

Information about STARTING YOUR PERIODS

Common Questions

Here are some of the questions that you may have about starting your periods:

How will I know when my periods are going to start?

Your periods will start when your body is ready. This is usually between the age of 8 and 17. Signs that your period is on its way are if you have grown underarm and pubic hair. Typically, you will start your periods about 2 years after your breasts start growing.

Why have my periods not started yet?

Your periods will start when your body is ready. Possible reasons for delayed periods include being underweight, doing lots of exercise (including dance, gymnastics and athletics), stress and a hormone imbalance. See a GP if your periods have not started by age 15 (or 13 if you do not have any other signs of puberty).

How do I get ready for my first period?

Talk to your parent or another adult you trust about what you can expect before it actually happens. It is a good idea to start carrying sanitary pads or tampons around with you in advance.

If you find yourself at school without any sanitary items visit one of the toilets in the areas below or, if you need help, ask a teacher or go to the medical room.

- Library
- CAIRB
- Main Reception
- Bridging Room
- Attendance

How long will my first period last?

Your first period might not last very long, and they may be irregular initially as it can take your body some months to get into a regular pattern. Once they have settled, you are likely to have a period every 23 to 35 days and it will last 2 to 7 days.

How much blood will I lose?

It might seem a lot, but it is only about 20 to 90ml (about 1 to 5 tablespoons). It is not a sudden gush – you will just see a reddish-brown stain on your pants or on your sheets when you wake up in the morning.

Should I use pads, tampons, menstrual cups or period underwear?

This is up to you. Tampons, menstrual cups, disposable or reusable pads (towels) and period underwear are safe and suitable if you have just started your period. You might want to use pads for your very first period, as tampons and cups can take some getting used to. It might be worth experimenting until you find the product that suits you best.

What if period blood leaks through my clothes?

There are ways of covering up stains until you are able to change your clothes, such as tying a jumper around your waist. Keep a spare pair of pants and tights at school or in your bag. Also, the school have spare clothes to help you if that happens.

Painful periods

Pain during periods is common - it is usually caused by the womb contracting. Exercise may help relieve the pain, as well as taking painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. However, do not take ibuprofen if you have asthma, or if you have stomach, heart, kidney or liver problems.

All medication on site, including painkillers, requires written consent from a parent or carer. Consent forms are available on the college website ([here](#)) as well as at main reception and in the medical room.

If problems with your periods are affecting your life, there is help and support available

See your GP if the pain is so severe it affects your daily life, or if the bleeding is heavy. It can be useful to keep a diary of your symptoms throughout the menstrual cycle. This can give your doctor a detailed idea of what happens, and when, during your cycle.

Further reading

[The Period Book: A Girl's Guide to Growing Up](#) by Karen Gravelle is a well-known book for any girl approaching puberty. It explains what to expect and how to cope with periods. [Susan's Growing Up](#) is a picture book about periods that has been specially developed for people with learning disabilities. It is from the Books Beyond Words series from the Royal College of Psychiatrists.



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