

Unit 3: Period Challenges and Solutions



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 to:

- understand common problems girls may face before or during their periods;
- understand the physical, emotional and social issues girls may face before or during their periods; and
- offer practical ideas and solutions to period problems.

Skills and Personal Capabilities	Learning Experiences	Attitudes and Dispositions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing Information • Working with Others • Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making • Self-Management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive environment • Offers choice • Relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal responsibility • Concern for others • Respect • Openness to new ideas.

Resources

- Resources A–C
- A3 paper
- [YouTube – AMAZE: Period Symptoms and Self Care](#)
- [NHS – Toxic shock syndrome](#)
- [YouTube – Dazed: Period poverty: a journey through the pain, struggle and taboo](#)
- [CCEA – Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3](#)
- Additional useful resources:
 - [NHS – Period problems](#)
 - [Office on Women’s Health – Period problems](#)
 - [YouTube – World Bank: Menstrual Hygiene Day 2022: Committed To End Period Stigma](#)
 - [YouTube – NBC News: Breaking Down The Stigma Of Menstruation](#)
 - [YouTube – AMAZE: Menstruation Stigma](#)

Starter Activity: Period Problems



- Show the pupils the YouTube video [Period Symptoms and Self Care](#) from AMAZE.
- Now ask the pupils what problems they think girls may have before or during their periods.
- Record their responses on the board.
- Possible answers:
 - Period pain
 - Headaches
 - Acne
 - Bloating
 - Anxiety
 - Worry
 - Embarrassment
 - Anger or irritability
 - Mood swings
 - Lack of period products
 - Leaking.
- Discuss the responses with the class and why they may happen.
- Possible answers:
 - The muscular wall of the uterus contracting to expel its lining
 - Changing levels of hormones throughout the menstrual cycle
 - Period poverty
 - Forgetting to pack period products
 - Period comes unexpectedly.

Activity 1: Physical, Emotional and Social Issues



- Tell the pupils that they are going to learn more about different physical, emotional and social issues that may be experienced before or during periods.
- Put the pupils into small groups and give each group a copy of **Resource A: Period Issues**.
- Point out the three categories on **Resource A** and make sure that the pupils understand the meaning of each:
 - Physical is about the body.
 - Emotional is about emotions and feelings.
 - Social is about attitudes within society and peer groups.
- Ask the groups to complete **Resource A** by writing down possible period issues or difficulties that fall into each category. (These might be experienced before or during periods.)

- Discuss the groups' answers for each category and ask them for feedback on their answers.
- Possible answers:

Physical issues

- Stomach cramps or pain
- Tender breasts
- Back pain
- Spots or skin outbreaks/acne
- Tiredness
- Bloating
- Sleeplessness.

Emotional issues

- Mood swings
- Anger or irritability
- Sadness or feeling low
- Frequently feel like crying
- Difficulty concentrating
- Heightened emotions
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Worry.

Social issues

- Embarrassment
- Feeling ashamed
- Not wanting to do normal daily activities
- Missing school/education
- Experiencing stigma
- Fear of being judged
- Feeling uncomfortable when buying period products
- Unable to talk about periods
- Fear of people joking about them
- Experiencing negative comments or period stigma
- Lack of self-confidence or low self-esteem
- Period poverty – unable to afford period products
- Feeling excluded.



Activity 2: Ask the Agony Aunt



- Put the pupils into pairs and give each pair a copy of **Resource B: Ask the Agony Aunt** and **Resource C: Agony Aunt Responses**.
- Ask the pupils to read through the four problems on **Resource B** and provide a possible solution to each, writing it in the corresponding speech bubble on **Resource C**.
- When the pupils have finished, discuss the problems and possible solutions with the class.

Possible solutions

Problem 1

- Take a paracetamol and put a hot water bottle or heat pad on your tummy.
- Take a warm bath to help relax muscles and ease cramps.
- Try doing some exercise, as this often helps ease the pain.

Problem 2

- Make sure to take some period products to school.
- Discuss the issue with a teacher or trusted adult.
- Be aware that there is a free period products scheme operating in school. Make sure you know who to ask if you need any emergency supplies.

Problem 3

- Carefully read the instructions on the packet.
- It's not possible for a tampon to get lost inside you. It will stay in your vagina after you have inserted it.
- The cervix at the top of your vagina is too small for a tampon to pass through into the uterus.
- There is a string attached that usually stays outside your body. You can remove the tampon at any time using the string, so it shouldn't get stuck inside you.
- Always make sure you remove the current tampon before inserting the new one.
- Never leave tampons in for longer than 8 hours. To be on the safe side, most experts recommend 4 to 6 hours.
- (Tell the pupils about toxic shock syndrome.)

Teaching Notes: Toxic shock syndrome

Toxic shock syndrome (TSS) is a rare but life-threatening condition caused by bacteria getting into the body and releasing harmful toxins. Using tampons can increase your risk of getting TSS, particularly if you leave them in for longer than recommended or use too high an absorbency for your flow.

Continued overleaf

The symptoms of TSS get worse very quickly, and it can be fatal if not treated promptly. However, if it's diagnosed and treated early, most people make a full recovery. Symptoms include:

- a high temperature;
- feeling shivery, with muscle aches;
- vomiting and diarrhoea;
- severe pain in your arms or legs, or all over your body;
- a rash that feels rough like sandpaper – the rash may look red, which can be harder to see on brown or black skin;
- the palms of your hands, soles of your feet, tongue and the whites of your eyes turn bright red;
- swollen or peeling skin; and
- feeling sick, dizzy or confused.

(Adapted from [NHS – Toxic shock syndrome](#))

Problem 4

- This is normal around the time of ovulation and is caused by changing levels of hormones.
- During ovulation, the discharge might become thicker and more mucus-like.
- The discharge is a sign of a healthy vagina.
- When oestrogen is the dominant hormone, discharge tends to be clear or watery, while progesterone turns discharge cloudy or white.

Activity 3: Period Poverty – Bystander or Stand Up?



- Show the class the YouTube video [Period poverty: a journey through the pain, struggle and taboo](#) from Dazed.
- Now ask the pupils to get into small groups to discuss the video using the following prompt questions:
 - What is Chloe experiencing?
 - How do you think she is feeling?
 - How do you think Chloe's mother was feeling in the film?
 - Do you think Chloe was aware that she had leaked?
 - Why do you think Chloe was asked if she had 'been away'?
 - Why did the boy help Chloe by giving her his jumper?
 - What do you think the boy who helped Chloe was thinking and feeling:
 - » at the beginning when he sees Chloe;
 - » when he is talking to Chloe on the bus; and
 - » after he has talked to Chloe and is back with his friends?
 - How do you think Chloe was feeling when the boy was talking to her and gave her his jumper?

- What words would you use to describe the boy and his actions?
- Do you think you would help someone in this way, or do you think you would behave differently?
- Thinking about the video, how many physical, emotional and social issues relating to periods did you spot?
- Ask the pupils to write down their answers and then share them with the class.
- Allow time for a class discussion about:
 - the video;
 - the impact of period poverty; and
 - how we can step up to help those who are impacted by period poverty or other period challenges.

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 3: Period Challenges and Solutions

Resource A: Period Issues

Physical



Emotional



Social



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Resource B: Ask the Agony Aunt

You have recently been asked by a popular girls' magazine to be the agony aunt for all period problems. Teenage readers regularly send you letters and emails, and you must respond quickly to help them solve their period issues.

Read the period problems below and give the reader advice on what they should do next. Write your answers in the speech bubbles on **Resource C**.



Agony Aunt



Problem 1

Dear Agony Aunt,

During my period, I'm very tired and emotional. My tummy also gets very swollen and uncomfortable, and I sometimes get very painful cramps.

Can you give me some advice on what I should do?

Problem 2

Dear Agony Aunt,

I'm 11 years old, and I'm worried about what I should do if my period starts while I'm in school. I'm worried people will notice and that I'll be unprepared.

How should I prepare for this?

Problem 3

Dear Agony Aunt,

I've recently started my period, and I'm using pads. I'd like to try using tampons, but my friends have told me that they can get lost or stuck inside you, and I'm afraid.

Can you help?

Problem 4

Dear Agony Aunt,

Between periods, I get a white discharge from my vagina. I'm confused and worried that something is wrong with me.

Should I be worried, or is this normal?

Unit 3: Period Challenges and Solutions
Resource C: Agony Aunt Responses

The worksheet is titled "Agony Aunt Responses" in a blue, cursive font. It features a cartoon illustration of a woman with dark, wavy hair, wearing a blue top, with her hand on her chin in a thinking pose. Surrounding her are four large, empty speech bubbles, each labeled "Problem 1", "Problem 2", "Problem 3", and "Problem 4" respectively. The entire content is enclosed in a light blue rounded rectangle with a dotted border.