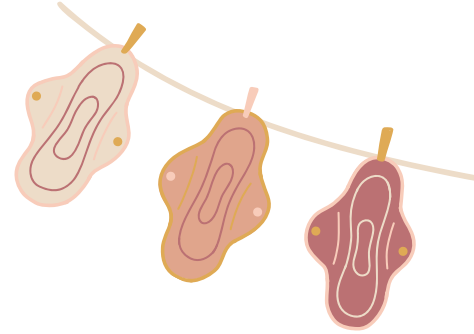


Period Products

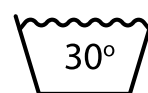
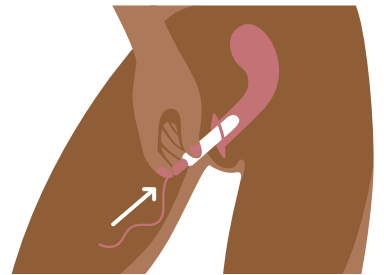


What are period products?

There are a range of different period products available. This way you can choose the one that you feel is the most comfortable and suitable for yourself. There is no right or wrong period product. If you need further assistance on period products, your local pharmacist, GP/doctor, and menstrual health organisations are there to support you.

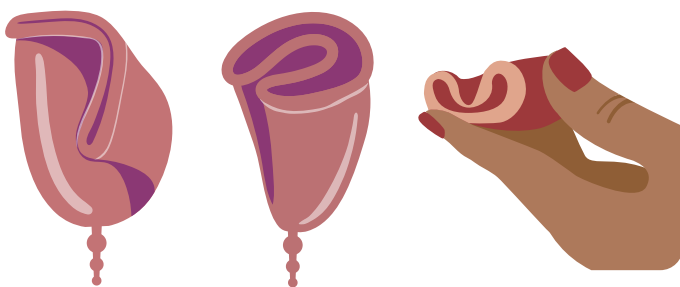
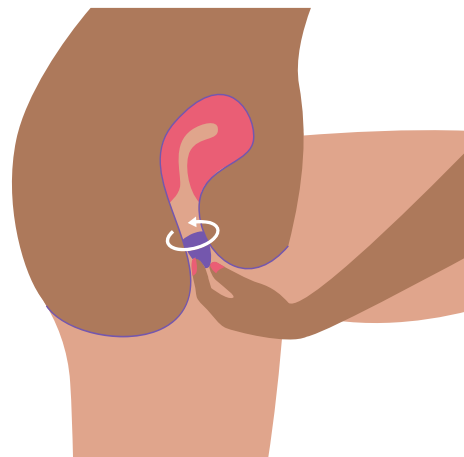
What types of period products are there and how do you use them?

- **Pads:** A pad can be either disposable or reusable, and is worn on the outside of your body by sticking it to the inside of your underwear. Period pads can be more beneficial when you have a heavier period. You must replace your period pads every two to three hours depending on your period flow, but you can wear a pad for up to 8 hours overnight.
- **Tampons:** A tampon is a disposable product that is inserted into the vagina to absorb blood. If a tampon has been inserted correctly, you shouldn't be able to feel it. You should change your tampon every 4-6 hours depending on how heavy your period flow is. Tampons that are left inside the vagina for too long can carry the risk of causing an infection. If inserting a tampon is painful, please speak to your GP/ doctor.
- **Period Pants/ Underwear:** Period underwear is a form of underwear that is specially designed to be used during your period. They are different from regular underwear because they have multiple layers to absorb the blood you lose during your period. Period underwear can be more absorbent than tampons and period pads. Those who have heavy periods tend to use them as extra protection at night. They are also reusable, which creates less waste than period pads and tampons. You can wash them by hand or in a washing machine. You do still have to change period underwear on a regular basis. (There are different types of period underwear. Please check individual guidelines for how long you can use them).



- **Period Swimwear:** Specially designed for swimming on your period - includes swimming costumes and bikini bottoms that can be used without the need for another period product.

- **Menstrual Cup:** A menstrual cup is a reusable cup that is inserted into your vagina during your period. It comes in a variety of sizes. You can wear it for up to 12 hours a day without it stopping your normal activities. You fold it before you insert it. Cups create less waste than period pads and tampons. If you insert it correctly, you shouldn't be able to feel it. Squeeze the bottom of the cup to remove it.



Key Words:

Disposable - to be thrown away after use, not to be reused.

Reusable - to be reused, reusable period products are often cleaned after use so that they can be used again.

Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS)

It is important to shower regularly when using menstrual products - especially with tampons and menstrual cups. If you don't, they can put you at higher risk of developing a condition called Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). TSS is a rare but life-threatening condition caused by an infection. Symptoms develop quickly – therefore you would need to seek urgent medical treatment if you suspect you have TSS

To prevent TSS, it is important not to leave your tampons or menstrual cups in longer than needed or recommended on the packaging.

TSS Symptoms:

- High temperature
- Muscle aches
- Raised skin rash that feels like sandpaper
- Flu-like symptoms
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Disorientation



Which period product can I use?

There is no 'right' or 'wrong' period product to use. Some people prefer to use reusable products because they are better for the environment. Some people prefer to use insertable products because they find them more comfortable.



Will using a tampon or period cup affect my virginity?

NO - using a tampon or period cup does not affect virginity. There is a myth that using a tampon could 'break' the hymen, this is not true. A hymen is a thin membrane found at the entrance to the vagina, but it does not entirely cover the vagina, it is stretchy to enable menstrual blood to pass.

Is the use of tampons *haram* in Islam?

Using tampons is permissible because they are not for sexual purposes.*

Where can I access period products?

Period products can be purchased from supermarkets, pharmacies or online. You can also use this website, myperiod.org.uk, to find free period products near you. Children in both primary and secondary school can access period products for free at school due to the Government's Free Period Product Scheme.



Remember –

use whatever period product is right for you!
There are many options, so you can decide what is best for you.

* Rizvi (2014) *Ritual Ablutions for Women* (Book)



This resource was created in consultation with Muslim communities in South Yorkshire.
Funded by the University of Sheffield

This resource is also informed by: Tomlinson, M (2025) *The Menstrual Movement in the Media: Reducing Stigma and Tackling Social Inequalities*. Palgrave (free to read online). The research for this book was funded by the Leverhulme Trust.


Some of this resource has been adapted from <https://menstrualhealthproject.org.uk/toolkits/menstrual-health-guide/>

Images of woman in pain and women meditating by Uzma Rani: www.uzmarani.com

Resource created in 2025 and will be reviewed and updated annually by the Menstrual Health Project



Download our **FREE** toolkits

 www.menstrualhealthproject.org.uk

Available in English and Welsh.
Scan to download!



**MENSTRUAL HEALTH
PROJECT**



**Irise
International**

Irise International provide free period product banks in Sheffield, including at Zest and ISRAAC, Zest and Stocksbridge Community Centre



SHEFFIELD

**DAYS FOR
GIRLS**

Thank you to Days for Girls for their generous donation of reusable pads
<https://www.daysforgirls.org/>

Food and your menstrual health

There is lots of information on the internet about food and nutrition and how it might affect menstrual and hormone health. Some information is great, but unfortunately some information is not supported by evidence and following it could be harmful to your health.



How do I tell if information is reliable?

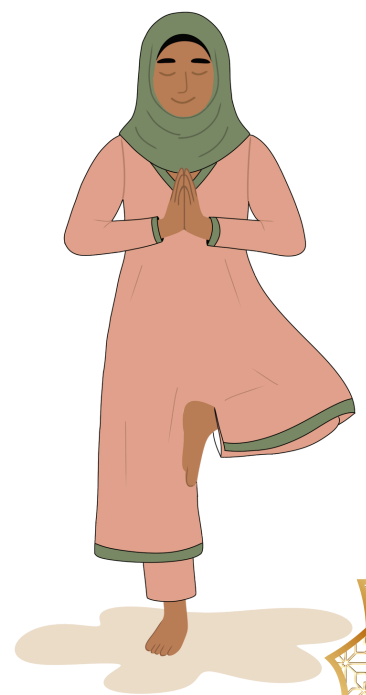
Ask yourself...

- **Who** has written this information? – *are they an expert? What are their credentials? (e.g. are they a doctor, dietician, researcher...?)*
- **Why** has it been created? – *if the information is provided by a brand/ is trying to sell you something, it may not be reliable (e.g. companies selling gummies to help with periods or menopause may be exaggerating the benefits to sell their products)*
- Is any **evidence** provided? – *We can often tell if information is reliable because it provides sources as evidence (e.g. articles that are published in journals)*
- How does it **compare** to other sources? – *if you can check other sources and find the same information, this is a good sign that what you are reading is probably reliable*

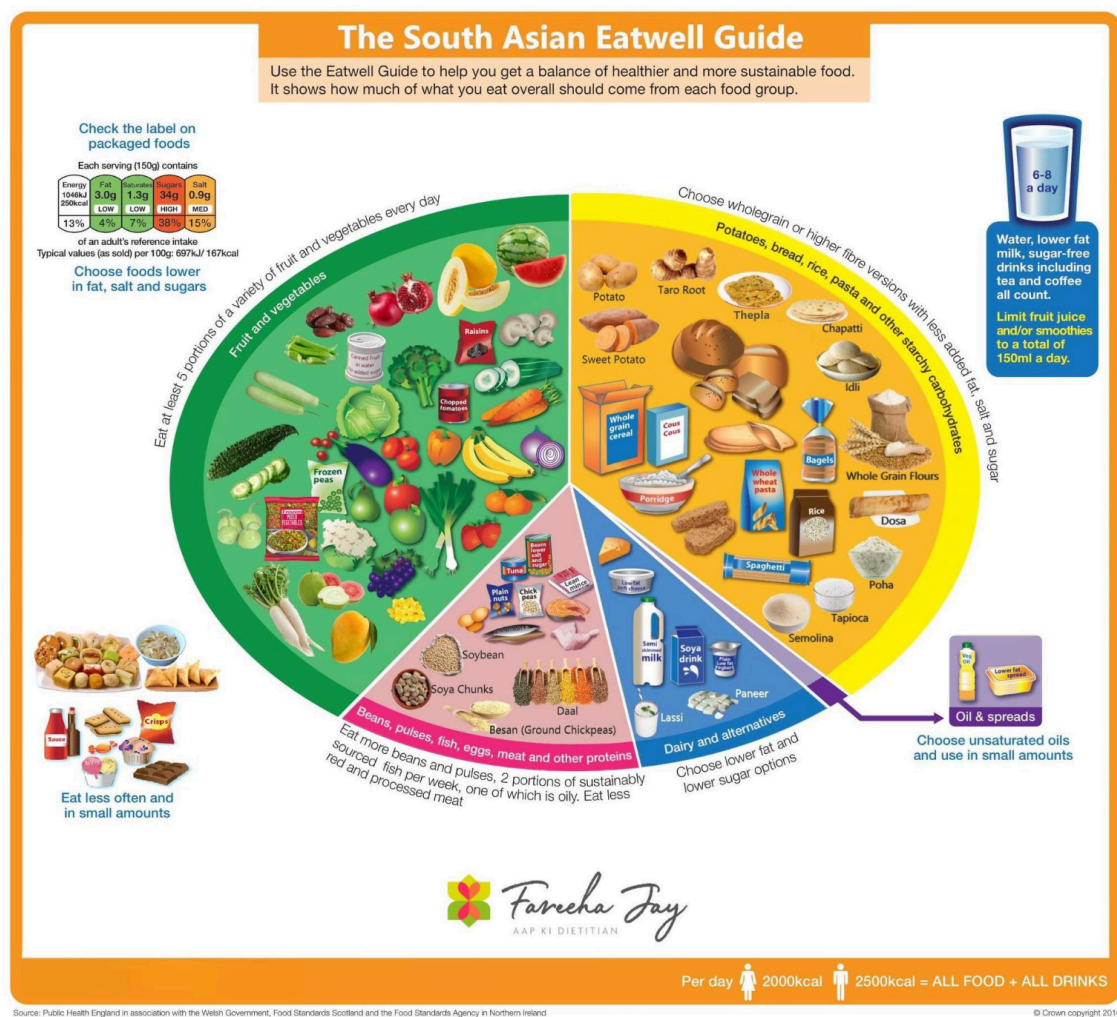
So, where to start?

For general health and hormone health, it is recommended to base your meals on vegetables, wholemeal products (like wheat flour and brown rice), fruits and legumes (like chickpeas, lentils, hummus). These foods provide a range of healthy vitamins and minerals, fibre, protein and carbohydrates.

You can add to this with low fat proteins, such as chicken or tofu, oily fish such as salmon, nuts and seeds. These foods provide protein and healthy fats, including Omega 3s.



Hormones are chemical substances that act like messengers in the body. After being made in one part of the body, they travel to other parts of the body where they help control how cells and organs do their work. [1]



Adding eggs and dairy (like cow's milk, yogurt and paneer) can help provide other valuable nutrients such as iodine and calcium, which are important nutrients in maintaining good menstrual health. If you are vegan, choose 'fortified' plant-based alternatives (such as fortified soya milk) to help meet your recommended requirements for iodine and calcium.

Other foods such as red meat (like beef and lamb) contain iron which is important for your body's iron stores, but are to be eaten in moderation because they are also high in saturated fat. Deep-fried foods (like samosas and pakoras) are high in saturated fat and salt, so can be enjoyed - but do not provide a lot in terms of nutritional value. It is the same with sweets and desserts (like cake and biscuits) because they are high in sugar.

When cooking, be mindful of how much oil/butter/ghee you are using as these ingredients are very high in saturated fats (1-2 tablespoons is enough!). Methods of cooking like baking, grilling and steaming tend to use less saturated fats than frying and deep-frying.



If a food is '**fortified**', it means the food has had extra nutrients added to it. A commonly fortified food is bread, which is often fortified with calcium, iron, vitamin B1 and vitamin B3. [3]



Myth busting

Does hot food help with period pain? NO - there is no evidence that either cold or hot food helps with period pain. [4]

Does eating less reduce period pain? NO - eating less does not reduce period pain. In fact, there is evidence that shows that skipping meals, especially breakfast, can worsen period pain. [5]

Does spicy food make your periods heavier? NO - there is no evidence to suggest that spicy food makes periods heavier. However, if your stomach is sensitive to spicy foods, it may be helpful to avoid spicy food whilst on your period to reduce gastrointestinal symptoms. [6]



Ramadan and menstrual health

During the holy month of Ramadan, those who are menstruating are exempt from fasting. Those who have a chronic illness, including menstrual health conditions such as endometriosis and PMDD are also exempt from fasting, if fasting was to pose a risk to the person's health.

Certain responsibilities are removed from a woman; she is not to pray when menstruating. This does not refer to a prayer for help or a prayer to God which is always permissible. Prayer here means ritual prayer that starts at a certain time, ends at a certain time, has specific movements, you face the direction of Mecca. That ritual prayer, a woman is exempt from. During her period, she is exempt from fasting in the month of Ramadan and is exempt from pilgrimage. These are the three main acts of worship in Islam - Imam Aarij [7]

What about...?

PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome) — Aim for a regular meal pattern and consider pairing your carbohydrates (like brown rice and oats) with good sources of fibre (like chickpeas and sweet potatoes), protein (like chicken and tofu) or healthy fats (like oily fish and nuts). This helps make meals more nutritious and supports healthy blood glucose regulation by the pancreas [8]

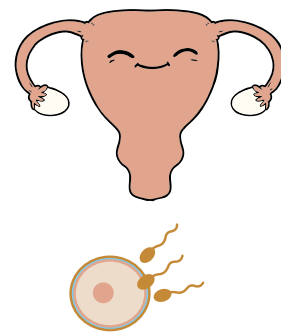
Endometriosis — There is very limited evidence that any dietary changes will benefit endometriosis, despite 50% of women having tried different diets for managing symptoms. Continuing with the general health and hormone diet as described above is recommended, unless you have been told to follow a low fibre diet due to symptoms involving the bowel.

Fibroids — Sticking to a healthy balanced diet could be helpful for minimising risk of fibroids. This includes following the general health and hormone diet above, and making sure you have plenty of vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds. There is promising research that polyphenols (a type of antioxidant) in some tea, fruits and vegetables might have a beneficial impact on reducing fibroid risks, but more research is needed in this area.

Menopause — Keep up your calcium and vitamin D with foods like oily fish and dairy. This will help maintain bone mineral density, which often becomes reduced during menopause. As we lose muscle during menopause, our energy requirements tend to go down. Be mindful of your hunger and when you feel full.



Fertility – Consider taking supplements with at least 10mcg per day of vitamin D, and at least 400mcg per day of folic acid (you can get these for free on the NHS Healthy Start Scheme by asking your midwife). Continuing with the general health and hormone diet above, especially choosing wholegrains, can help provide natural folate which can support the implantation of a fertilised egg in the uterus



Some key words

PMDD: PMDD is a hormone related mood disorder. The physical and mood symptoms impact at a specific time of the monthly cycle in the pre-menstrual phase and subsiding when their periods start. Symptoms can include: headaches, joint and muscle pain, overeating, problems sleeping, and feeling very anxious, angry, depressed or suicidal

Endometriosis: Endometriosis is where cells similar to those in the lining of the womb (uterus) grow in other parts of the body. Some symptoms can include: severe period pain that stops you from doing your normal activities, heavy periods, and pain when you poo or pee.

Fibroids: Growths that develop in and around the uterus. They are not cancerous. They are made from muscle and tissue. They vary in size.

Blood glucose: Blood glucose, or blood sugar, is the main sugar found in your blood. It is your body's primary source of energy.

Bone mineral density: Your bones are made of living tissue. To keep them strong, your body breaks down old bone and replaces it with new bone. But when more bone is broken down than replaced, you lose bone density, also called bone mass. Bone density is a measure of the amount of calcium and other minerals in bone. Bones containing more minerals are denser. They tend to be stronger and less likely to break.

Folic Acid/ folate: Folic acid is the synthetic version of the vitamin folate, also known as vitamin B9. Folate helps the body make healthy red blood cells and is found in certain foods.

Supplements: Any product that aims to 'supplement' the diet with nutrients that could potentially be missing.

Antioxidant: Something that helps keep our body healthy by protecting our cells from damage.

[1] Adapted from: <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/hormones.html>

[2] South Asian Eatwell guide available on <https://mynutriweb.com/the-south-asian-eatwell-guide/>

[3] <https://www.ukflourmillers.org/bread-and-flour-regulations>

[4] <https://www.wellbeingofwomen.org.uk/health-information/15-period-mythbusters/>

[5] Abu Helwa HA, Mitaeb AA, Al-Hamshri S, Sweileh WM. Prevalence of dysmenorrhea and predictors of its pain intensity among Palestinian female university students. *BMC Womens Health*.

[6] <https://flo.health/menstrual-cycle/lifestyle/diet-and-nutrition/foods-to-eat-on-period>

[7] Ricebox Studio: *From Your Big Sister: A Guide on Periods*. Available for free at <https://ricebox.studio/red-cloud-project.html>

[8] <https://www.verity-pcos.org.uk/booklets.html>

For more information about the key words, please consult NHS website. See also: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-types/different-fats-nutrition/>

Scan QR code to access resources by the Menstrual Health Project



LEVERHULME TRUST

This resource was created in consultation with Muslim communities in South Yorkshire.

Resource is also based on findings from: Tomlinson, Maria (2025) *The Menstrual Movement in the Media: Reducing Stigma and Tackling Social Inequalities*. Palgrave (free to read online).

The research for this book was funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

Resource includes information from resources created by the 'Menstrual Health Project'

<https://menstrualhealthproject.org.uk/> in conjunction with Olivia Wall, Dietitian - www.akindietitian.com

Some of this resource has been adapted from:

<https://menstrualhealthproject.org.uk/toolkits/menstrual-health-guide/>

Resource includes artwork by Uzma Rani: www.uzmarani.com

Funded by the University of Sheffield.

Resource created in 2025 and will be reviewed and updated annually by the Menstrual Health Project



Pain Management and Self-Care



Why do people experience pain during their period?

When people experience pain during their period, this is often caused by the squeezing of the muscles in the uterus wall. This happens because the uterus is trying to push menstrual blood out through the vagina. This pain is also known as 'cramps'.

How much pain is too much pain?

A small amount of period pain is normal.

If you are experiencing pain that is stopping you from doing your daily activities, such as going to work/school and exercising, then this is too much pain and you should go to see your GP/doctor to discuss this, as it may be a sign that you have a menstrual health condition that requires medical support.

"The Prophet, peace be upon him, says menstruation is something God has created for the daughters of Adam. It is part of being a female, not something that should be shamed. It is mentioned in the Quran as *adha*, which means a painful thing." - Imam Aarij*



What can I do to help ease pain caused by periods?

- **Painkillers:** (e.g. paracetamol and ibuprofen) can be purchased at supermarkets and pharmacies
- **Heat:** hot water bottles, heat packs on the stomach or having a hot bath can soothe pain.
- **Gentle Exercise:** walking or yoga can help ease pain.
- **Reduce stress:** stress can make period pain worse. To reduce stress, you could prioritise taking time to relax.

Self-Care

Having a period can be a challenging experience, both physically and emotionally!



It is important to prioritise your health by doing things that make you feel good, such as:



- Meditation, prayer, and mindfulness
- Napping**
- Eating delicious snacks
- Ask for support from those around you

If you are struggling with your menstrual symptoms, it could be helpful to reach out to those around you for support, such as your partner, family and friends. Explain to them that your symptoms are affecting your quality of life, and it would be helpful if they could support you through taking something off your plate - perhaps a household chore so you can prioritise rest and relaxation.

“There is an example of the wife of the Prophet, Aisha, who is titled “the mother of believers”. There are very beautiful descriptions of how the Prophet is lying on her lap while she's on her period and the Prophet is reciting the Quran. She explained to her students that “the Prophet and I would be very close and loving in our relationship...”. The Prophet would be just as loving and romantic with her when she is on her period; because a woman is menstruating, doesn't mean that she is any lesser.” - Imam Aarij*



* Ricebox Studio: *From Your Big Sister: A Guide on Periods*

(Available for free at <https://ricebox.studio/red-cloud-project.html>)

** The Sleep Charity recommends 20-30 minutes for naps so that you can wake up feeling refreshed and not groggy.



This resource was created in consultation with Muslim communities in South Yorkshire.

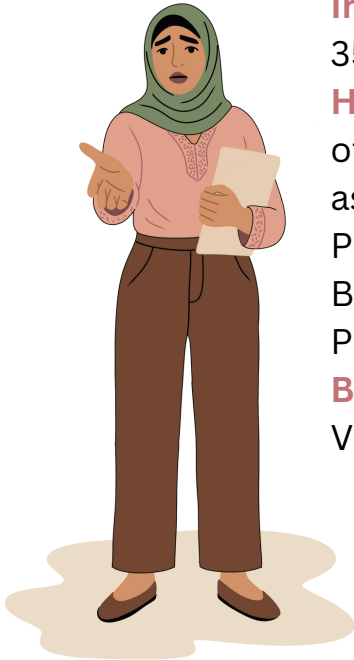
Project funded by the University of Sheffield.

Resource is also based on findings from: Tomlinson, M (2025) *The Menstrual Movement in the Media: Reducing Stigma and Tackling Social Inequalities*. Palgrave (free to read online). The research for this book was funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

People artwork by Uzma Rani: www.uzmarani.com

Asking for Help

You should see your GP/ doctor if you experience any of the following symptoms:



Irregular periods (less than 21 days or more than 35 days between periods)

Heavy periods (e.g. need to change products more often than recommended on their packaging, such as changing pads every 1-2 hours)

Periods that **last more than 7 days**

Bleeding **in between** periods

Period pain that **affects your quality of life**

Blood clots larger than a 10p coin

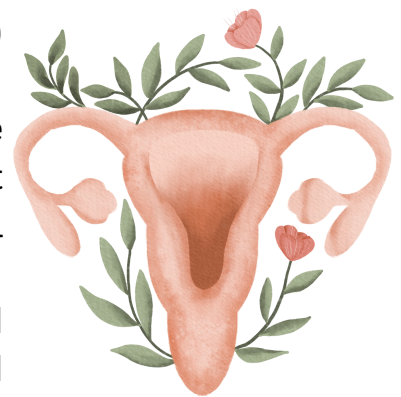
Vaginal discharge with a bad smell



If you have some of these symptoms, it could be a sign that you have a menstrual health condition which requires further support.

Some examples of menstrual health conditions:

- **Endometriosis:** Endometriosis is an inflammatory condition where cells similar to the lining of the womb are found elsewhere in the body which can cause severe symptoms.
- **PCOS:** This is a condition of altered hormone production where your periods may be less frequent. You may have more of a certain type of hormone (androgens) and your ovaries can contain small follicles that struggle to develop and produce an egg.
- **Adenomyosis:** This is when the lining of the uterus (womb) grows into the muscular wall of the womb.
- **PMDD:** PMDD is a hormone related mood disorder. The physical and mood symptoms affect people with periods at a specific time of their monthly cycle in the premenstrual phase and subsiding when their periods start.
- **Fibroids:** Fibroids are benign growths that develop in and around the uterus. They are made up of a muscle and fibrous tissue which vary in size.



If you seek support from your GP/ doctor, they may ask you personal questions about your body, intimate health and relationships. This information will be treated with care and respect, and will help your GP/doctor to find out what is going on and ensure you can access the correct treatment.

How to prepare for an appointment about your menstrual health:

Come to your appointment prepared with information about...

- **Your menstrual cycle** (when do you have your periods and for how long?)
- **Symptoms** (how often they happen and how severe they are)
- It may be helpful to use the NICE guidance to help describe your symptoms (<https://www.nice.org.uk/>) and treatment options you have seen on the NHS website.
- Phrases such as 'my period is keeping me from doing my daily activities' or 'my period is stopping me from going to work/ school' can be helpful for doctors to understand how your pain is affecting you.



What to do if you feel dismissed by your doctor:

- **Tell your doctor that you are feeling dismissed:** express your concern to your GP Doctor that you feel that your concerns are not being heard.
- **Make notes during your appointment:** write down the name of your GP/ doctor, their opinion on your situation and the treatment options they have offered.
- **Bring someone with you for support:** consider bringing along a supportive family member or friend who may be able to explain how these symptoms are affecting your quality of life.
- **Ask for a second opinion:** a good doctor will support your decision in wanting a second opinion on your situation.

Remember - if English is not your first language, you are allowed to ask your GP surgery for a translator during your appointment.

You may need a physical exam during your appointment - on booking your appointment you can request a female GP/doctor, and you can ask for a chaperone during a physical exam.

Summary:

If you have any symptoms such as pain that stops you from doing your daily activities, heavy bleeding, or irregular bleeding, you may need to talk to your GP/doctor. Prepare for your appointment by noting down your symptoms (frequency and severity) and when/how long you have your period



Additional Resource: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/periods/period-problems/>



Rise
International



DiverseCity Development Trust



University of
Sheffield

LEVERHULME
TRUST



This resource was created in consultation with Muslim communities in South Yorkshire.

Project funded by the University of Sheffield

This resource is also informed by: Tomlinson, M (2025) *The Menstrual Movement in the Media: Reducing Stigma and Tackling Social Inequalities*. Palgrave (free to read online). The research for this book was funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

Includes artwork by Uzma Rani: www.uzmarani.com