

# What Is a “Normal” Period?

During a woman’s reproductive years, she experiences a monthly discharge of blood and uterine lining, or **menses**, also known as a period. Globally, more than 800 million people are menstruating each day.

A “normal” period is not the same for every person. What’s normal for you might be different than for your friends or family members. **It is not normal, however, when your period-related symptoms cannot be managed with over-the-counter medications or when they significantly disrupt your life.**

Women with chronic pelvic pain and/or heavy menstrual bleeding are often unaware that their debilitating symptoms may be caused by gynecologic conditions such as **endometriosis**. The normalization of symptoms and the dismissal of pelvic pain as a supposedly inevitable part of the **menstrual cycle** can play significant roles in diagnosis and treatment delays for women with endometriosis. **Period symptoms can cause discomfort, but they should not be distressing.**

EVEN  
YOUR “NORMAL”  
CAN CHANGE...

It is not uncommon for your period to change over the years. For example, cycles are commonly longer and more irregular in younger women, but might become shorter and more consistent as you get older.



## A “NORMAL” PERIOD

- Occurs every 21 to 35 days
  - Lasts from 2 to 7 days
- Can be light or moderate flow (averaging no more than 1 soaked pad/tampon every 3 hours)



## “NORMAL” PERIOD SYMPTOMS

- Abdominal and/or lower back cramping
  - Bloating
- Sleep problems
- Food cravings
- Mood changes

# Keeping a Period Diary

Tracking your **menstrual cycle** is a good way to figure out what is “normal” for you. It can also give your health care provider a more complete picture of your symptoms, their severity, and their impact on your daily life.

## What to Track:

- Start and end date
- Flow – heaviness, changes from usual, how often you change menstrual products
- Cramping/pelvic pain, including severity and impact on your ability to function
- Irregular bleeding between periods
- Late or missed periods
- Gastrointestinal symptoms such as constipation or diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, or pain with urination or bowel movements
- Mood and sleep issues

## Consult Your Doctor If You:

- Miss a period (and you’re not pregnant)
- Bleed for longer than 7 days
- Have heavy bleeding (or go through more than one pad/tampon every hour or two)
- Bleed in between periods
- Experience abnormal or high levels of pain between periods or with sex. Everyone’s pain threshold is different and subjective, so it is important to recognize the changes in your own body.



## PERIOD TRACKING APPS

Clue



Eve



Flo



Period Tracker Period Calendar



Spot On

## ENDOMETRIOSIS APPS

Endo Empowered



EndoWheel



Flutter



MyEndometriosisTeam



MyFLO



Phendo

There are many health apps to choose from. The Federal Trade Commission provides **guidance to consumers** on how to select and use health apps while reducing privacy risks.

# Addressing the Stigma Around Menstruation



## Some people still refuse to say it: menstruation.

Societal and cultural **stigma** around menstruation can prevent women from voicing their concerns about life-disrupting, period-related symptoms, even to their health care provider. When stigma silences women, they are more likely to experience delays in diagnosis and treatment for gynecological disorders like endometriosis.

### 20% OF WOMEN

*do not feel comfortable talking about menstruation with health care providers*

### 64% OF TEENS

*believe society teaches people to be ashamed of their periods*

### 58% OF WOMEN

*have felt embarrassment because they were on their period*

### 10% OF MEN

*do not feel comfortable talking about menstruation with anyone*

## Overcoming Period Stigma

Stigma contributes to the negative and dismissive reactions that some people experience when they speak up about menstruation and their related symptoms.

### How can you help fight this stigma?

- Talk openly about periods with friends, family, and others
- Ditch the slang terms for menstruation
- Do not hide menstrual products
- Advocate for menstrual health education in schools
- Support menstrual movements like **National Period Day** and **Menstrual Hygiene Day**

## Help Fight Period Poverty

Period poverty refers to lack of access to safe, hygienic menstrual products, education, and waste management. Without these products, women may be forced to use the same sanitary product for a long period of time or to use an alternative product, such as paper towels, which is unsafe and can result in health problems.

### How can you fight period poverty?

- Donate menstrual products to groups like **PERIOD, Alliance for Period Supplies**, or **I Support the Girls**
- Advocate for free menstrual products in places like schools, shelters, food banks, and prisons
- Support legislation that eliminates taxes on menstrual hygiene products



**Being able to talk about your period and the symptoms you experience will help you and your doctor better understand your body and your health.**