team

Our Four Pillars

EDUCATE

Science-backed info on periods, PCOS, hygiene & more

EMPOWER

Build confidence to seek medical care without shame

EMBRACE

Normalize open conversations about menstrual health

ENLIGHTEN

Expose myths and dangerous social misconceptions

DID YOU KNOW?

Nearly **23 million girls** in India drop out of school every year because of lack of menstrual health knowledge and proper facilities. One conversation can change a life.

28

Average cycle days

5

Average period days

80ml

Max normal blood loss

45

Age of menopause

What Is Menstruation?

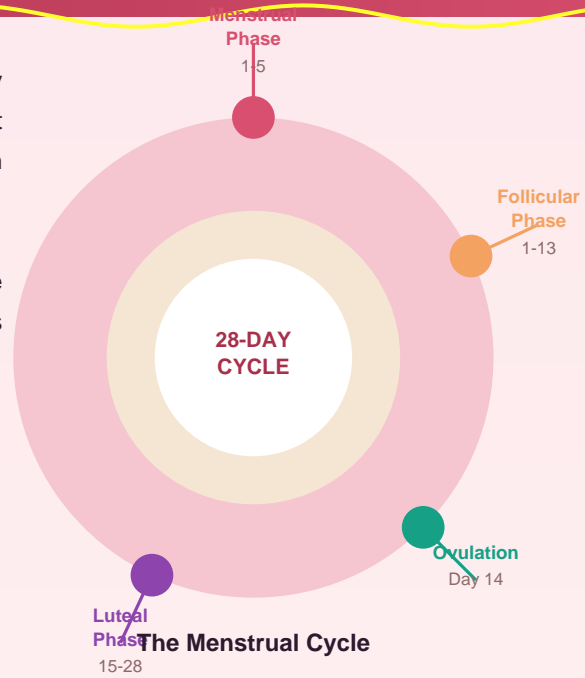
Understanding your body is the first step to loving it

Menstruation — often called a **'period'** — is the monthly shedding of the uterine lining when pregnancy does not occur. It is a completely **natural biological process** that happens in people with a uterus, typically between the ages of 10 and 55.

Every month, your body prepares for a possible pregnancy. The uterus builds a thick, nutrient-rich lining. When pregnancy does not happen, this lining sheds. That is your period.

Key Facts at a Glance

- Cycle length: **21 to 35 days**
- Period duration: **3 to 7 days**
- Blood loss: **30 to 80 ml** per cycle
- First period (menarche): age **10 to 15**
- Menopause: around age **45 to 55**
- Bleeding is **uterine lining**, not stored blood



Change pad every 4-6h

Stay hydrated

Rest when needed

Days 1-5

Menstrual Phase

Uterine lining sheds. Period bleeding occurs.

Days 1-13

Follicular Phase

Estrogen rises, uterus lining rebuilds.

Day 14

Ovulation

Egg released. Highest fertility window.

Days 15-28

Luteal Phase

Progesterone rises. PMS may occur.

DID YOU KNOW?

Menstrual blood is **not dirty** — it is the same blood in your veins mixed with uterine tissue. There is absolutely nothing impure or shameful about it.

Common Symptoms During Periods

What to expect — and what not to fear

Every body is different, but many share similar experiences during menstruation. Knowing what is **normal** helps you understand your body and seek help when needed.

Cramping

Mild to moderate lower abdominal pain caused by prostaglandins making the uterus contract. Usually peaks on days 1-2.

Fatigue

Feeling tired or low-energy is completely normal, especially the first 2 days when blood flow is heaviest.

Mood Changes

Hormonal shifts affect serotonin levels, bringing irritability, sadness, or anxiety. This is real biology — not drama.

Bloating

Water retention caused by hormones makes you feel puffier. Reduce salt intake and drink more water. It resolves in a few days.

Headaches

Very common due to hormonal changes. Stay hydrated, avoid caffeine, and rest in a cool, quiet space.

Breast Tenderness

Swelling and sensitivity in the breasts before and during periods is a normal hormonal response.

Doctor's Advice



If cramps are so severe you miss school or work, if your period lasts more than 7 days, or if you soak a pad every hour — please see a doctor. This is **not normal** and may need medical attention.

DID YOU KNOW?

Prostaglandins — the hormones causing period cramps — also affect the bowel. Diarrhea, nausea, or loose stools during day 1-2 of your period is completely normal.

Normal vs. Abnormal Periods

Your guide to knowing when to act

NORMAL SIGNS

- Cycle: 21 to 35 days long
- Period lasts 3 to 7 days
- Mild to moderate cramps
- Light to moderate flow
- Some mood changes (PMS)
- Slight breast tenderness
- Occasional headaches
- Small clots (under coin size)
- Brown spotting at start or end
- Clear or white discharge between periods

SEE A DOCTOR

- Cycle shorter than 21 or longer than 35 days
- Period lasting more than 7 days
- Soaking a pad every 1-2 hours
- Severe, debilitating cramps
- No period for 3+ months (not pregnant)
- Very large clots (larger than a coin)
- Regular spotting between periods
- Period stopping before age 40
- Extreme fatigue or dizziness with period
- Fever during heavy bleeding



Pain that disrupts your daily life is NEVER just 'part of being a woman.' You deserve care, answers, and relief.

— Menstrual Health Alliance

Menstrual Hygiene Practices

Clean, confident, and comfortable every day

Sanitary Pads

Most accessible option in India. Change every 4-6 hours even on light days. Available in regular, heavy, and overnight sizes. Wrap used pads in paper before disposal — never flush.

Tampons

Inserted internally for discreet use. Change every 4-8 hours — NEVER leave in longer than 8 hours due to rare Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) risk. Safe once you learn to use them.

Menstrual Cup

Reusable medical-grade silicone cup. Eco-friendly and cost-saving — lasts up to 10 years. Collects rather than absorbs flow. Sterilize between cycles. Learning curve but highly effective.

Period Underwear

Absorbent, washable underwear with built-in lining. Excellent backup alongside other products or used alone on light days. Comfortable, sustainable, and reusable for years.

Essential Hygiene Rules

- **Change regularly** — every 4-6 hours, even on very light days, to prevent infection and odor
- **Wash hands** before and after changing any menstrual product — always
- **Clean your vulva** (outside only) with warm water — the vagina is self-cleaning, no soap needed inside
- **Dispose properly** — wrap used pads in paper and bin them; never flush pads or tampons
- **Breathable underwear** — cotton underwear prevents rashes, moisture buildup, and yeast infections
- **Stay hydrated** — drinking plenty of water reduces bloating and keeps you feeling fresh

DID YOU KNOW?

Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) is rare but serious. Always change tampons within 8 hours, and never sleep with a tampon in. Pads, cups, and period underwear are safer overnight options.

Mental Health & Emotional Changes

Your feelings are valid — always

Hormones during the menstrual cycle powerfully affect your **brain chemistry**. Estrogen and progesterone directly influence serotonin — your 'feel-good' chemical. Emotional changes during your cycle are **real, biological, and valid** — not weakness.

PMS — Premenstrual Syndrome

- Mild mood swings
- Slight irritability or sadness
- Temporary fatigue
- Manageable symptoms
- Does NOT stop daily life

PMDD — Needs Medical Help

- Severe depression or anxiety
- Extreme mood swings
- Difficulty working or studying
- Relationship problems
- Requires doctor care

Self-Care for Emotional Wellbeing

Mindfulness & Breathing

Even 5 minutes of deep breathing significantly reduces anxiety and tension. Try box breathing: inhale 4s, hold 4s, exhale 4s.

Journal Your Feelings

Track your mood alongside your cycle dates. Patterns help you prepare for emotional shifts each month.

Talk to Someone

Share with a trusted friend, family member, or counsellor. Isolation worsens symptoms every time.

Creative Outlets

Art, music, dance, writing — creative expression is powerful emotional medicine during difficult cycle days.



Crying before your period is not weakness — your brain is experiencing hormonal changes. Be as gentle with yourself as you would be with a dear friend.

— Women's Mental Health Foundation

Nutrition During Your Period

Eat to heal, energize, and feel your best

What you eat before and during your period directly impacts your **pain levels, energy, mood, and flow intensity**. Choosing the right nutrients can genuinely transform your period experience.

EAT MORE OF THESE

Leafy Greens

Spinach, methi — rich in iron to replace what you lose

Bananas

High in B6 and potassium — reduce bloating and lift mood

Dark Chocolate

Magnesium-rich, boosts serotonin — doctor-approved comfort

Ginger

Natural anti-inflammatory — reduces cramps and nausea

Turmeric

Curcumin reduces uterine inflammation and eases period

Flaxseeds

Omega-3 fatty acids help regulate hormones and reduce h

LIMIT OR AVOID

Excess Salt

Worsens bloating and water retention significantly

Too Much Caffeine

Constricts blood vessels and increases cramping pain

Processed Sugar

Spikes then crashes your energy, worsening mood swings

Alcohol

Disrupts hormones and dehydrates — making all symptoms

Fried Food

Triggers inflammation, worsening both cramps and bloating

Dairy (for some)

Can increase prostaglandins and worsen cramps in some people

Doctor's Advice



Drink at least **8-10 glasses of warm water** daily during your period. Warm water relaxes uterine muscles and significantly reduces cramping. Herbal teas like ginger, chamomile, and peppermint are especially helpful.

DID YOU KNOW?

Iron deficiency anaemia is extremely common in menstruating women in India. Combine iron-rich foods (rajma, dal, spinach, jaggery) with Vitamin C (amla, lemon) for far better absorption and to prevent weakness and fatigue.

Understanding PCOS & PCOD

Because you deserve real answers, not confusion

PCOS — Polycystic Ovary Syndrome

PCOS is a **hormonal disorder** where the ovaries produce excess androgens (male hormones), causing small fluid-filled cysts to develop and disrupting ovulation. It affects **1 in 5 women** in India and influences metabolism, skin, hair, and fertility. It requires medical management but is fully **liveable with the right care**.

Symptoms:

- Irregular or missed periods
- Excess facial or body hair
- Weight gain, especially belly
- Acne and very oily skin
- Hair thinning on scalp
- Difficulty getting pregnant
- Mood swings and depression
- Darkening of skin in folds

PCOD — Polycystic Ovary Disease

PCOD is a condition where the ovaries release **immature or partially mature eggs** that form cysts over time. It is generally milder than PCOS and strongly **lifestyle-related**. Many women with PCOD can manage it significantly through improved diet, regular exercise, stress reduction, and healthy sleep — sometimes without heavy medication.

Symptoms:

- Irregular periods
- Weight gain
- Pelvic discomfort
- Ovaries releasing immature eggs
- Often responsive to lifestyle changes

PCOS vs PCOD — Quick Comparison

Feature	PCOS	PCOD
Type	Hormonal disorder	Ovarian condition
Severity	More serious	Milder
Fertility	More affected	Less affected
Reversible?	Manageable, not cured	Often reversible with lifestyle

DID YOU KNOW?

PCOS is not caused by being overweight. Women of all body sizes and weights can have PCOS. In fact, about **20-30% of women with PCOS have a normal body weight**.

Myths vs. Facts

Breaking the chains of misinformation — one truth at a time

MYTH

Periods are dirty and impure

Menstrual blood is clean blood mixed with uterine tissue — biologically identical to the blood in your veins. There is NOTHING impure about it.

FACT

MYTH

Irregular periods are always normal and fine

Consistently irregular cycles can signal PCOS, thyroid issues, or other conditions. Always consult a doctor if your cycle is unpredictable.

FACT

MYTH

Severe period pain is just part of being a woman

Debilitating pain is NOT normal. It may indicate endometriosis, fibroids, or adenomyosis — all treatable conditions needing medical care.

FACT

MYTH

Only adults get PCOS

PCOS can begin at the very first menstrual cycle — in teenage girls. Adolescents with irregular periods should be evaluated for PCOS.

FACT

MYTH

Girls cannot enter kitchen or temple during periods

This is a cultural superstition with zero scientific basis. Menstruation does NOT make anyone spiritually or physically 'impure'.

FACT

MYTH

PCOS only affects overweight women

PCOS affects women of ALL body types. About 20-30% of women with PCOS are of normal weight. Body size does not determine PCOS.

FACT

MYTH

Exercise during periods is harmful

Gentle to moderate exercise REDUCES period pain by releasing endorphins (natural painkillers). Yoga, walking, and swimming are especially helpful.

FACT

MYTH

Pads are the only safe hygiene option

Tampons, menstrual cups, period underwear, and menstrual discs are equally safe when used correctly. Choose what suits your lifestyle.

FACT

When to See a Doctor

Your health is always worth the conversation

Many women wait too long before seeking medical help — due to shame, fear, or the belief that pain is normal. Here are **clear signals** that you should consult a doctor.

Emergency Warning Signs — Act Immediately

- Soaking through a pad or tampon every hour for 2 or more consecutive hours
- Severe abdominal pain not relieved by painkillers after 30 minutes
- Fainting, dizziness, or extreme weakness during your period
- Fever above 38.5 degrees C along with heavy bleeding
- No period for 3 or more months (and not pregnant)
- Sudden dramatic change in your normal cycle pattern
- Any bleeding after menopause

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

Q Is my cycle length and flow normal for my age and stage?

Q Could my symptoms indicate PCOS, PCOD, or endometriosis?

Q Should I track my cycle and how do I do that?

Q What blood tests or ultrasound scans do I need?

Q Are there lifestyle changes that would ease my symptoms?

Q What contraceptive options exist for my situation?

DID YOU KNOW?

In India, gynaecology consultations are available free or at very low cost at government hospitals and PHCs. You have the **right to ask questions and get clear, respectful answers**. No good doctor will ever shame you for seeking care.

Exercise, Self-Care & Lifestyle

Small daily changes create big life improvements

Cycle-Friendly Exercise Guide

Yoga

Child's pose, cat-cow, and butterfly pose significantly reduce cramps. Even 15 minutes daily helps. Best during menstrual phase.

Walking

A 20-minute gentle walk releases endorphins — your body's natural painkillers — and lifts mood considerably.

Swimming

Warm water soothes cramping pain while providing gentle, full-body exercise. Water temporarily slows flow.

Strength Training

Save intense strength workouts for your follicular and ovulatory phases (days 7-21) when energy peaks naturally.

Self-Care Checklist

Daily

- Drink 8+ glasses of water
- Track your cycle
- 7-8 hours of sleep
- Eat iron-rich foods

Weekly

- Exercise 3-4 days gently
- 10 min mindfulness
- Connect with loved ones
- Prepare nourishing meals

Monthly

- Review your cycle notes
- Doctor visit if needed
- Restock hygiene supplies
- Celebrate your strength

Doctor's Advice



Rest is productive. Taking a nap on a heavy-flow day is not laziness — it is self-preservation. Your body is working very hard. Listen to it and be kind to yourself.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the follicular phase (days 7-14, after your period ends), estrogen rises and you naturally have more energy, strength, and motivation. This is the best time for challenging workouts and ambitious projects. Work **with** your cycle, not against it.

Track Your Cycle

Know your body. Own your health.

Tracking your menstrual cycle is one of the most powerful health habits you can build. It helps predict your period, identify irregularities, understand your moods, and provide valuable information to your doctor. Use this calendar every month.

Monthly Period Tracker — Color Your Dates

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Color Legend:

Period days

Ovulation day

PMS symptoms

High energy

Low energy / rest day

What to Record Each Day

Flow Level

Light, medium, heavy, or spotting

Pain Level

Score your cramps 0 to 10

Mood

Happy, sad, anxious, irritable, calm

Energy

High, medium, or low energy day

Symptoms

Bloating, headache, breast tenderness

Sleep

Good, broken, or poor sleep quality



Tracking your cycle for just 3 months gives you — and your doctor — invaluable information about your hormonal health.

— ShakTide Health Team

Frequently Asked Questions

No question is too small when it's about your health

Can I swim or bathe during my period?

Yes! Bathing is recommended for hygiene and comfort. Swimming is safe with a tampon or menstrual cup. Water pressure temporarily reduces flow while submerged.

Can I get pregnant during my period?

Unlikely but possible, especially with shorter cycles. Sperm survive up to 5 days in the body. Use contraception if you want to prevent pregnancy.

Can stress really delay my period?

Yes. Stress raises cortisol, which suppresses reproductive hormones and can delay or prevent ovulation entirely — causing a late or missed period.

What does discharge color mean?

Clear or white = normal. Yellow or green with odor = possible infection (see a doctor). Brown at start or end of period = old blood and completely normal.

Is it normal to miss periods for months?

Not usually. Missing 3+ periods (amenorrhea) can indicate PCOS, thyroid issues, extreme stress, low body weight, or pregnancy. Always consult a doctor.

Why do I get diarrhea during my period?

Prostaglandins that cause uterine contractions also affect the bowel. This is completely normal and typically resolves within the first 1-2 days of your period.

Is it safe to skip periods with contraceptives?

Yes — many doctors recommend this for PCOS, endometriosis, or pain management. Hormonal contraceptive-suppressed periods are medically safe when prescribed.

Why does my flow seem heavier some months?

Stress, diet changes, illness, weight changes, or hormonal fluctuations can all affect flow volume month to month. Track it and consult a doctor if consistently heavy.

Words That Heal & Inspire

Because you deserve to hear these truths every day

“

A girl's education should never stop because of her period.

— Malala Yousafzai

“

Menstruation is a natural process deserving respect, resources, and recognition — not shame.

— UN Women

“

The more openly we talk about periods, the more we chip away at stigma that harms millions of girls.

— Global Health Advocate

“

You are not broken. You are not dirty. You are not dramatic. You are a human being whose health matters.

— ShakTide

“

Periods are proof that life renews itself every single month. Honor your body's incredible cycle.

— Wellness Wisdom

“

When one woman heals and learns, she teaches others. Knowledge shared is stigma dismantled.

— ShakTide Initiative

“

Your pain is real. Your emotions are real. Your cycle is real. And you deserve real support.

— Women's Health Alliance

“

Breaking the silence about menstrual health is not just women's work — it is all of humanity's work.

— World Health Org

ShakTide Mission & Join the Movement

Together we rise. Together we break the silence.

About ShakTide

ShakTide is a menstrual health and wellness initiative creating a world where every woman has access to **accurate health information, dignified resources, and a community free from shame.**

We work with schools, colleges, rural communities, and healthcare providers to deliver menstrual health education, hygiene kits, and counselling — because **informed women build stronger families and stronger communities.**

Our programs have reached thousands of girls across India, and we are growing every month.

Our Key Programs

School Education Programs

Free Hygiene Kit Distribution

Rural Community Outreach

Free Online Health Resources

Counselling & Support Services

Visit ShakTide



shaktide.com

Free resources, cycle tracker, support community

Instagram

Facebook

Twitter

YouTube

Our Impact So Far

5000+

Girls Educated

1200+

Hygiene Kits Given

50+

Schools Reached

Share This Booklet

Every share breaks one more chain of stigma



You Are Stronger Than You Have Been Told.

Your body is not your enemy.

Your cycle is not your weakness.

Your pain deserves to be heard.

Your questions deserve real answers.

Your health is worth every conversation.

And you deserve to know all of this.

Share This Booklet. Break the Stigma. Save a Life.

Every person who reads this becomes part of the change. Every conversation matters.

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Breaking Stigma. Spreading Science. Empowering Every Woman.