

A Parent's Guide to Menstrual Wellbeing



Practical tips to help you continue
the conversation and build
confidence at home

BY KATRINA CHRISTIAN

About Me



Hi there,

Your daughter has just taken part in a menstrual wellbeing session designed to support her through one of the most important stages of growing up – puberty.

This guide is here to help you keep the conversation going at home. Inside, you'll find simple ways to feel confident talking about what's normal (and what's not), and how to support her as she learns to understand and trust her changing body.

Because this isn't just about periods.

It's about self-worth, body confidence, emotional wellbeing, and feeling empowered in her own skin – now and for the years ahead.

And your support? It matters more than you might think.

With care,

Katrina Christian

Founder, Wellwise Woman

A handwritten signature of Katrina in a cursive script, rendered in a dark red color.





What your daughter learned in the session

Here's a summary of what was covered:

- Physical and emotional changes in puberty
- The menstrual cycle and its hormonal 'inner seasons'
- What to expect with a first period
- Period products and hygiene
- How to track a cycle
- What a healthy period looks like
- When to ask for help
- Self-care strategies for cramps, moods, and more
- The power of understanding your body

“

Katrina's passion for helping women navigate with confidence and self-compassion was evident throughout the day. Through guided discussions and interactive activities, our students explored their voices, and gained tools to navigate the complexities of modern life.”

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Menstrual cycle & inner seasons

The Menstrual Cycle
The 'inner seasons' of the Menstrual Cycle



01

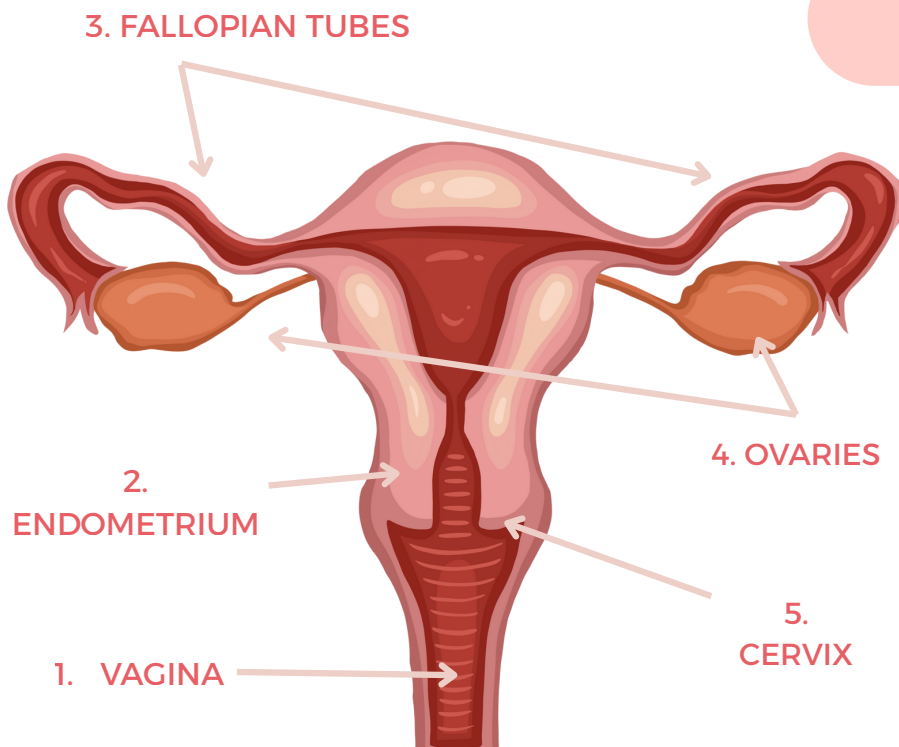
Why Periods Happen

Understanding the biology of periods helps take away the mystery and gives you the language to support your daughter with clarity and confidence.

A period occurs when the uterine lining builds up and then sheds

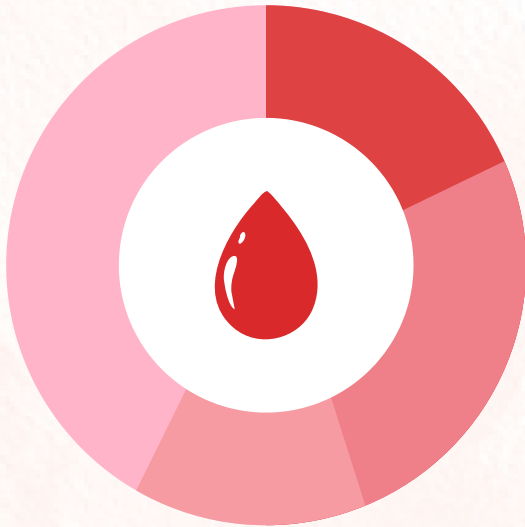
1. Hormones rise to prepare the body for **ovulation** – the release of an egg from the ovary.
 2. As this happens, the **lining of the uterus** (the endometrium) thickens with blood and tissue.
 3. If no pregnancy occurs, **hormone levels drop**.
 4. The body releases the **uterine lining** – and that's the period (menstrual bleed).
- This usually happens about every 21–35 days once cycles settle in.

Watch Video



WHY WE HAVE A PERIOD

Your body is doing something amazing! Let's understand why.



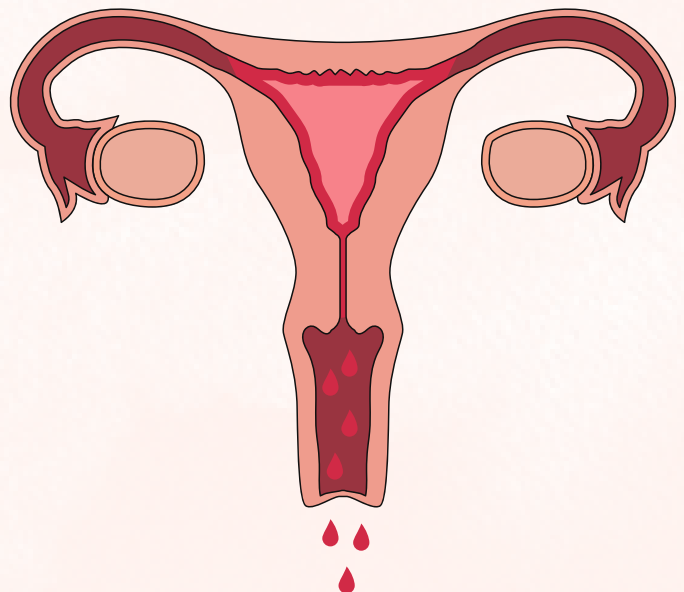
Your period isn't just a random bleeding event—it's part of an incredible monthly process your body goes through to prepare for the possibility of growing a baby one day (don't worry—you don't need to be ready for that now!).

Here's how it works:

Every month, your body goes through a cycle. Your brain sends signals to your ovaries, and your ovaries release hormones (chemical messengers) that tell your uterus what to do. One of the things it does? Build a soft, cushiony lining inside your uterus—just in case a fertilised egg needs a place to grow.

But if pregnancy doesn't happen, your body doesn't need that lining anymore. So it gently lets it go. That's what your period is—the old lining of the uterus coming out of your body through your vagina.

This happens about once a month and is a healthy sign that your body is working exactly as it should.



What's normal/what's not

**PERIODS STARTING
BETWEEN AGES 9-16**

NO PERIOD BY AGE 16
(or 14 if other puberty
signs haven't started)

**CYCLES BETWEEN
21-35 DAYS**
(first 2 years 21-45
days is normal)

**PERIODS <21 OR >45
DAYS APART**
or irregular more than 2
years after starting

**BLEEDING FOR 3-7
DAYS**

**BLEEDING LONGER
THAN 8 DAYS**

**SOME DISCOMFORT
OR MILD CRAMPS**

**PAIN THAT DISRUPTS
SCHOOL, SLEEP, OR
DAILY LIFE**

**WHITE OR CLEAR
DISCHARGE (CERVICAL
FLUID)**

**GREEN, ITCHY, OR FOUL-
SMELLING DISCHARGE**

**MOOD SWINGS NEAR
PERIOD TIME**

**CONSTANT LOW
MOOD, ANXIETY, OR
DISTRESS ALL MONTH**

How much pain is too much?

Mild to moderate cramps are common – but pain that stops your daughter from participating in school, sport, or life is not normal.

This may be a sign of an underlying issue such as **endometriosis** or **adenomyosis**, even in teens.

Period Pain Assessment

How to Talk Periods With Teens

Keep It **Simple** and **Supportive**

- It's okay if it feels awkward at first — that's completely normal.
- Keep chats short and casual. Everyday moments (like in the car or at the shops) are great for starting conversations.
- Share small bits about your own experience when it feels natural — it helps her feel less alone.
- Use the conversation starters at the end of this guide to help get things flowing.

Top Tip:

✓ Normalize, don't dramatize. Your calm and open attitude builds trust and sets the tone for body confidence that lasts.

When should her first period arrive?

- 1 Most girls get their period 2–2.5 years after breast development starts.
- 2 If no period has arrived by age 16, or she's 14 with no other signs of puberty, see a doctor.
- 3 Early periods (before age 9) should also be checked.

Where and when to seek help

If your daughter had a heart concern, you'd want a cardiologist. If it were her skin, you'd see a dermatologist.

It should be the same for **menstrual health**.

Many young people are told that **painful, heavy, or irregular periods** are “just part of growing up.” But this isn't always true. In fact, period issues can be **early signs** of something deeper — and deserve to be taken seriously.



THE IMPORTANCE OF ROOT-CAUSE CARE

Medications like the oral contraceptive pill are often prescribed to teens to manage period symptoms. While this can reduce pain or bleeding, it does not treat the **underlying cause** — and symptoms may return when the medication is stopped.

For many teens, a **root-cause approach** is safer and more effective. This might include:

- Hormonal testing (if appropriate)
- Nutritional support
- Pelvic physiotherapy
- Stress and lifestyle strategies
- Natural therapies guided by qualified practitioners

DON'T IGNORE ONGOING OR SEVERE SYMPTOMS

Your daughter deserves care that goes beyond symptom-masking. If she's missing school, in significant pain, or feeling emotionally overwhelmed by her cycle, don't accept “wait and see” or “it's normal” if it doesn't feel right.



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Help-Seeking

Speak with a GP if your daughter:

- Misses school regularly due to period pain or emotional distress
- Bleeds heavily (e.g., soaks through a pad every hour or passes large clots)
- Has very irregular cycles after 2 years of menstruating
- Has no period by 16 or very early period before age 9
- Experiences severe mood swings, anxiety, or panic

Has ongoing pelvic pain, not just during periods

Finding the right Practitioner(s)

Trust your Instincts as a Parent

If something doesn't feel right — keep asking questions.

It's okay to seek a second opinion.

It's okay to advocate for your daughter.

It's especially okay to ask: **“What's the root cause of this?”**

Who to See for Period Support:

- A GP who specialises in **adolescent** or **women's health**
- A gynaecologist or **paediatric gynaecologist**
- A pelvic pain **specialist**
- A naturopath or integrative GP (with **teen experience**)
- A **menstrual wellbeing educator** or health coach (like Katrina at Wellwise Woman)

Helpful Resources

1

WA HEALTH -
PERIOD FACTS

2

PELVIC PAIN
FOUNDATION - TEEN
TOOLS.

3

SELF MANAGING PERIOD
PAIN & SYMPTOMS -
CANBERRA HEALTH
SERVICES

4

MOST COMMON
QUESTIONS
ANSWERED

Note for Doctor

My daughter is experiencing ongoing or disruptive period symptoms that are impacting her daily life.

We would like to:

- Investigate potential underlying causes (e.g. endometriosis, PCOS, hormone imbalance, pelvic pain)
 - Discuss a root-cause approach to treatment, not only symptom suppression
 - Consider referrals to a gynaecologist, adolescent health specialist, or pelvic pain clinic if needed
 - Avoid defaulting to the oral contraceptive pill unless medically indicated and fully informed
- Please take her symptoms seriously and help us explore next steps.

Take along to the appointment

- A cycle tracking log (dates, symptoms, pain, mood, flow)
- The Teen Period Pain & Symptom Questionnaire
- Notes from this guide or any questions you'd like to ask

Advocating for your child's health is a strength. You don't have to do it alone.

02

Choosing Period Products for Your Daughter



There are so many more period product options for our daughters now! However, not all period products are created equal.

As parents, we can support our daughters to choose products that feel comfortable, safe for their bodies, and better for the planet.

Here's a breakdown of common period care options, including their pros, potential concerns, and what to look for.

A quick decision guide:

PADS/PERIOD UNDERWEAR

"I want the easiest option for school"

REUSABLE PADS/MENSTRUAL CUPS OR PERIOD UNDERWEAR

"I want less waste"

PADS OR PERIOD UNDERWEAR

"I'm nervous about inserting anything"

TAMPONS/MENSTRUAL CUP OR PERIOD SWIMWEAR

"I'm sporty or swim often"

ORGANIC PADS, REUSABLE CLOTH PADS/UNDERWEAR

"I want something breathable and natural"

Period Underwear



Environmental Impact

- Washable and reusable for 2–3 years
- Reduces need for pads or liners
- Still has some footprint due to water and energy used in washing

Health Impact

- Comfortable and chemical-free (if made from natural fibres)
- Great for night use, school, or backup
- Can be easier for young users to manage

What to Look For:

- ✓ OEKO-TEX certified or organic materials
- ✓ Avoid “forever chemicals” like PFAS – check the brand’s safety testing
- ✓ Washable designs with good absorbency levels for flow type

Period Swimwear



Environmental Impact

- **Reusable** and **machine washable** — can be worn for years, reducing the need for disposable tampons or pads during swimming
- Replaces single-use products often flushed or discarded at beaches
- Less plastic packaging compared to traditional disposable period products

Health Impact

- Gentle on sensitive skin — typically made from **breathable, moisture-wicking materials**
- **Avoids internal products** like tampons or cups, which some teens aren't ready for
- **No bleaches, fragrances, or chemical exposure** — especially when certified

What to Look For:

- ✓ Designed specifically for period protection (not just black bathers!)
- ✓ OEKO-TEX® certified or PFAS-free fabrics (some swimwear brands still use water-resistant coatings that can contain “forever chemicals”)
- ✓ Good fit — secure, snug leg seams to prevent leaks
- ✓ Built-in absorbency layer (not just removable inserts)

Disposable Pads



Environmental Impact

- Most pads contain **plastic layers** and packaging that take hundreds of years to break down
- A single person may use **over 10,000** pads in their lifetime
- Non-biodegradable, contributing to **landfill** and pollution

Health Impact

- Many contain **synthetic fibres, fragrances, bleaches, and adhesives**
- These can cause skin irritation or reactions in sensitive users
- Some pads may contain **endocrine-disrupting chemicals**

What to Look

For:

- ✓ Unscented, organic cotton pads
- ✓ Brands that use biodegradable materials and minimal packaging
- ✓ Ingredient transparency

Tampons



Environmental Impact

- Tampon applicators and plastic wrapping are commonly found in **ocean pollution**
- Non-organic cotton tampons may be **chemically treated** and contribute to waste

Health Impact

- Risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) if used incorrectly or for too long
- Many contain **pesticides, bleaches, and phthalates**
- Can **dry out vaginal tissues** and introduce **synthetic chemicals**

What to Look For:

- ✓ Organic, non-applicator or cardboard-applicator tampons
- ✓ Clear instructions for safe use (especially for beginners)
- ✓ Ingredient lists that avoid fragrances and bleaches

Reusable Cloth Pads



Environmental Impact

- Can be used for 3–5 years, reducing landfill waste significantly
- Often made with **natural fibres** and **minimal packaging**
- Some Shires or Councils offer a **rebate** if purchased (check with local council)

Health Impact

- **Gentle** on sensitive skin
- Free from harsh chemicals and synthetic ingredients
- **Breathable** and less likely to cause irritation

What to Look For:

- ✓ Pads made from organic cotton or bamboo
- ✓ Machine-washable and easy-to-use designs
- ✓ Reputable brands that prioritise safety and comfort

Menstrual Cups and Discs



Environmental Impact

- Made from medical-grade silicone, **reusable** for up to 10 years
- Saves thousands of pads or tampons from landfill
- **Low waste** once disposal is needed

Health Impact

- Low risk of TSS if used correctly
- **No chemical absorption** or drying of vagina
- May require **practice to insert** and remove, which can be a barrier for some teens

What to Look For:

- ✓ Soft, teen-sized or beginner cups or discs
- ✓ Brands with medical-grade silicone and detailed usage guides
- ✓ BPA-free and FDA or TGA approved



03

Conversation Starters

Use these conversation starters to spark open, shame-free discussions. They help your daughter explore her feelings, deepen body literacy, and feel supported through this transition — not just informed.

Parent Reflection Prompts:

(Consider journalling or just reflecting quietly.)

**WHAT WAS MY
FIRST PERIOD
EXPERIENCE LIKE?**

**What did I need
to hear when I
got my first
period?**

**How can I model
healthy respect
for my body?**

**What messages
do I want to
pass on/leave
behind?**

Ask your daughter

Start where she's at — these prompts support emotional awareness and invite gentle reflection:

**"What do you already
know about periods?"**

**"What feels exciting about
getting your period one
day?"**

**"What feels scary or weird
about it?"**

**"How do you feel about your
body changing?"**

**"Do you know what to do if
you get your first period at
school?"**

**"What kind of support would
feel good when you have
your period — more rest,
quiet time, snacks?"**

Tip: Let her lead. Avoid jumping in to fix or correct — just listen, validate, and stay curious.

Family Conversations to Normalize Periods:

Help the whole household contribute to a cycle-positive culture by either reflecting on or discussing these questions.

**WHAT WAS IT LIKE
FOR YOU WHEN YOU
HAD YOUR PERIOD?**

**“How do we want to support
each other when someone has
their period?”**

**“What period supplies should
we keep in our bathrooms or
bags?”**

**“What are some unhelpful
messages we’ve heard about
periods – and what can we
replace them with?”**

**“Why do you think people still
feel awkward about periods?
How could we change that?”**



04

Your period is a vital sign - your body is wise



Menstruation isn't just about reproduction — it's a sign of overall health.

A healthy menstrual cycle is like a monthly report card from your daughter's endocrine system (hormones), brain, and body. It tells us:

- Her hormones are communicating well
- She's producing and clearing estrogen and progesterone properly
- Her body is regulating energy, stress, and development

Your Period Speaks; your monthly report card on your overall health

Each period provides valuable insights into your daughter's brain, hormones, stress levels, nutrition, and overall health.

LATE OR MISSED PERIODS

VERY IRREGULAR CYCLES

VERY HEAVY PERIODS

PAINFUL PERIODS

SEVERE PMS OR MOOD CHANGES

What your period might be telling you

LATE OR MISSED PERIODS

Stress, under-eating, over-exercising, PCOS, or hormonal disruption. If periods disappear for 3+ months (after previously starting), it needs investigation.

VERY IRREGULAR CYCLES

course, etc.

***less than 21 days or more than 45 days apart, consistently**

The brain-ovary communication may still be maturing, but could also signal a hormone imbalance or PCOS. Seek medical advice if this continues **beyond 2 years after menarche**.

VERY HEAVY PERIODS

***soaking through pads hourly, large clots**

Could indicate low iron, hormone imbalance, or a bleeding disorder. Needs medical attention.

What your period might be telling you, continued...

PAINFUL PERIODS

*** stopping her from attending school or doing activities**

Not normal. May be a sign of endometriosis or other pelvic pain conditions — even in teens. Needs proper assessment, not just painkillers or the Pill.

SEVERE PMS OR MOOD CHANGES

Can signal stress overload, poor sleep, or nutrient deficiencies. Tracking emotional shifts is key.

What the Period Says About the Brain, Hormones & Health:

- Late or missing periods often reflect **stress, under-fuelling, or hormonal dysregulation.**
- Painful periods may be a sign of **inflammation, hormone sensitivity, or chronic conditions** like endometriosis.
- Mood swings or fatigue in the lead-up to a period may reflect **nervous system overload, nutrient depletion, or sleep issues.**
- Changes in cycle regularity can signal **life stress, emotional wellbeing challenges, or the effects of medication.**

What is your period trying to tell you?



When to track and what to track

Encourage your daughter to track:

- Period start dates
- Length of bleed
- Pain or mood symptoms
- Changes in discharge
- Energy levels or emotions across the month



Use a cycle tracker or paper calendar – whatever works best.

If you notice patterns that raise concern, bring a cycle log and symptoms to your GP. You can also bring the Teen Period Pain Screening Tool with you.

PERIOD PAIN SCREENING

“Led by the inspiring Katrina Christian, founder of Wellwise Woman, this session was designed to empower our female students to navigate gender dynamics, embrace their individuality, and develop respectful communication strategies.”



Period *tracker*

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Symptoms

- ☐ Cramps (location, intensity)
- ☐ Bloating
- ☐ Headaches or Migraines
- ☐ Breast Tenderness
- ☐ Mood Swings
- ☐ Fatigue
- ☐ Acne
- ☐ Digestive Issues

Mood & Mental Health

- ☐ Anxiety
- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Irritability
- ☐ Libido changes

Flow Intensity (Daily)

- Day 1       
- Day 2       
- Day 3       
- Day 4       
- Day 5       
- Day 6       
- Day 7       
- Day 8       



05

The Menstrual Cycle and it's inner seasons

Each menstrual cycle has **four distinct phases**, like inner seasons.

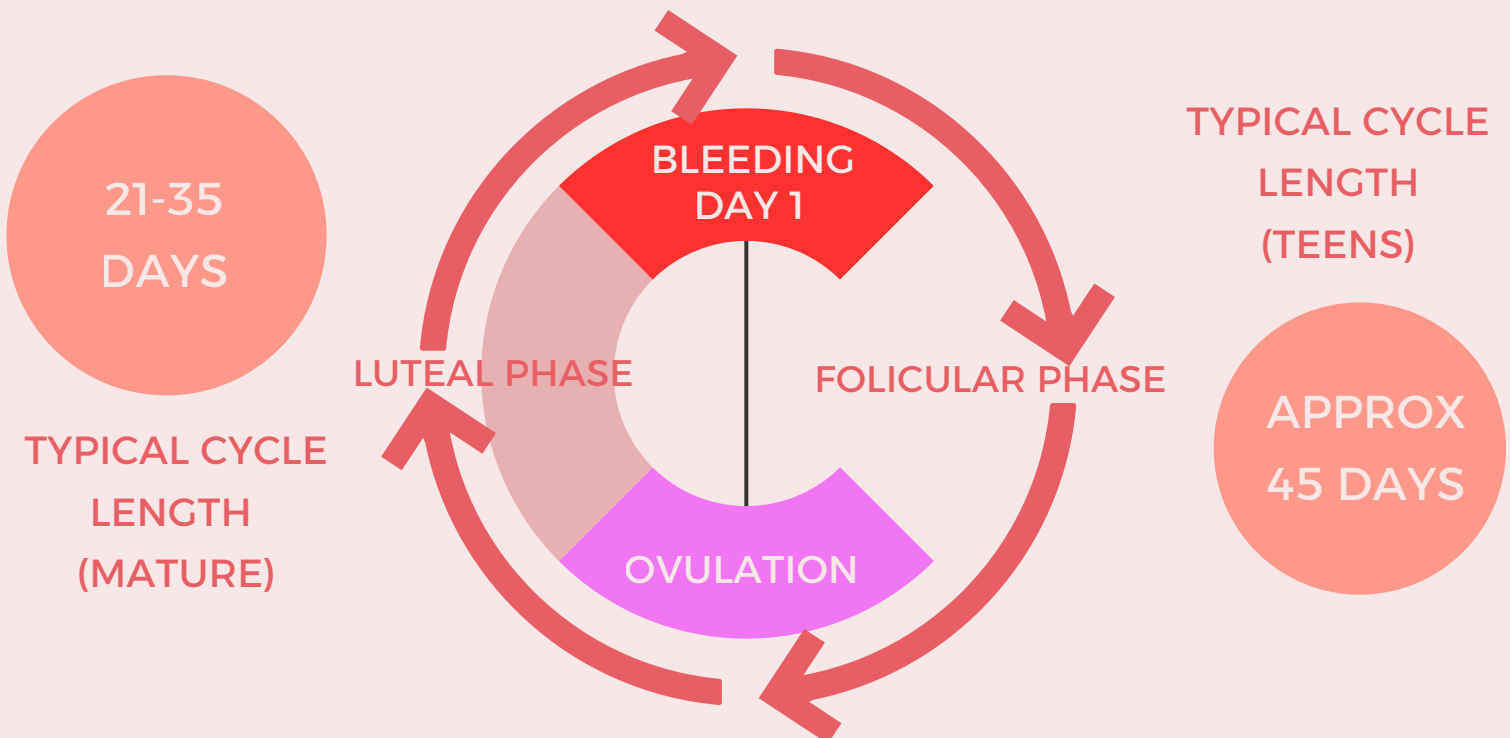
These phases influence energy, mood, concentration, and physical wellbeing — just like the external seasons of nature

Knowing which phase your daughter is in can help you support her with compassion and understanding.

THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE IS A MONTHLY BODY RHYTHM



FOUR PHASES IN ONE CYCLE



THE CYCLE AND ITS SEASONS

Cycle lengths will vary and not all girls will follow this exact timing, especially in the first few years.

PHASE 4: LUTEAL - INNER AUTUMN

WHEN: Before Period - when Period begins

WHAT: Progesterone rises then falls. The body prepares for menstruation.

FEEL: Moody, tired, sensitive, craving solitude, hungry.

NEEDS: Offer comfort, calm routines, nutritious food, reassurance, increase calories.



PHASE 1: MENSTRUATION - INNER WINTER



WHEN: DAY 1 of Bleed

Lasts 3-7 days

WHAT: Hormones are low. The uterine lining sheds. This is the period.

FEEL: Tired, reflective, sensitive or withdrawn

NEEDS: encouragement, rest, warmth, quiet time.



PHASE 2: FOLLICULAR - INNER SPRING

WHEN: After period - Ovulation

WHAT: Estrogen rises. The body prepares for ovulation.

FEEL: More energised, hopeful, social, focused

NEED: Support new ideas, gentle movement, creativity



PHASE 3: OVULATION - INNER SUMMER

WHEN: Midcycle - Ovulation

WHAT: Ovulation occurs (release of egg). Hormones peak.

FEEL: Confident, outgoing, high-energy, verbal

NEED: Encourage socialising, school presentations, physical activity

WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR INNER SEASONS...

- You realise that it's normal to feel different each week
- You can plan your life around your energy (where possible!)
- You start to listen to your body with kindness, not judgment

You don't have to be the same every day or even week to week!. You're not supposed to be - and that's the power of knowing about your cycle.

ALL PART OF THE CYCLE

You are not too much when you feel deeply.

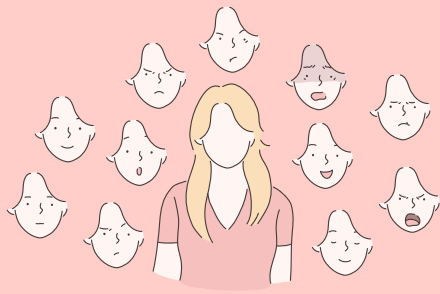
You are not lazy when you need rest.

You are not broken when you feel off.

You are simply cycling.

Learning your rhythm is a superpower.

MOOD + EMOTIONS



Your hormones influence your feelings. Noticing your mood without judgment helps you choose the best way to support yourself.

- Do I feel more like being around people or being alone today?
- Do I need rest or movement?
- Am I being kind to myself?

ENERGY + BODY SENSATIONS

Your energy changes throughout the cycle—and that's okay.

You might feel tired before your period, energetic after it, strong during ovulation, and sensitive in the lead-up to your bleed.

Listen for:

- Changes in appetite
- Needing more or less sleep
- Feeling strong or sluggish
- Cramping or bloating

