



Title: Menstruation

Level: THIRD/FOURTH

Links to Curriculum for Excellence

Experiences and outcomes	Benchmarks
I understand my own body's uniqueness, my developing sexuality, and that of others. HWB 4-47a	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recognises the impact of puberty and developing sexuality.

Learning intentions

- Young people learn the correct names for parts of their body, including male and female genitalia, and their functions.
- Young people recognise that body changes with puberty impact on feelings and behaviour.
- Young people understand the importance of personal hygiene.
- Young people learn how to prepare for and manage periods.

Success criteria

- I can name parts of my body.
- I can talk about the different parts of my body and what they do.
- I can describe the changes that take place with puberty.
- I know and can describe how to prepare for and manage periods and I am aware of all the available options, including re-usable products.
- I understand how to maintain personal hygiene.

Resources to support this activity

- PowerPoint slides
- What is Normal activity. This activity ©Hey Girls CIC 2019. Reproduced with kind permission of the owner.
- A selection of period products for the class to see.
- Menstruation what to expect (duration 3 minutes 18) by amaze.org <https://youtu.be/DBe7-PHRav8>
- Period hygiene: Tampons, Pads and Menstrual Cups (duration 2 minutes 9) by amaze.org <https://youtu.be/kmWbOC8Fbb0>

NOTE: Many teachers/educators assume that young people know about menstruation and there is no need to return to the topic after an input in S1. Research with young people, however, has shown that many feel that a further chance to discuss the topic would be useful. All learners should take part in this activity, it is important for everyone to understand menstruation. Modelling positive conversations about this natural process can help dismantle the stigma around periods and reduce the teasing that girls can experience.

Learning about menstruation can also be revisited and further enhanced by using the resources produced by Hey Girls. There are free resources, lesson plans and supporting material available here:

<https://www.heygirls.co.uk/education/schools/>

Please also look ahead to the Senior Phase activity *Human Fertility and Reproduction* as well as *Planning for Parenthood* which extend understanding of sexual and reproductive health through the life course.

Activity

1. Introduce the session as being about menstruation. Acknowledge that the young people may have done some previous learning, but today you will be discussing them in more detail. Also acknowledge that young people may have seen these short animations, but both will just bring everyone up to speed:
 - Menstruation what to expect (duration 3 minutes 18) by amaze.org <https://youtu.be/DBe7-PHRav8>
 - Period hygiene: Tampons, Pads and Menstrual Cups (duration 2 minutes 9) by amaze.org <https://youtu.be/kmWbOC8Fbb0>
2. Take any initial comments and then have a short, general discussion along these lines: So, even though we have been learning about periods over a long time at school: Do you think people – young people your age or adults - are embarrassed to talk about periods? Why so – do we learn to be embarrassed somehow? What should be happening at school or at home or amongst friends to make it less awkward for people to discuss?
3. Take young people through the **What is Normal?** Activity. This activity ©Hey Girls CIC 2019. Reproduced with kind permission of the owner. In pairs or small groups, explain that young people will have a selection of statements (see prop for cards to cut out) and have to decide which of them are **normal**, **not normal** or **not sure**. When young people have finished, go through each statement, taking questions and facilitating discussion. If the statements are mixed it won't matter if not every statement is seen by every group as they will be discussed in feedback – but if possible take time to let young people look at everything.

Teacher/educator notes are provided at the end of this activity description with responses to the statements. Take time on those that young people clearly are not sure about or have wrong information.

4. As part of this discussion, you may touch the fact that there are medical conditions associated with periods. Use the slide to inform young people that it is worth being aware of:
 - **Endometriosis** – affects 1 in 10 women in the UK and causes chronic pain. Adenomyosis and Fibroids also cause severe menstrual pain
 - **Menorrhagia** - very heavy menstrual bleeding
 - **Pre-menstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD)** – a particularly severe and distressing form of pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS). Mood symptoms are very pronounced, and can include anxiety, depression, irritability, severe mood swings, difficulty concentrating and fatigue

- **Polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS)** – can cause very irregular periods, excess facial or body hair, acne and weight gain, along with irregular or missing ovulation

Explain that for a long time, people with period-related health issues have found it difficult to seek help partly because they are unaware of what is normal. Use the next slide with the key message. Stress that while everyone experiences pain differently, if periods have a significant negative impact on someone's life then there is something wrong. Anyone suffering from severe pain that isn't helped with painkillers, has very heavy bleeding, cyclical depression and/or anxiety, irregular cycles, and irregular bleeding between periods should seek help. Treatments vary depending on the person and the condition.

If periods have a significant negative impact on someone's life then there is something wrong. Information, help and support is available.

5. Explain to pupils that the rest of the lesson will be spent exploring products people use on their period. Ask what products young people know about? Use the slide to check if the class/group thought of all of these:

Menstrual products

Disposable pads, tampons (applicator and non-applicator), Menstrual Cups, Reusable (cloth) pads and Period pants.

Pass round a range of products, enough so that everyone can see and handle them. It is important all pupils get a chance to touch and feel the products, not just look at them. If possible, try and use a range of different brands so pupils can experience the variety of options. Explain how they work, including re-usable products, and that young people may choose to use these in future.

Encourage discussion about the potential pros and cons of different products – including ease of use, cost, environmental sustainability etc.

Reassure young people that everyone uses the products that work best for them. There is no right or wrong. Most young people start by using pads, and are unlikely to start using tampons or menstrual cups until later on. However, it is important for young people to know these options exist.

6. **Use the final slides to highlight two important factors:**
 - Toxic Shock Syndrome is a rare but serious illness that you can get if you leave a tampon in for a long time. Always use the lightest absorbency for your flow and change tampons every 4-6 hours (maximum 8 hours). If you have a fever and think you might have toxic shock, go to the doctor
 - Never flush period products down the toilet. Always put them in a bin
7. **To end. Free products.** Remind the young people (even if it has come up in conversation already) that all schools are now providing free period products as part of the Scottish Government's provision of sanitary products policy. Explain to children where they can access these at school.

Normal? Not normal? Answers for teachers/facilitators

1. Starting your period after your friends do. **Normal**. Starting any time between ages of 8 and 16 is totally normal.
2. Being scared to use a tampon. **Normal**, tampons can be quite intimidating. Always read the instructions first. If you can feel it and it feels uncomfortable then you've probably got it wrong
3. Talking to your friends about your period. **Normal**. Periods are nothing to be embarrassed about
4. Leaking blood on your clothes during a period. **Normal**. Although it can be embarrassing this is nothing to be ashamed of. Blood washes off with cold water and soap
5. Brown period blood. **Normal**, blood goes brown as it gets in contact with the air
6. Being angry a few days before your period starts **Normal**. But everyone experiences periods differently
7. Going swimming on your period. **Normal**. Although wear a tampon or a cup. Not a pad
8. Having a bath on your period. **Normal**. You won't notice any blood
9. Having a period about every 25-35 days. **Normal**, but everyone experiences periods differently
10. Having labia that dangle down. **Normal**. If pupils are worried about this, there is an excellent resource by Brook and the British Society for Paediatric and Adolescent Gynaecology (BritSPAG) called 'So what is a Vulva anyway?' which you could show pupils .
11. Cloudy stretchy discharge about 10 days after your period. **Normal**. The cervix produces mucus in varying quantities and consistencies throughout the menstrual cycle (this is discharge)
12. Having really irregular periods **Normal**. In the first couple of years. From then on not normal and a cause for visiting the doctor
13. Talking to your dad about periods **Normal**. But perhaps isn't for some families - you could get your dad to look at this <https://www.heygirls.co.uk/pads-for-dads/>
14. Having a heavy flow for the first couple of days. **Normal**.
15. Feeling really depressed and anxious each month. **Not Normal**. Many people experience mood swings around their periods, but cyclical depression and anxiety is a symptom of PMDD. See a doctor.
16. Dark red blobs in your period blood. **Normal**. Provided they are fairly small. Clots the size of a 10p piece or larger are a reason to visit the doctor
17. Such bad cramps that you faint or pass out. **Not normal**. Go to your GP
18. Having a sore back on the first day of your period. **Normal**. But everyone experiences periods differently.
19. Finding green discharge in your pants. **Not normal**. This could be a sign of infection. Go to your GP or a local sexual health clinic.
20. Needing to change your period product every hour. **Not normal**. Not normal if this is sustained over a period of several hours. If you are bleeding heavily tell a trusted adult and go to your GP.
21. Not starting your period until you are 16 years old. **Normal**. Starting any time between ages of 8 and 16 is totally normal. If you are 17 and you have never had a period, you might want to get a check-up.
22. Using a menstrual cup **Normal**. Many women use cups.

23. Feeling itchy around your vulva. **Normal** to be a bit itchy occasionally. **Not normal** to be very itchy and painful. As this could be a sign of infection you should go to your GP or a local sexual health clinic.

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Additional material

- **So, what is a vulva anyway?** This is a great leaflet that could be used in this or another lesson.
https://www.brook.org.uk/data/So_what_is_a_vulva_anyway_final_booklet.pdf
published by British Society for Paediatric and Adolescent Gynaecology (BritSPAG) and Brook.
- **Information for Dads** from Hey Girls! <https://www.heygirls.co.uk/pads-for-dads/>
this could be shared with home.
- **Plastic pollution.** Show the group this information video by charity City to Sea about plastic pollution caused by menstrual products. Explain before you show it that of course menstrual products are available for free for them but the point is really to understand the harm of flushing products down the loo. **Plastic free periods:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsJjUzN_12o (duration 1 minute 29)

Practitioner Notes

