

A **phs** Group PODCAST

# THE BLOBCAST

FREE THE PERIOD

WITH KASEY ROBINSON



RESOURCING AND  
LEARNING PACK

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# OUR HOST



## KASEY ROBINSON CONSULTANT AND HOST

Kasey's passion for period equity work began when she launched **The Red Box Project Monaco** to address period equity with local schools. Inspired and motivated to change the period activism space she launched **Proud of My Period** to openly discuss her work and what she was learning about periods. Kasey was featured on a Newsround special on periods in her own segment, 'Top tips for feeling confident about periods', and was a guest on Jac Jossa's ITVX **Celebrity Health Stories**. She worked as the inclusion consultant for the Cycle by Freda by McCann Madrid campaign and is also the learning development lead for Bloody Good Employers, where she designed their three-module program and corporate assessment tool.

And now she is our podcast host!



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EP. 01 SHAME

# EP. 01 SHAME

## OUR GUESTS



**MOLLY FENTON**  
**CAMPAIGNER**

Molly Fenton is an activist who, alongside her younger brother and sister, started the Love Your Period charity, providing period products to those in need. Molly and her sister Tilly can often be seen on TikTok dancing and highlighting the issues of period inequity. You can follow her on Instagram [@loveyourperiod](https://www.instagram.com/loveyourperiod)

**RICHARD ETHERINGTON BENSON**  
**FACILITATOR AND YOGA TEACHER**

Richie Etherington Benson is a project manager and facilitator from Beyond Equality - a charity that works with men and boys to bring them into the conversation on gender equality. He's also a yoga teacher. You can follow the charity on Instagram [@beyond\\_equality](https://www.instagram.com/beyond_equality)

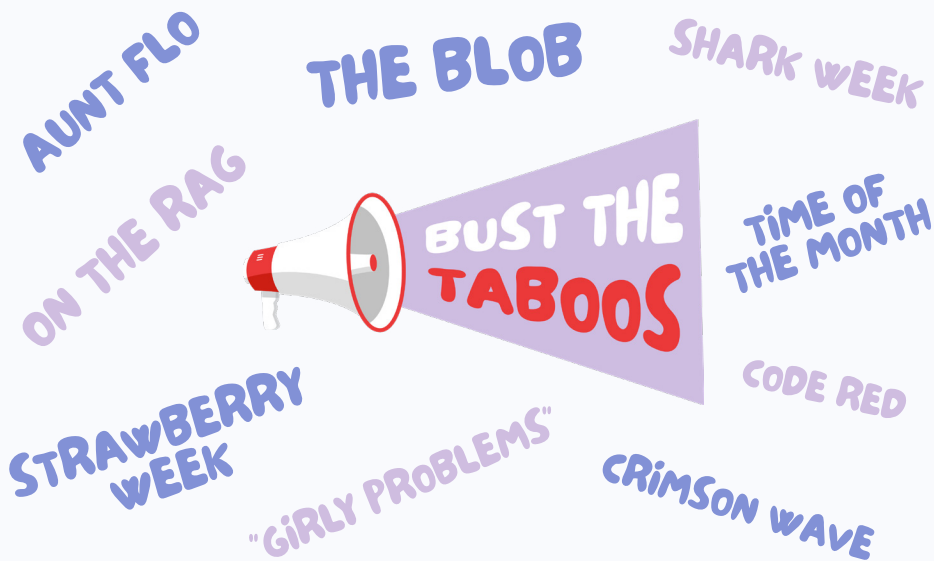


# EP. 01 SHAME

## QUICK INFO



- Plan International found that **14% of girls aged 14-21** said they did not know what was happening when they started their period
- **1 in 4 girls** did not know what to do when they started their period
- **phs** Group found that **almost 1 in 5 (19%) stay away from lessons** because they are embarrassed about being on their period
- **Girls are missing 54 days of education** over the course of their teen school and college years due to their periods This is the equivalent of 11 academic weeks, and worse than before period equality schemes were in force at schools



## MYTH

For many years throughout history and even up to today, periods have been represented as something negative, something to be avoided (by those who don't have them) and a reason to exclude or treat menstruators differently.

- Periods are dirty/contain poison
- Tampons will break your hymen and you'll no longer be a virgin
- You can't have a bath
- Everybody gets PMS and it always manifests as crankiness/irritability

## EDUCATION

We don't usually get taught a lot about them at school and so it can feel awkward.

We almost never see them on TV or read about them in books. If we do it is likely to be negative.

Society expects us to keep periods a secret and often shames us for having them or talking about them.





## INCLUSIVE PERIODS

Out of these people, can you tell just by looking who has a period and who doesn't? It might seem simple, but the truth is that we do not know people's personal stories just by looking.

It is better not to make assumptions and to understand that while periods aren't a secret, they are private.

Women, trans men and non-binary people can all have periods, but not all of them do.

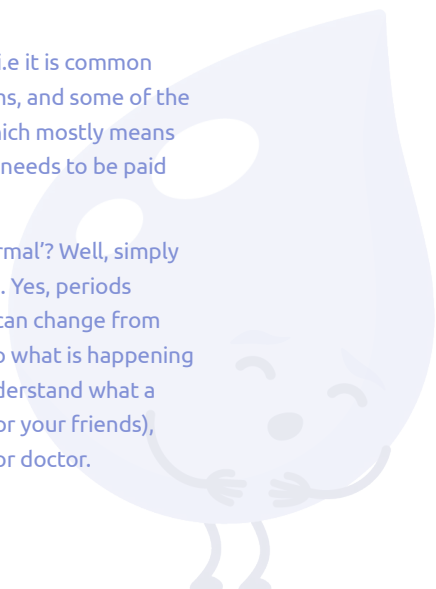
Remember to use gender neutral or gender inclusive language when talking about periods so that everyone feels included.

## ABNORMAL AND COMMON

Cramps? Heavy bleeding? Cravings? Mood swings?

Some of these symptoms are what we call 'common', i.e it is common amongst a lot of people to experience these symptoms, and some of the symptoms we may have are considered abnormal - which mostly means that they could indicate something more serious that needs to be paid attention by a doctor (see 'Abnormal Periods' page).

So why do we use abnormal and common and not 'normal'? Well, simply because when it comes to periods there is no 'normal'. Yes, periods should be regular, but the fact is that so many things can change from cycle to cycle and so it is important to pay attention to what is happening to your body so that you can take care of yourself, understand what a period is like for you (it's likely going to be different for your friends), and know when you need to speak to a trusted adult or doctor.





# PERIOD CARE AND WELLBEING

Means good communication. You're going to experience changes - talking about them can help. There is a lot to learn too - remember learning is a privilege!

## TALKING ABOUT PERIODS SOUNDS LIKE..



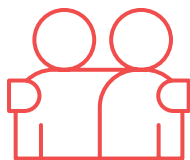
**PERIOD EQUITY  
ACTIVISM**



**BEING INCLUSIVE WITH  
YOUR LANGUAGE**



**SELF LOVE  
AND SELF CARE**



**BEING OPEN AS  
PART OF HEALTHY  
RELATIONSHIPS**



**SAYING WHEN YOU  
NEED A BREAK OR  
TIME TO REST**



**RESPECTING  
DIFFERENT  
CULTURAL NORMS**



## **FREE THE PERIOD - LET'S GET TALKING**

Each episode of the podcast has been put together to help you learn and answer some of your most important questions. But it doesn't stop there. Now it's time for action.

Talking about periods is one of the most powerful ways to... FREE THE PERIOD. To help you do that, we've put together some questions to talk about at home, at school or with friends.

**ARE MEN TALKING ENOUGH ABOUT PERIODS?**

**WHERE DOES SHAME AROUND OUR PERIODS COME FROM?**

**WHY MIGHT PEOPLE FEEL SHAME AROUND NOT BEING ABLE TO AFFORD PERIOD PRODUCTS?**

**HOW MIGHT YOUNG BOYS REACT TO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT PERIODS?**

**WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO TACKLE STIGMA WITH KIDS AND YOUNG PEOPLE?**

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EP. 02 BACK TO BASICS

# EP. 02 BACK TO BASICS

## OUR GUESTS



### **LE'NiSE BROTHERS** **NUTRITIONIST AND YOGA TEACHER**

Le'Nise Brothers is a period nutritionist and yoga teacher. She has written a book called, "You Can Have a Better Period". She also has her own podcast called Period Story. You can follow her on Instagram [@eatlovemove](#)

### **SASKIA BOUJO** **CAMPAIGNER AND EDUCATOR**

Saskia Boujo is period campaigner and a relationship and sex educator who has written a book, "This Period in My Life." You can buy a copy of the book in English and French. You can follow Saskia on Instagram [@factsoflife.ed](#)



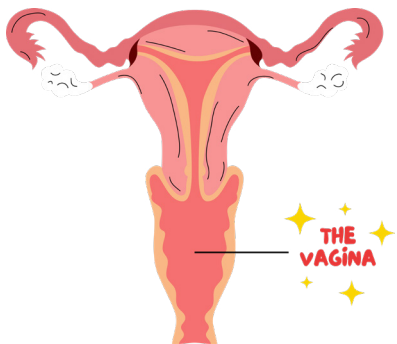


# EP. 02 BACK TO BASICS

## QUICK INFO

**59% OF MEN + 45% OF WOMEN**

**COULD NOT IDENTIFY WHERE  
THE VAGINA WAS ON A DIAGRAM**



- **phs Group** has discovered the following stats, based on polls of girls and people who menstruate aged 13-18
- **Only a third (32%)** correctly identified the vulva as the term for the female external genitals, with the majority wrongly saying it was the vagina
- As many as **1 in 5 girls (19%)** do not feel that they have received adequate education at school or college about menstruation and **just 1 in 7 understand their monthly cycle**
- Two thirds of girls (65%) use an alternative nickname for the vagina
- **Most girls (38%)** say that boys are not involved in menstruation classes at school or college

# THE BIOLOGY BIT

## ENDOMETRIOSIS

Endometriosis is a condition where tissue similar to the lining of the womb starts to grow in other places, such as the ovaries and fallopian tubes. Endometriosis can affect women [and menstruators] of any age. It's a long-term condition that can have a significant impact on your life, but there are treatments that can help.

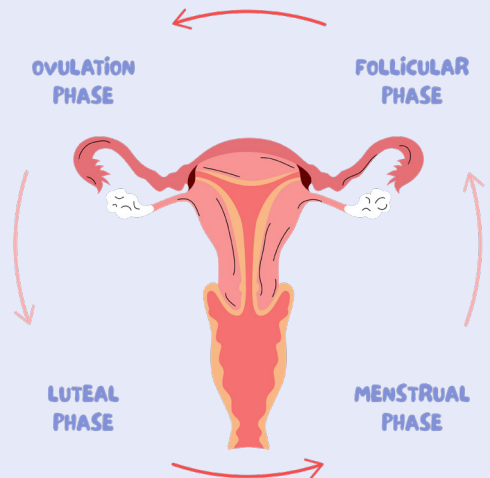
## POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME (PCOS)

Polycystic ovaries contain a large number of harmless follicles that are up to 8mm (approximately 0.3in) in size. The follicles are underdeveloped sacs in which eggs develop. In PCOS, these sacs are often unable to release an egg, which means ovulation does not take place. Around 1 in every 10 women are affected by PCOS, but as more than half of these women do not have symptoms, it's difficult to know the exact amount.

## PREMENSTRUAL DYSPHORIC DISORDER (PMDD)

A small number of women [and menstruators] may experience more severe symptoms of PMS, known as premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD). Symptoms of PMDD are similar to PMS but are much more intense and can have a much greater negative impact on your daily activities and quality of life. If you have ADHD, you may be more likely to experience PMDD.

## YOUR MENSTRUAL CYCLE

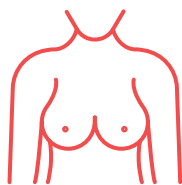


*All medical definitions are taken from the NHS UK website.  
\*[menstruators] was added by the creator*

# PERIOD CARE AND WELLBEING

Is about understanding what your body needs during different parts of your cycle. Your body is talking, listen.

THESE ARE SOME OF THE BODILY CHANGES THAT YOU **\*MIGHT\*** NOTICE JUST BEFORE OR ONCE YOU START YOUR PERIOD



TENDER  
BREASTS



NAUSEA



HEADACHES



LOW MOODS AND/OR  
MOOD CHANGES



INSOMNIA OR  
DIFFICULTY SLEEPING



ACNE / SPOTS



## FREE THE PERIOD - LET'S GET TALKING

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DO WE KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT OUR OWN BASIC BIOLOGY AS ADULTS?

HOW MUCH ARE YOUNG PEOPLE LEARNING FROM TIKTOK AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS?

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT TO TEACH? PARENTS, SCHOOLS, OR BOTH?

WHY SHOULD WE TRACK OUR CYCLE?

WHAT AGE SHOULD WE LEARN ABOUT PERIODS? WHY?

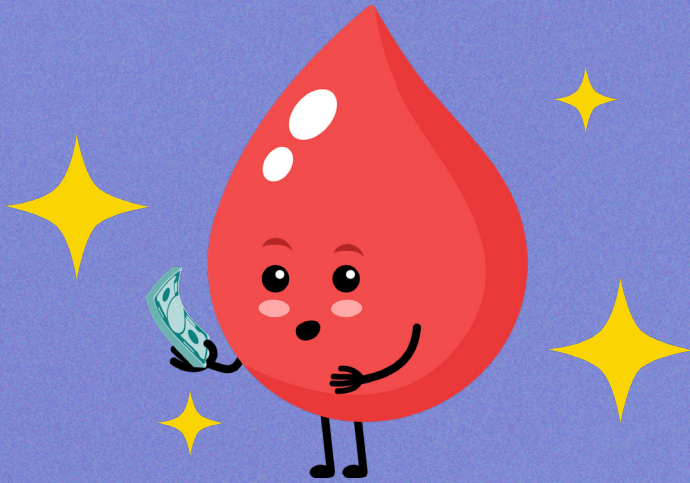


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EP. 03 PRODUCTS + COSTS

# EP. 03 PRODUCTS + COSTS

## OUR GUESTS



**KENNY ETHAN JONES**  
**ACTIVIST, WRITER AND MODEL**

Kenny Ethan Jones is an activist, writer, model and advocate. Kenny made history by becoming the first trans man to front a period campaign. He is a key voice in the activism space and can be seen in many campaigns that support marginalised communities. You can follow him on Instagram [@kennyethanjones](https://www.instagram.com/kennyethanjones)

**TERRI HARRIS**  
**ACTIVIST AND FACILITATOR**

Terri Harris is from Bloody Good Period - the UK's leading period equity charity. BGP provide menstrual education, work to normalise periods at work with Bloody Good Employers as well as providing products for people who can't afford them. You can follow them on Instagram [@bloodygoodperiod](https://www.instagram.com/bloodygoodperiod)



# EP. 03 PRODUCTS + COSTS

## QUICK INFO



**phs** Group has found

- Around a quarter of girls and their families have found it harder to buy period products over the last year
- The higher cost of living is forcing 2 in 5 (39%) to opt for period items that they would not normally choose
- 44% said the cost of sustainable period products such as period underwear or a menstrual cup is ruling them out from using them
- 10% said teachers haven't given period products to students at school because they think students can afford them

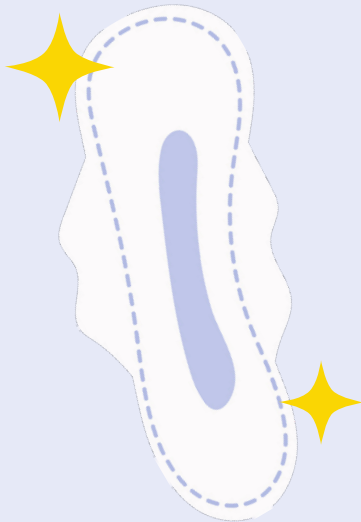
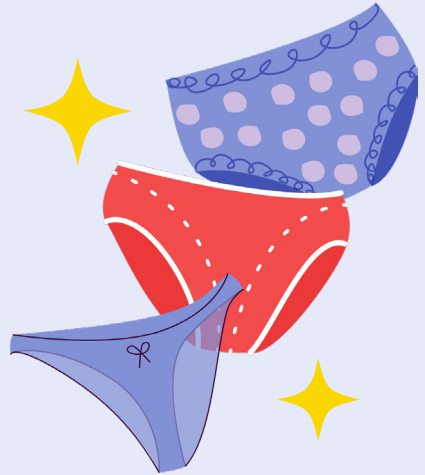
# PERIOD PRODUCTS

## PERIOD PANTS

Period pants are underwear that absorb your period blood. They look like regular underwear and are washable and reusable.

They are a product that can be worn alone or as added protection when you're wearing a tampon or a menstrual cup. Make sure you follow the guidance on how to wash them properly.

You can wear them from 6-12 hours depending on how heavy your flow is. Please read the instructions provided on the packet for how to use.



## PADS

A period pad (most commonly known as a sanitary towel) is a product which is worn inside your underwear to absorb your period blood during your period.

Some come with wings (like in this image) that attach to each side, and hook underneath to help keep them in place.

They come in different absorbency levels depending on how much you bleed. They can also be worn overnight and night pads will likely be longer and thicker than day pads.

They should be changed every 4-6 hours. Please read the instructions provided on the packet for how to use.



# PERIOD PRODUCTS

## MENSTRUAL CUP

A menstrual cup is a period product that is inserted into the vagina by hand during your period.

It sits inside the vagina (if it's in properly you shouldn't be able to feel it) and collects period blood.

Menstrual cups are made from flexible, medical-grade silicone and come in different sizes depending on how heavy your flow is. They are washable and reusable.

You can wear one for up to 6-12 hours depending on your flow. Please check the guidelines on how to properly clean and store them.



## REUSABLE PAD

A reusable pad is a product made from cloth and they are worn in your underwear to absorb the blood from your period. Much like non-reusable pads, they attach themselves to the underwear, usually with a popper rather than an adhesive.

They can be washed and reused, and can also be worn when you are wearing a tampon or a menstrual cup for added protection.

Check the guidance on how to wash them properly. You can wear them for 6-12 hours depending on how heavy your flow is.

Please check the guidelines on how to properly clean and store them.



# PERIOD PRODUCTS

## FREE BLEEDING

Free bleeding is the practise of menstruating without using any sort of period product.

Free bleeding has and is still used to challenge the stigmas and taboos about periods. Some people who menstruate free bleed as a sign of protest against period inequity, such as the price of period products or the negative effect they can have on the environment.

Free bleeding isn't 'dirty' or 'wrong'. It is up to the person who is menstruating to decide how to take care of their period health.



## TAMPONS

A tampon is a period product that is inserted into the vagina to absorb period blood.

They can come in plastic, paper, sugar plastic or reusable applicators, or without an applicator. The applicator helps to push the tampon into the right position in the vagina, where as the non-applicator ones are fully inserted with your fingers.

When inserted properly, you shouldn't be able to see it, but a bit of the string will show outside your vulva. They come in different sizes depending on your flow and should be changed every 4-6 hours (max 8), but this will vary with your flow.

Please read the instructions provided on the packet for how to use.



# PERIOD CARE AND WELLBEING

Starts with understanding what to expect - you might experience some of these, none, or all of them each cycle.

## HAVING A PERIOD LOOKS AND SOUNDS LIKE



**BEING TIRED,  
INSOMNIA**



**HAVING  
CRAMPS**



**FEELING EMOTIONAL  
AND IRRITATED**



**WANTING TO BE  
COMFORTABLE**



**FEELING  
BLOATED**



**NEEDING  
A CUDDLE**



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WHERE CAN I GET  
PRODUCTS FOR FREE?

WHY CAN'T WE MAKE FREE  
PRODUCTS AVAILABLE FOR  
ALL EVERYWHERE?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO  
TALK ABOUT PERIODS?  
INCLUSIVITY? WHO MIGHT  
GET LEFT OUT OF THE  
CONVERSATION?

WHAT PERIOD PRODUCTS ARE  
AVAILABLE AT THE MOMENT?

WHAT ARE THE BEST  
PRODUCTS FOR [ME] TO USE?



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EP. 04 PAIN

# EP. 04 PAIN

## OUR GUESTS



### **DR ANNABEL SOWEMIMO** **Gynaecologist AND AUTHOR**

Dr Annabel Sowemimo is a Gynaecologist from Reproductive Justice (formally Decolonising Contraception). She works at a gynae outpatients clinic, at a hospital sexual health clinic and at a menopause clinic. She is also studying for a PHD around Black British women's access to contraception and abortion. You can follow her on Instagram [@decolonisingcontraception](https://www.instagram.com/decolonisingcontraception) and buy her new book "Divided".

### **CHANTÉ JOSEPH** **WRITER AND BROADCASTER**

Chante Joseph is a Writer (author of Black British Power) broadcaster (presenter of The Guardian's Pop Culture podcast), content creator and recent sufferer of bad periods. Chanté broke Insta when she posted about getting a mooncup stuck inside her. You can follow her on Instagram [@chantayyjay](https://www.instagram.com/chantayyjay)



# EP. 04 PAIN

## QUICK INFO



- John Guillebaud, professor of reproductive health at University College London, revealed in 2018 that research shows **period pain can be as “bad as having a heart attack”**
- Around **80-90% of people suffer period pain at some point in their lives**. In 5-10% of women the pain is severe enough to disrupt their lives (various sources)
- It takes an average of 7.5 years to get an endometriosis diagnosis - with a life of constant pain often leading up to it (source: Endometriosis UK)
- Multiple studies have shown that women’s pain is taken less seriously than men’s, with women made to wait longer at A&E and given weaker medication



# UNDERSTANDING PERIOD PAIN

Period pain is considered 'abnormal'. Pain, and FOUR other key signs that something might be wrong with your period and it's time to see a doctor.

## VERY PAINFUL PERIODS

EXTREMELY  
HEAVY OR  
PROLONGED  
PERIODS

IRREGULAR  
PERIODS

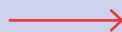
MISSED  
PERIODS

NOTHING

## VERY PAINFUL PERIODS

- Pain is subjective
- A good indicator of serious pain is:
  - When simple painkillers such as ibuprofen and paracetamol rarely help the pain
  - Debilitating pain that completely stops you from carrying on with your normal day-to-day activities
- These could indicate underlying conditions such as fibroids, endometriosis or adenomyosis

FOUR KEY SIGNS  
CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE





## EXTREMELY HEAVY OR PROLONGED PERIODS

- Heavy periods are described as >80mls per period. 'Normal' loss is approx. 40mls
- Signs could be that you flood through double protection (pads and tampons) or pass big clots
- Heavy periods can lead to anaemia and you may need an iron supplement
- Prolonged periods could be a sign of underlying medical conditions such as fibroids, endometriosis, adenomyosis, polyps, or in rare cases, cancers of the womb or cervix

## IRREGULAR PERIODS

- These may be 'normal' if you are at the extremes of menstrual life, such as just starting you periods (menarch) or ending your periods (perimenopausal)
- If you're not within these stages then irregular periods could be due to medications such as the mini-pill or implant, or underlying medical conditions like PCOS

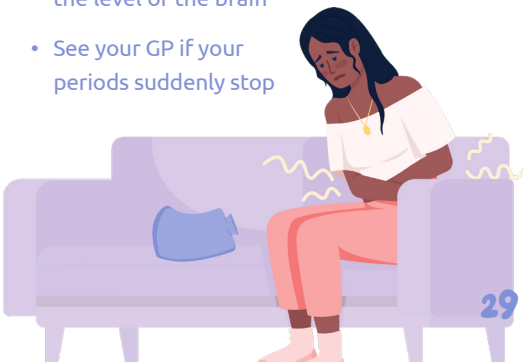


## MISSED PERIODS

- If you've missed a period, are within reproductive age and sexually active
  - Take a pregnancy test!
- Other conditions that can cause your periods to stop include thyroid-related issues or due to over-exercising, anorexia or extreme weight gain. These conditions affect your menstrual cycle at the level of the brain
- See your GP if your periods suddenly stop

## NOTHING

- You may have heavy, painful periods, and after investigations, can't find a cause for them. This is called dysfunctional uterine bleeding (DUB)
- It's only diagnosed when everything else i.e. pregnancy, medication, systemic conditions and genital tract issues have been excluded
- DUB is common amongst people of reproductive age and can seriously impact their personal and social life
- Treatments include medication, the hormonal intrauterine coil (Mirena), endometrial ablation and at the end, a hysterectomy



# PAIN: KNOW YOUR BODY

## TRACKING YOUR SYMPTOMS

You can make a note of your symptoms in a period app or written in your personal diary.

Pain can feel different for everyone, but if you are experiencing very painful periods (eg. you cannot carry out your normal day to day activities like getting out of bed, walking, sports, travel etc) then this is something that is considered abnormal and may be a sign of something more serious. It is best to seek medical advice as soon as you can.



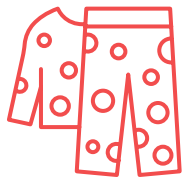
**DON'T FORGET TO KEEP TRACK OF OTHER SYMPTOMS LIKE HEADACHES AND ACNE. THE MORE YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR BODY, THE BETTER!**



# PERIOD CARE AND WELLBEING

Is about understanding what your body needs during different parts of your cycle. Your body is talking, listen.

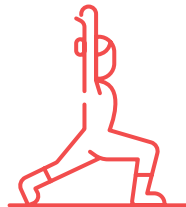
## PERIOD SELF CARE LOOKS LIKE...



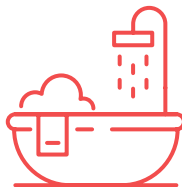
**WEARING YOUR  
COMFIEST CLOTHES**



**HAVING A CUP OF TEA  
IN YOUR FAVOURITE CUP**



**LIGHT STRETCHING  
EXERCISES**



**HAVING LONG  
BATH OR SHOWER**



**WATCHING A FUNNY  
OR FAVOURITE MOVIE**



**FINDING TIME TO BE  
STILL AND RELAX**



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IS PAIN NORMAL  
DURING A PERIOD?  
WHAT LEVEL OF PAIN IS  
ACCEPTABLE, IF ANY?

WHAT PRODUCTS ARE  
AVAILABLE OVER THE  
COUNTER FOR PAIN?

WHAT PRODUCTS  
ARE AVAILABLE VIA  
PRESCRIPTION FOR PAIN?

IS THE CONTRACEPTIVE  
PILL THE ANSWER?

CAN DIET AND EXERCISE  
AFFECT PAIN?



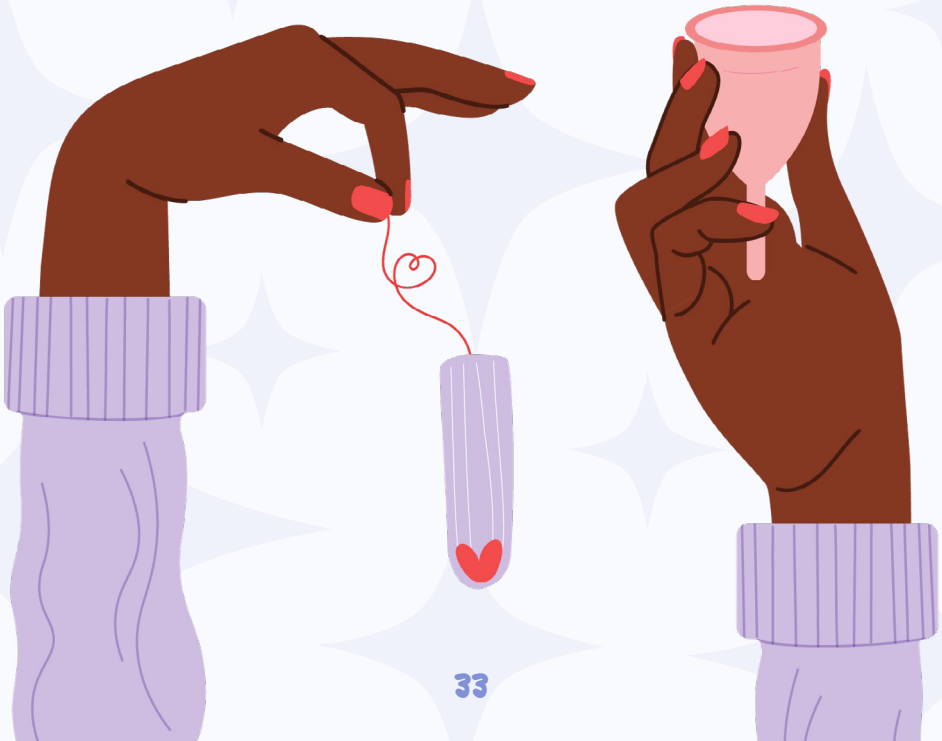
# QUICK CHECK IN... FREE THE PERIOD

## PERIODS ARE:

- Healthy
- Normal
- Natural
- Ok to talk about
- Different for everyone

## PERIODS ARE NOT:

- Dirty
- Shameful
- A secret
- Embarrassing
- A reason to exclude



**SUBSCRIBE, LISTEN AND SHARE OUR  
PODCAST TO HELP US SPREAD THE WORD.**