

# CHAPTER TWO MENSTRUATION



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## OUTCOMES

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

- Understand the stages of the menstrual cycle
- Recognise and understand the different products needed for menstruation

## INDICATORS

- Correctly order the stages of the menstrual cycle
- Recognise and understand the different products needed for menstruation

## CONSIDERATION

If the boys are present for this topic, it is suggested that there is a discussion about the importance of boys learning about menstruation. Consider discussing the number of significant women in a boy's life, both now and in the future e.g. Mum, sisters, future girlfriends, wives and daughters will all experience menstruation. It's important for boys to know how this will affect both themselves and these women.

**a.** Discuss each aspect of the menstrual cycle. Optional exercise is to create “menstrual cycle cards” representing each step in the cycle. Divide the class into groups and each group must place the cards in the correct order.

**b.** Discuss other issues associated with menstruation: cramps, backaches, sore breasts, headaches, constipation, diarrhoea, weight gain, tiredness, depression and irritability (PMT and PMS). Methods of relief to discuss are heat packs, OTC pain relief, and the benefits of being healthy – physical and dietary health.

**c.** Discuss factors affecting period regularity: pregnancy, stress, severe dieting, anorexia nervosa, bulimia and strenuous physical training (amenorrhoea). Point out that it may take a few years after puberty for a regular cycle to settle in, so irregularity is common in these years.

**d.** Use full sized products in the sample kit, pass them around the class and play the video explaining correct usage, how to avoid Toxic Shock Syndrome, and also reinforcing different products for different stages of the menstrual cycle. The video includes showing the variety of blood volume lost in periods and the effectiveness of product in absorbing the blood, reassuring the students that they can feel confident if prepared.

**e.** DO NOT demonstrate a tampon by putting it in a glass of water – many children react in fear to this, thinking it will expand massively inside their bodies.

**f.** Assess the embarrassment level in the classroom and ask the class questions as a group rather than individuals if necessary.

(Question Box Strategy: Every student is given the same size and colour piece of paper and every student must write something on the paper, whether it is a question or just what they ate for breakfast. Every student must put his or her paper in the box. No names are to be mentioned in questions).

## NOTE

Ideally this topic, **Menstruation**, follows topic one, **Changes To Your Body**, so that students understand reproductive systems in both sexes before the menstrual cycle is discussed to put the menstrual cycle lesson in context.

# Periods *What are they?*

Girls are born with thousands of tiny ova (eggs) inside their ovaries. When puberty starts:

- Your body begins releasing a hormone called oestrogen (which controls menstruation)
- Your ovaries ripen the eggs and one egg is released each month – this is called ovulation
- The egg travels from the ovaries, down the fallopian tubes, and into the uterus (womb)
- While this is all going on, the lining of the uterus is thickening. If an egg is fertilised by sperm (during sex), the egg can attach itself to the uterine lining and develop into a baby
- The lining thickens so that it can provide nutrients for a fertilised egg
- If the egg is not fertilised, the extra lining of the uterus is no longer needed, so it breaks down and comes out through the vagina



**Average:** 5 DAYS (CAN BE SHORTER 2-7 DAYS).

**Blood loss:** 2-6 TABLESPOONS OF BLOOD PER PERIOD, DEPENDING ON FLOW.

**Flow:** CHANGES WITHIN THE PERIOD CYCLE. USUALLY HEAVIEST DAY 2-3 (MIDDLE OF PERIOD).

## Product choices



### Tampons:

**Tampons** are ideal for sport or swimming, with added discretion. Product size relates to blood flow and has nothing to do with the size of the vagina.

**Frequency of change:** Recommended every 3-4 hours.

### Pads & Liners:

**Pads** have different thicknesses and absorbencies. Thickness doesn't mean it is more absorbent. Ultrathin Pads do the same job as Maxi Pads, they're just thinner and more discreet.

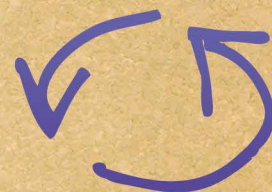
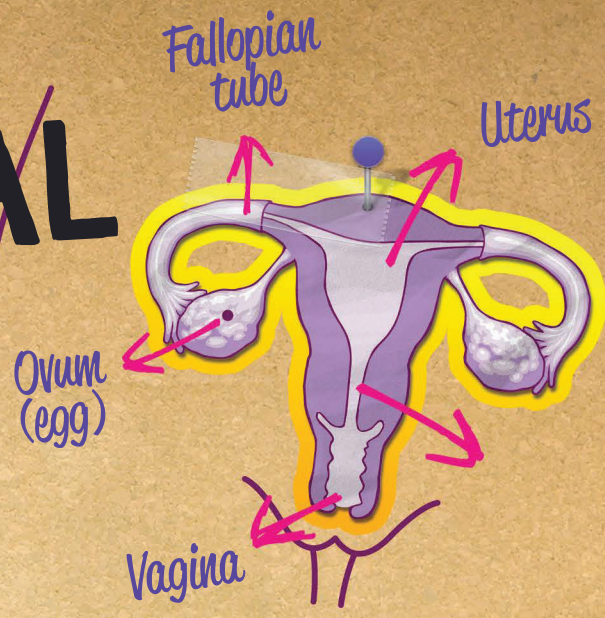
**U by Kotex® Overnight Pads:** Longest and most absorbent and have a longer back for extra protection when lying down.

**Liners:** between periods or just in case, tampon back up or very light flow. Much smaller, thinner and less absorbent version of a pad.

**Frequency of change:** Recommended every 3-4 hours.

# THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

## A typical 28 day menstrual cycle



The average cycle lasts around 28 to 30 days, but everybody is different. It can range from 21 to 35 days.

### DAYS 1-7

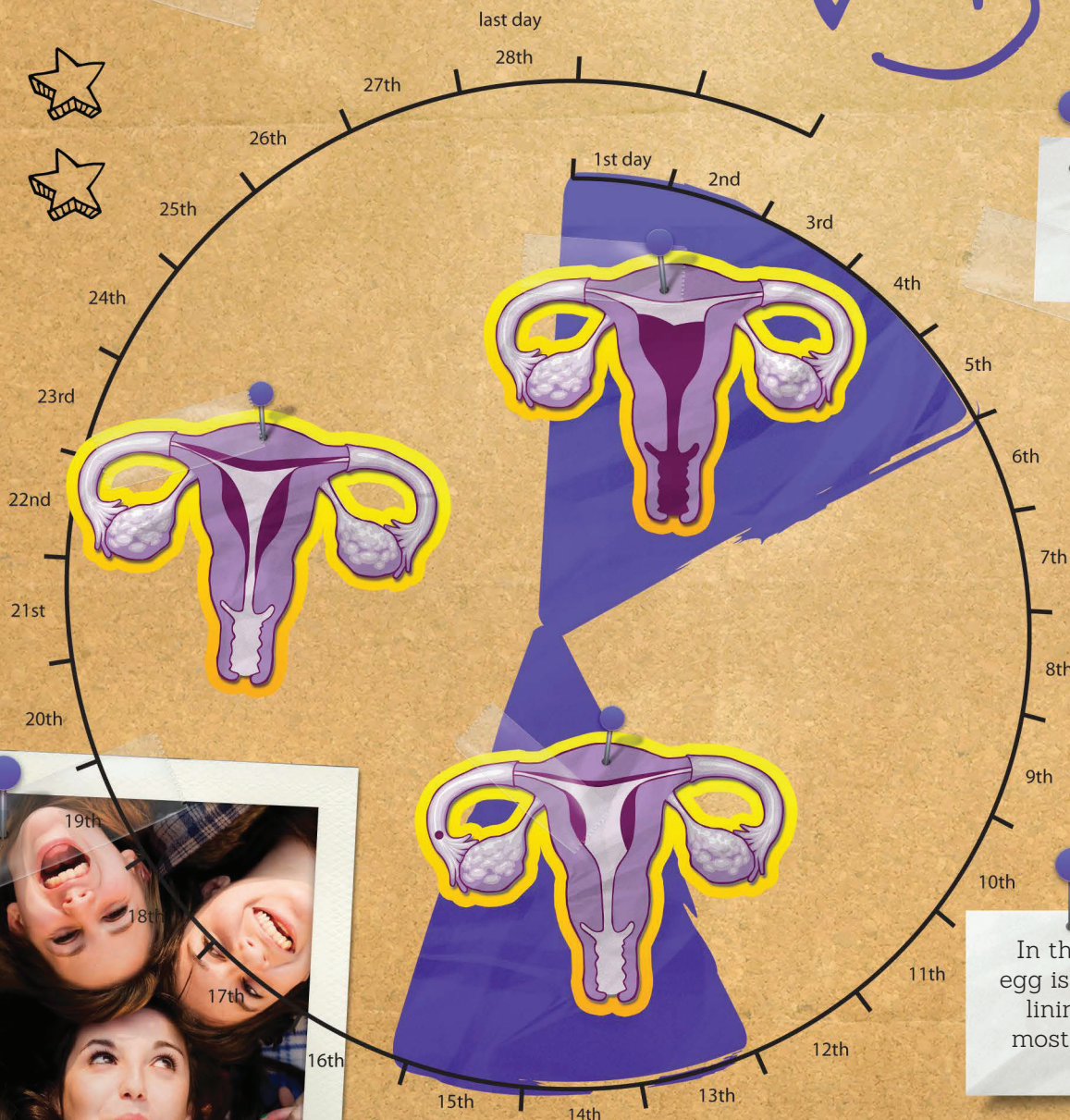
Your period is considered the beginning of your menstrual cycle.

### DAYS 8-14

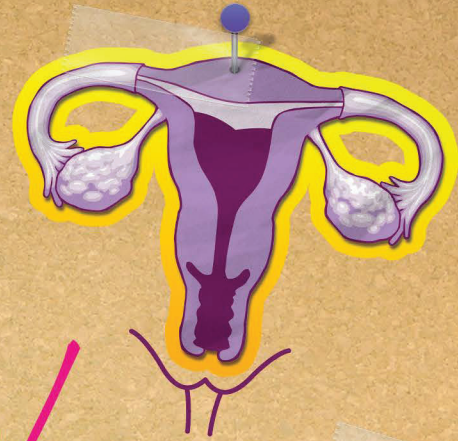
One of your ovaries releases an egg and the uterus begins to rebuild its lining.

### DAYS 15-28

In the case of pregnancy, the egg is fertilised and the uterus lining remains, which is why most pregnant women do not have their periods.

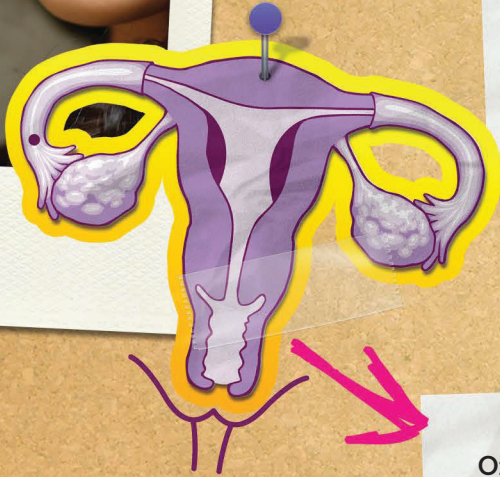


# THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE



**DAYS  
1-7**

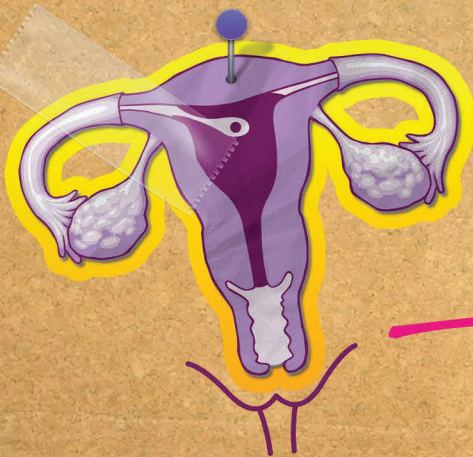
The period is considered the beginning of the menstrual cycle. A period normally lasts for around five days, but can be as short as two days or as long as seven. There will usually be around 2-6 tablespoons of blood lost during each period, depending on the heaviness of the flow. A period occurs because the uterus will shed its lining if an egg (ovum) is not fertilised.



**DAYS  
8-14**

One of the ovaries releases an egg and the uterus begins to rebuild its lining. Only one egg is released each cycle. The egg will slowly travel down the fallopian tube from the ovaries towards the uterus. If the egg is fertilised by a sperm before it arrives in the uterus, a girl will fall pregnant.

Remember!



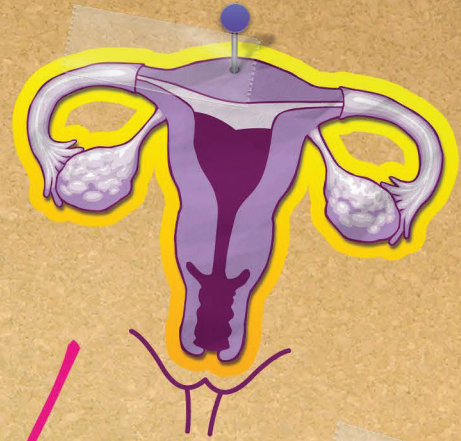
**DAYS  
15-28**

If the egg isn't fertilised, the uterus wall will continue to thicken until there is a sudden drop in hormone levels. The lining will then break down and another period will begin.

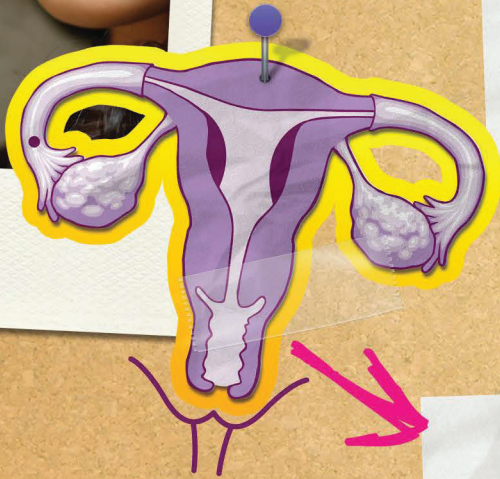


Test your knowledge. Use the spaces below to describe what happens at each stage of the menstrual cycle.

# THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

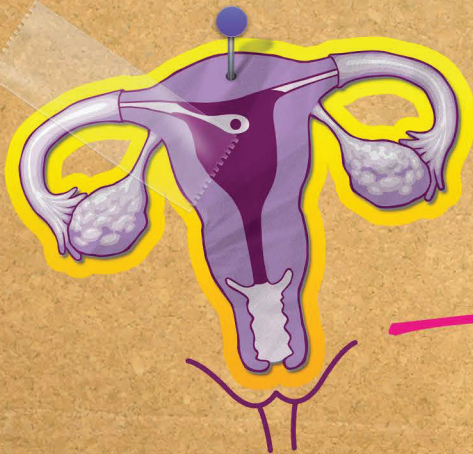
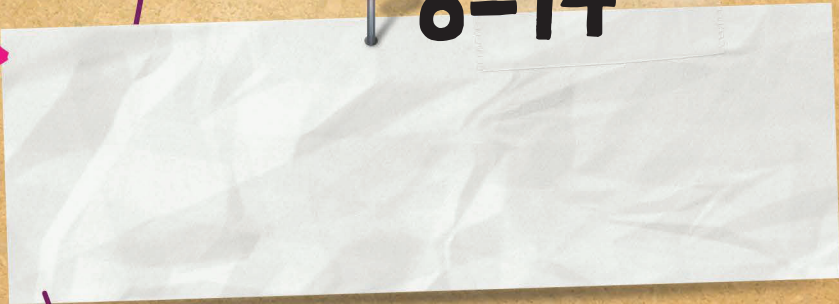


**DAYS  
1-7**



**DAYS  
8-14**

Remember!



**DAYS  
15-28**



# GETTING YOUR FIRST PERIOD

## DISCUSSION:

This information is to assist you in leading a discussion in the class, to ensure the facts are correct. It's also vital to allay any fears and concerns so students feel confident using the correct information and products. Suggested format is Q & A (images when added will demonstrate or illustrate the points).

## GETTING YOUR FIRST PERIOD IS OFTEN A SURPRISE

### Q: HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN I GET MY FIRST PERIOD?

A: Usually when you go to the toilet, but not always.

### Q: WHAT WILL I SEE?

A: Dark colouring in your undies, menstrual blood.

### Q: WHAT COLOUR IS NORMAL FOR MENSTRUAL BLOOD?

A: Anything from bright red to dark brown.

### Q: HOW MUCH MENSTRUAL BLOOD IS THERE?

A: The amount differs for each woman. (NOTE: The beginning of the period usually has heavier bleeding and it gradually lightens up until it's finished).

### Q: ARE THERE ANY EARLY WARNING SIGNS TO INDICATE THAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO GET YOUR FIRST PERIOD?

- A:
- You may notice underarm and pubic hair growth
  - White vaginal discharge
  - You may feel bloated or experience cramps
  - Your mood may change without reason
  - You may become more sensitive to emotions

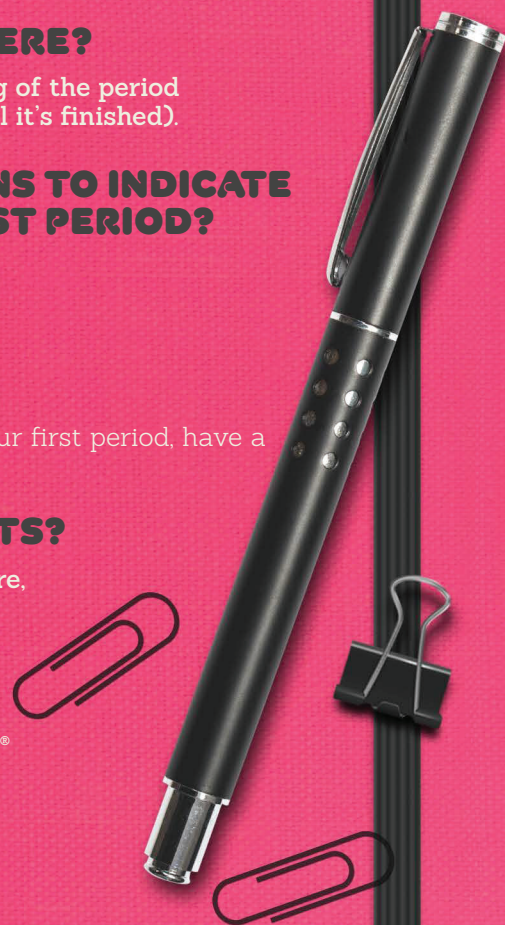
**Being ready:** if you don't want to be caught unprepared for your first period, have a few products on hand just in case!

### Q: WHERE CAN I BUY SANITARY PRODUCTS?

A: **1.** Ask your mum, or **2.** Buy your own at a convenience store, petrol station, chemist or supermarket.

### Q: WHAT SHOULD I BUY?

- A: You will notice there are two options: pads and tampons.
1. Pads are an easy option for getting started (e.g. U by Kotex® Ultrathin Pad examples provided).
  2. Tampons: to start with, try the smaller ones (called minis), as they are usually easier to insert.



# MYTHS

**DON'T WASH  
YOUR HAIR  
WHILE YOU ARE  
MENSTRUATING**



## 01 CAN YOU GO SWIMMING WHEN YOU HAVE YOUR PERIOD?

Of course you can go swimming when you have your period, just use a tampon.

## 02 CAN DRINKING SOMETHING HOT STOP YOUR PERIOD?

Drinking something hot doesn't stop your period.

## 03 CAN YOU HUG PEOPLE WHILE YOU HAVE YOUR PERIOD?

You can totally hug people while you have your period.

## 04 WILL IT HURT TO WEE WHEN I HAVE MY PERIOD?

It shouldn't hurt to wee when you have your period – if it does, see your doctor.

## 05 DO GIRLS WITH THEIR PERIODS GET ATTACKED BY SHARKS?

Sharks do not attack girls with their periods! Go to the beach! Go swimming!

## 06 ARE PERIODS CONTAGIOUS?

Periods aren't contagious because they're not a disease – they're a normal body function.

## 07 IS THERE A NORMAL LENGTH OF TIME YOUR PERIOD SHOULD LAST?

The length of everyone's period is different – the average is 5 days, but it could be 2 days or up to 7 days.

## 08 WILL DOING SIT-UPS DELAY YOUR PERIOD?

Doing sit-ups won't delay your period, but they will help you keep fit!

## 09 IS IT OKAY TO HAVE A BATH OR SHOWER WHEN YOU HAVE YOUR PERIOD?

Having a bath or shower when you have your period is really important – it keeps you clean and fresh and avoids odours associated with puberty.

## 10 IS IT TRUE THAT WHEN YOU FIRST START YOUR PERIOD IT'S GOING TO LAST FOR 16 DAYS?

Your first period is probably going to be short, not long – may be just a few days – and never 16 days!

## 11 CAN YOU INSERT A TAMPON IF YOU DON'T HAVE YOUR PERIOD YET?

You can insert a tampon if you don't have your period yet – but it's not a good idea. It's best to wait a while, until you're used to your period.

## 12 IS IT TRUE YOU BLEED ONE LITRE OF BLOOD DURING YOUR PERIOD?

No, you don't bleed one litre of blood during your period – an average period is blood loss of about 40ml or about 8 teaspoonfuls over the whole period.

## 13 IS MENSTRUAL BLOOD DIFFERENT FROM REGULAR BLOOD?

Menstrual blood isn't different from regular blood. It's just regular blood that flows from the vagina.

## 14 IS BLEEDING DANGEROUS FROM YOUR PERIOD?

Bleeding from your period isn't dangerous, it's completely normal.



**YOU WILL ATTRACT SHARKS IF YOU SWIM IN THE OCEAN WHEN YOU HAVE YOUR PERIOD**



### **15 DOES DRINKING ENERGY DRINKS MAKE YOUR PERIOD SHORTER?**

Drinking energy drinks doesn't make your period shorter.

### **16 IS IT TRUE THAT DENTAL FILLINGS WILL FALL OUT IF YOU GET THEM PUT IN WHEN YOU HAVE YOUR PERIOD?**

If you get dental fillings put in when you have your period, they won't fall out!

### **17 CAN YOU WASH YOUR HAIR WHEN YOU HAVE YOUR PERIOD?**

It's totally okay to wash your hair when you have your period.

### **18 IS IT TRUE YOU CAN'T TAKE MEDICINE WHEN YOU HAVE YOUR PERIOD?**

If you have your period and you need to take medicine, you should always check with your doctor.

### **19 WILL A TAMPON FALL OUT WHILE YOU'RE SWIMMING?**

Tampons that are put in correctly don't fall out while you're swimming.

### **20 DOES YOUR PERIOD STOP WHEN YOU'RE IN THE BATH?**

Your period doesn't stop when you're in the bath – the water may dilute the blood flow, but your period continues.

### **21 DOES HAVING A TAMPON IN BLOCK YOUR WEE FROM COMING OUT?**

A tampon doesn't block your wee from coming out – the urine comes from the urethra, and the tampon is inserted into the vagina – two separate parts of your body.

### **22 CAN HAVING A COLD DELAY YOUR PERIOD?**

A cold by itself doesn't delay your period, but serious illness can disrupt your cycle.

### **23 CAN STRESS DELAY YOUR PERIOD?**

Really serious emotional or physical stress can delay your period.

### **24 WILL OTHER PEOPLE KNOW WHEN I HAVE MY PERIOD?**

When you're having your period, there's no reason for anyone to know. Regular bathing, proper use of pads or tampons and comfortable clothes are all part of a good strategy. There's absolutely no way for others to know.



## Period Calendar

Show students how they can effectively use a traditional calendar to mark up their expected cycle.

Discuss the pros and cons of using a period calendar App such as **iPeriod**

Visit [www.winkpass.com/iperiod.html](http://www.winkpass.com/iperiod.html) or the Apple App store.

For android devices [www.hormonehoroscope.com](http://www.hormonehoroscope.com)

## Suggested Homework



1. Students find two more myths about menstruation and the correct answer for each – each student brings two myths to class for discussion.
2. Each student or small groups choose a particular culture or people group and find out some of the differences between that culture and what has been taught at school about menstruation.
3. The day in the life of an ovum. Students write a story from the point of view of the ova (or something similar).



## Suggested Assignment

Find out the history of menstrual products in the Western World. For example, from cloths to belts to modern products such as U by Kotex® Products.

## Final Activities



Question Box Strategy: every student is given the same size and colour piece of paper and every student must write something on the paper, whether it is a question or just what they ate for breakfast. Every student must put his or her paper in the box. No names are to be mentioned in questions.

Each student writes down at least one question relating to puberty or menstruation and places it in a box at the front of the classroom. This activity is an anonymous exercise ie. 'it is advised that the teacher endeavours to ensure no-one can recognise who wrote that question'. The aim of this activity is to give the students a safe way to ask any questions that might have arisen from the unit of learning. The teacher pulls the questions out of the box and the class discusses the question and thinks through best responses. (If nobody can answer the question the teacher will find out before the next lesson).



## Reference links:

Flash version of the menstrual cycle:

[http://msnbcmedia.msn.com/i/msnbc/Components/Interactives/Health/WomensHealth/zFlashAssets/menstrual\\_cycle\\_dw2%5B1%5D.swf](http://msnbcmedia.msn.com/i/msnbc/Components/Interactives/Health/WomensHealth/zFlashAssets/menstrual_cycle_dw2%5B1%5D.swf)