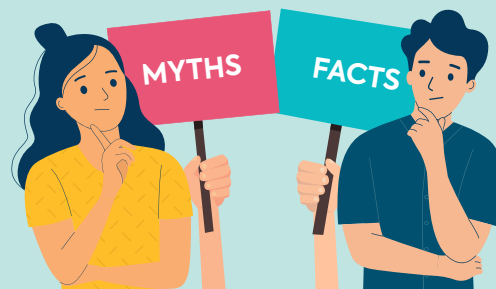


Unit 2: Understanding Periods



Note: You should review these resources and links before use to check if they are appropriate for your pupils at Key Stage 3 and in line with your school’s ethos and RSE and Period Dignity policies.

Learning Intentions

Pupils are learning:

- facts about periods;
- how to distinguish facts about periods from common myths or misconceptions; and
- about some period symptoms and PMS (premenstrual syndrome).

Skills and Personal Capabilities	Learning Experiences	Attitudes and Dispositions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Others • Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making • Communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive environment • Offers choice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curiosity • Openness to new ideas.

Resources

- Resources A–F
- Post-it notes
- Internet access
- Scissors
- A3 paper
- Coloured pens
- [NHS – Periods](#)
- [Always – Your First Period](#)
- [Bodyform – Your first period](#)
- [Hey Girls – For You | 28.03.22 Fact File](#)
- [Bodyform – Period myths](#)
- [CCEA – Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3](#)
- Additional useful resources:
 - [Hey Girls – For Parents | 28.03.22 Hey Boys!](#)
 - [Hey Girls – For You | 28.03.22 Myth Buster](#)

Teaching Notes

In this unit, pupils explore what they already know about periods. They learn some important facts about periods and how to distinguish facts from common myths. They also learn about some period symptoms and PMS (premenstrual syndrome).

Activity 1: What Do You Know About Periods?



- Assign the pupils to different groups (preferably a mix of boys and girls, if appropriate).
- Hand out copies of **Resource A: What Do I Know About Periods?**
- Ask the groups to:
 - discuss the questions on **Resource A**;
 - write down their answers on separate Post-it notes; and
 - put the answers below the relevant questions on **Resource A**.
- The questions are:
 - What are periods?
 - Why do periods happen?
 - At what age might periods start?
 - How often do they happen?
 - How long do they usually last?
 - Are they painful?
 - What period symptoms do I know?
 - What is PMS (premenstrual syndrome)?
 - What period products do I know?
 - How can someone get help during their period?
- Ask the pupils to put their copies of **Resource A** on a fact wall in the classroom.
- Give pupils the opportunity to see what the other groups have written.
- Discuss the statements with the class and allow some time for questions.
- Are there any statements that pupils are unsure of or want to respectfully challenge?
- Pupils will revisit the fact wall later and discuss if their statements are all facts or if some are common period myths.

Activity 2: Fact Finder



- Ask the pupils to use the internet to find information to answer the questions on **Resource B: Period Fact Finder**.
- There is space on **Resource B** for pupils to add any extra information they find.
- The following websites might be useful for the pupils' research:
 - [NHS – Periods](#)
 - [Always – Your First Period](#)
 - [Bodyform – Your first period](#)
 - [Hey Girls – For You | 28.03.22 Fact File](#)
- When the pupils have finished, discuss the answers with the class and respond to any questions they have.
- You can find sample answers in **Resource C**.

Activity 3: Fact or Myth?



- Explain to the pupils that they're going to learn to distinguish facts about periods from common myths.
- In groups, give the pupils a copy of **Resource D: Fact or Myth Statements**.
- Ask the pupils to cut out the statements, decide if each is a fact or a myth and then put them under the correct heading on **Resource E: Fact or Myth Table**.
- Alternatively, the pupils could write the statements under the appropriate heading.
- When the pupils have finished, use **Resource F: Fact or Myth Table (Teacher Copy)** to discuss each statement with the class and then give feedback on their answers.

Activity 4: Reflections on the Fact Wall



- Ask one member of each group to come up to the fact wall and choose two or three statements from a different group.
- They should decide if each statement is a fact or a myth and then add it under the correct heading on **Resource E**.
- Initiate a class discussion about each statement. Discuss the impact that misunderstandings or false information about periods can have on those who have periods and those who do not.

Extension Activity 1: First Period



- Put the pupils into pairs and give each pair a sheet of A3 paper and coloured pens.
- Ask the pupils to use the information they have researched and the fact or myth information to create a poster that:
 - helps young girls understand what may happen during their period; and
 - reduces fear and stigma.

Extension Activity 2: Period Myths



- Share the [Bodyform – Period myths](#) page with the class.
- Discuss with the pupils how these myths have contributed to the taboo and silence around periods.
- Now discuss how the pupils can play an important role in combating the stereotyping and stigma of periods.

Review of Learning Intentions

It's important that pupils have opportunities to reflect on their learning. You can choose from a range of methods detailed in our [Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3](#) resource, such as:

- Dartboard Evaluation
- Graffiti Board
- Fist-to-Five
- KWL (Know – Want to Know – Learned) Grid
- Post-It Collection.



Unit 2: Understanding Periods

Resource A: What Do I Know About Periods?

Discuss the questions below. Then write down your answers on separate Post-it notes and put the answers below the relevant questions.

Why do periods happen?

What is PMS (premenstrual syndrome)?

What do I know about periods?

What are periods?

At what age might periods start?

What period products do I know?



Unit 2: Understanding Periods

Resource A: What Do I Know About Periods?

Discuss the questions below. Then write down your answers on separate Post-it notes and put the answers below the relevant questions.

How can someone get help during their period?

How long do they usually last?

What do I know about periods?

What period symptoms do I know?

How often do they happen?

At what age might periods start?



Unit 2: Understanding Periods

Resource B: Period Fact Finder

Using the internet, research each question and write your answer in the spaces below. Then check your answers with the rest of the class. You can add more information to the table in the spaces at the end.

At what age do periods usually start?

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How long does a period usually last?

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How often will a period happen?

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Are periods painful?

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How will a woman know that her period is going to start?

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How much blood is lost during an average period?

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Unit 2: Understanding Periods

Resource B: Period Fact Finder (Continued)

Using the internet, research each question and write your answer in the spaces below. Then check your answers with the rest of the class. You can add more information to the table in the spaces at the end.

Who can help if a period comes unexpectedly?

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What is PMS?

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Unit 2: Understanding Periods

Resource C: Sample Answers

At what age do periods usually start?

Most girls start their periods when they're about 12, but they can start as early as 8, or as late as 16. Most girls will be having regular periods by age 16 to 18.

(Possible reasons for delayed periods include being underweight, doing lots of exercise (including dance, gymnastics and athletics), stress or a hormone imbalance.)

How long does a period usually last?

Once they're settled, periods will last 2 to 7 days.

(A first period might not last very long.)

How often will a period happen?

Periods happen around every 28 days. It can take some months to get into a regular pattern.

Are periods painful?

Pain during periods is common, but some women have more period pain than others. It's usually felt as painful muscle cramps in the tummy (abdomen), which can spread to the back and thighs. Cramps in the tummy are usually caused by the uterus (womb) contracting to push out the blood.

The pain sometimes comes in intense spasms, while at other times it may be dull but more constant. It may also vary with each period. Some periods may cause little or no discomfort, while others may be more painful.

Exercise and stretching can help loosen up muscles and ease the pain. Taking a warm bath or shower, or using a heating pad or hot water bottle can also help to reduce the effects of menstrual cramps.

How will a woman know that her period is going to start?

Although it differs from person to person, there are some common signs that a period is on its way. These can include:

- breasts becoming tender;
- feeling bloated and uncomfortable;
- having headaches;
- feeling tired, moody or grumpy;
- experiencing cramps or soreness in the lower back, legs or abdomen; and
- acne appearing a few days before the period is due.

Unit 2: Understanding Periods

Resource C: Sample Answers (Continued)

How much blood is lost during an average period?

About 20–90 ml (around 1–5 tablespoons) of blood is lost during a typical period, although some women bleed more heavily than this. The bleeding tends to be heaviest in the first two days.

Who can help if a period comes unexpectedly?

It helps to be prepared by talking to a parent or another trusted adult about what to expect before it happens and have some period products available in advance.

Schools now provide free period products as part of the Period Dignity scheme. They may also have spare tights and underwear, wet wipes and disposal bags. Your school can tell you where these are kept.

Parents, carers, designated Period Dignity teachers or the school nurse may be able to help with any pain or discomfort by providing hot water bottles or heat pads.

What is PMS?

Changes in hormone levels before a period can cause physical and emotional changes.

This is known as PMS (premenstrual syndrome) or PMT (premenstrual tension).

Typical symptoms include:

- feeling bloated;
- tiredness;
- headaches;
- breast tenderness;
- mood swings;
- feeling irritable; and
- spotty skin or greasy hair.

These symptoms usually improve when a period starts and disappear a few days afterwards.

Not all women who have periods get PMS.

Unit 2: Understanding Periods

Resource D: Fact or Myth Statements

Look at each statement below and decide if it is a fact or a myth. Put the statement into the correct column in **Resource E**. When you have finished, discuss your answers with the rest of the class.

A typical period lasts 2 to 7 days.

It's not possible to get pregnant during a period.

Most girls get their first period when they are between 10 and 16 years old.

Periods usually happen twice a month.

About 20–90 ml (around 1–5 tablespoons) of blood is lost during a typical period.

PMS (premenstrual syndrome) can cause tiredness, bloating and headaches.

Everyone can tell if a girl is having a period.

A girl will lose her virginity if she uses a tampon.

Breasts may be sore and tender just before a period.

Several eggs are released from ovaries during a period.

A period marks the end of the menstrual cycle.

Periods stop during pregnancy.



Unit 2: Understanding Periods

Resource E: Fact or Myth Table

Myth	
Fact	

Unit 2: Understanding Periods

Resource F: Fact or Myth Table (Teacher Copy)

Fact	Myth
<p>A typical period lasts 2 to 7 days.</p> <p>It can take a while to get into a regular pattern, and it varies from person to person.</p>	<p>It's not possible to get pregnant during a period.</p> <p>It is unlikely that a girl will get pregnant during her period, but it is possible. The likelihood of getting pregnant increases around the time of ovulation (day 14 of the menstrual cycle).</p>
<p>Most girls get their first period when they are between 10 and 16 years old.</p> <p>Periods start when the body is ready, and it varies from person to person. They usually start between ages 10 and 16, or two years after the first signs of puberty.</p>	<p>Periods usually happen twice a month.</p> <p>Periods happen only once a month, but some girls may experience spotting between periods.</p>
<p>About 20–90 ml (around 1–5 tablespoons) of blood is lost during a typical period.</p> <p>It might seem like more than this.</p>	<p>Everyone can tell if a girl is having a period.</p> <p>No one can tell if a girl is on her period unless she chooses to tell them.</p>
<p>PMS (premenstrual syndrome) can cause tiredness, bloating and headaches.</p> <p>It may also cause breast tenderness, mood swings, feeling irritable and acne.</p>	<p>A girl will lose her virginity if she uses a tampon.</p> <p>You can only lose your virginity if you have sexual intercourse.</p>
<p>Breasts may be sore and tender just before a period.</p> <p>Many girls will experience breast tenderness, but everyone is different.</p>	<p>Several eggs are released from ovaries during a period.</p> <p>Ovulation (the release of an egg from an ovary) happens mid-cycle (between periods) on day 14, not during a period.</p>
<p>Periods stop during pregnancy.</p> <p>If an egg has been fertilised, it will implant in the endometrium. Hormones ensure the endometrium is maintained to support the developing baby during pregnancy.</p>	<p>A period marks the end of the menstrual cycle.</p> <p>A period marks the beginning of a menstrual cycle. Day 1 of a period is the first day of the menstrual cycle.</p>