

Female Sexual Organs

5.1 External Genitals

The genital organs are situated on the lower part of the abdomen, which is also known as the pubis. It consists of the vulva, which is the thick triangular pad on the pubis between the legs. In the middle of this is a slit shaped opening which leads to the genital canal.

On the upper end of the slit is a fold of skin, hidden under which is a small round tipped organ known as the clitoris. This organ is the most sensitive area in the female and some kind of stimulation of this organ is necessary for a pleasurable intercourse, and especially for orgasm. Below this organ is the small opening of the urethra, through which urine is voided. Below the urethral opening is a larger orifice leading to the vagina. It is through this opening that intercourse is performed and the flow of menstrual blood comes out. It is also this very orifice which expands greatly to allow the baby to pass out from the uterus. Abortion and miscarriages, i.e. the passing out of immature products of conception also come out of this opening.

A little below the external orifice, the vaginal canal is partially covered by a thin membrane called the hymen. In virgins there is only a small opening in this membrane which lets out the menstrual blood. This membrane is ruptured during intercourse. Occasionally the membrane may be absent or be so thick that even intercourse does not rupture it. The hymen is also ruptured during masturbation.



5.2 Internal Genital Organs

The orifice of the genitals leads to a short canal which is flexible and the walls of which are in contact with each other, so that there is no space in it in the natural condition.

At the other end of the canal is a small pear shaped organ known as the uterus, which is, in the virgin female, about three to four inches in height and one to two inches in diameter. Originally it has very little space in it, but during pregnancy it enlarges so that the child grows to its full birth size inside it.

The lower rounded opening of the uterus sticks out in the last part of the vagina.

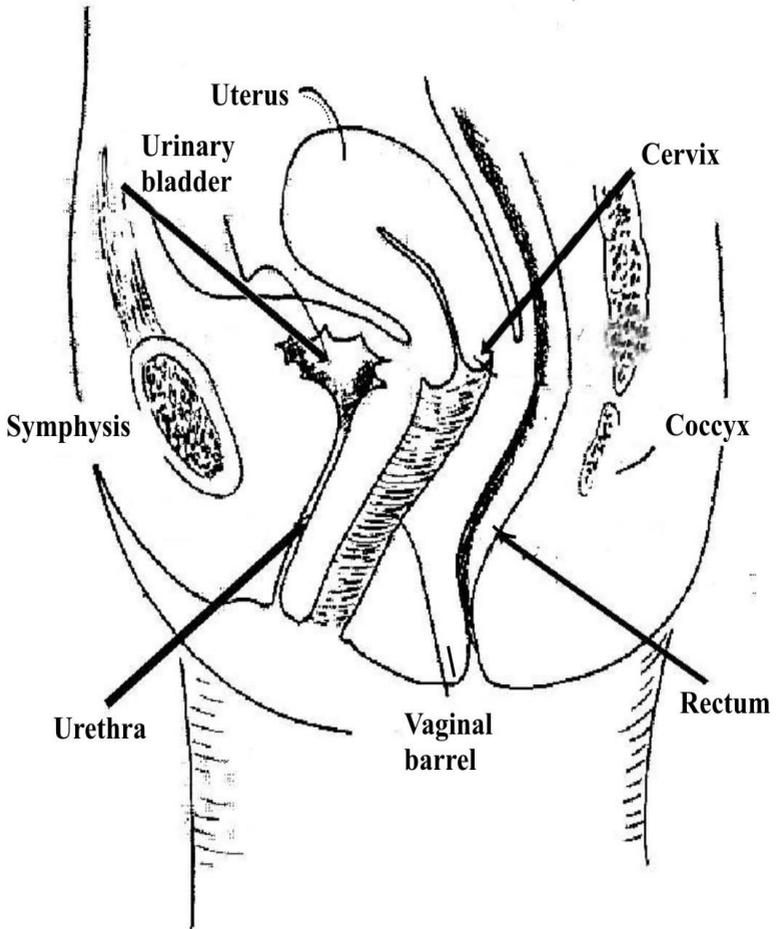
On each side of the uterus is a tube, called the Fallopian tube, which connects it to the ovary, a gland the size of an almond. The ovary produces an egg every month, which if fertilized by the male sperm leads to the formation of a baby. Only one egg matures and is shed by each ovary every 28 days. This egg travels through the Fallopian tube and enters the uterus. The egg, or ovum as it is called, is about the size of a pin head. The ovum remains viable for three to four days and if it is not fertilized during this period it degenerates and is destroyed.

Each drop of semen that is deposited in the vagina of the female contains millions of sperms, which swim through the vagina into the uterus and when contact with an ovum occurs, only one of them succeeds in entering it, fertilizing it, and forming a whole baby. This fertilized ovum then embeds itself in the uterus and gets its blood supply from it. In the later stages arteries from the uterus supply blood to the fetus and the veins take the blood back. This is known as the Umbilical cord. The part of uterus where the fertilized ovum is embedded and the arteries and veins from the fetus to uterus traverse, is known as the Placenta.

The ovaries also secrete the female hormone (estrogen)



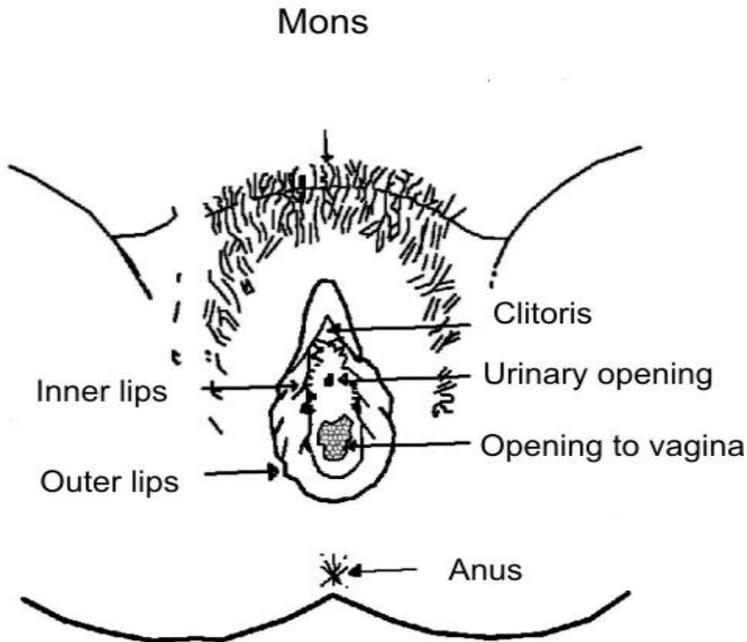
Intenal Female Sexual Organs



that produces the feminine characteristics. When menopause occurs the ovaries start to degenerate and the female hormone in the blood is reduced. Then symptoms of estrogen deficiency may be produced i.e. vaginal dryness, lack of sexual desire, burning and heat in face, hands and/or the rest of the body, excessive sweating, irritability and some times depression.

5.3 Puberty

The watershed of puberty is reached when girls start ovulating and boys produce sperm. Meanwhile, physical, emotional and psychological changes affect both the mind and body. In most of these boys lag a year or more behind girls. But by the late teens, males and females, both have matured sexual organs and well developed secondary sexual characteristics. Before the onset of puberty girls and boys



share a similar body shape, but by their late teens boys become taller and more muscular than girls, with broader shoulders, and also have facial hair. Girls gain a rounded form produced by wider hips and enlarged breasts, which equip them for the task of giving birth and suckling babies.

Both sexes have changes in their bodies. The skin grows oilier and coarser, and the sweat glands more active. This secretion produces black spots and acne. Armpits and genitals begin producing body odor. As body tissues grow, blood volume and pressure as well as lung capacity increase; but heart rate, respiration rate and body temperature all tend to drop as adulthood approaches.

By the age of ten a girl has reached 83% of adult height but only 53% adult weight. Her body form is like a boy's. The body's so called adolescent growth spurt usually starts about age ten. Most girls have not yet developed breasts or pubic and underarm hair. The uterus is about half the adult size and the ovaries about one third the adult size. These and other sex organs now begin to grow rapidly. By eleven the nipples become more prominent and the breasts start to develop. The pelvis widens and fatty pads appear on the hips. Hair starts growing under arms and in the pubic area; later it grows coarser, darker and curlier. The girl may reach the menarche (start menstruating) at thirteen. Ovulation begins slightly later, perhaps by age fourteen. By now the girl has reached 97% of her adult height and 85% of her adult weight. The breasts continue to grow, skeletal growth stops, the genitals mature, and the menstrual period become fully regular.

Hormones at Puberty:

Puberty occurs as boys and girls start producing certain hormones (chemical messengers) that instruct the genitals and secondary sexual features to develop. In both sexes, the process begins when the hypothalamus, a part of the lower



brain stimulates the nearby pituitary gland by a chemical releasing factor. The pituitary starts to produce two hormones involved in the sexual development of both males and females: follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) and luteinizing hormone (LH). These hormones act on the male and female sex organs, and development further continues with the production of other sex hormones i.e. estrogen and progesterone from the follicles of the ovaries.

Hormonal action in females:

1. The hypothalamus (A) directs a releasing factor to the pituitary (B).
2. The pituitary releases FSH.
3. FSH stimulates the growth of egg follicles in the ovaries.
4. The egg follicles then start producing estrogen.
5. Estrogen helps the genitals and breasts to develop.
6. The buildup of estrogen in the blood stream causes the hypothalamus and pituitary to cut down FSH production.
7. It also causes the pituitary to start releasing LH.
8. LH makes one follicle burst in order to free its egg for fertilization.
9. The corpus luteum (empty follicle) produces progesterone.
10. Progesterone makes the uterus lining ready to receive and feed a fertilized egg.
11. If no egg is fertilized, estrogen and progesterone levels in the bloodstream fall after approximately 14 days and menstruation occurs.

5.4 Menstruation

The lining of the uterus, called the mucosa, under the



influence of the hormones, becomes thick and spongy due to the increase in fluids and blood supply. If the ovum is fertilized the mucosa goes on to develop a placenta in order to supply blood to the fetus. However if the ovum is not fertilized, due to one reason or another, this thickened mucosa is sloughed off and cast out of the vagina through its external opening, along with blood, which is known as the periods, or menstruation. This is the reason that women pass blood via the vagina every month, except when they are pregnant or have some hormonal disorder.

The Menstrual cycle:

The start of menstruation is the most obvious indication of the onset of puberty in a female. Below is shown the role of different hormones during the monthly cycle. Changing levels of FSH, estrogen, LH, and progesterone produce the cycle's features: the maturing and releasing of an egg, changes in the quantity and character of cervical mucus which is abundant, thin and clear at the time of ovulation, and the building up of the uterus lining or endometrium to receive a fertilized egg, and its breaking down and shedding at menstruation which occurs if no egg is fertilized.

Talking about periods:

At some time usually between the age of nine and seventeen, girls start having periods (the scientific term for them is menstruation). A girl's first period is a sign that her body is getting ready to be able to have a baby. The thing that tells her that her periods have started is blood appearing from an opening – called the vagina – between her legs. It lasts for several days. Usually blood is a sign that there's something wrong with your body, like a cut or a graze, but when you have a period, there's nothing wrong with your body and you haven't hurt yourself. It is quite the reverse. Your first period



shows you that your body is developing and working in a new way, just as it should.

Starting your periods doesn't change you overnight. It doesn't mean you have to behave any differently. It's just part of all the changes that are happening to you. Some girls see their first period as a kind of landmark.

In the distant past, periods were a complete mystery to people. Bleeding to them meant wounds and death. They couldn't understand how a woman could lose blood regularly and not die. In some societies, people thought that a woman must therefore have great powers. They thought she could control the growth of crops and the weather. But more often, women were considered to be possessed not of good, but of evil powers. The blood was seen as bad blood. A woman having a period was seen as unclean and impure. She was kept apart from everyone else in a special hut or room. She wasn't allowed to touch anyone or anything. Nor was she allowed to cook. People also believed that she could have a terrible effect on things. They thought she could cause milk to curdle, wine to sour, plants to wither and iron to rust.

Today, we know more about how our bodies work and understand why periods happen. But ideas from the past sometimes still influence what people think or say now. Some older people still describe periods as the 'curse', as if they were something rather shameful or unpleasant. Periods were considered very hush-hush and secretive. You were never supposed to let anyone know you had a period. Nor were periods something to discuss with anyone. Many grandmothers passed this feeling on to their daughters. Some of these women pass the same feeling on to their daughters (i.e. girls of your age).

Lots of mothers want to do things in a different way from their own mothers, who may have told them nothing about periods when they started. If your mother hasn't talked to you much about that, it's not necessarily because she doesn't want to but may be because she's not quite sure how to, she



may m think that if she's embarrassed, you're bound to be embarrassed as well.

If you are embarrassed, then try to remember that your mother has (or has had) periods, so she knows, what's what. She's probably had the same sort of feelings you're having. She can tell you what a period feels like and how to cope. If you start the conversation, you'll probably find that she tells you what you want to know. If you ask a straight question, you'll most likely get a straight answer. If you haven't started yet, it's a particularly good idea to talk to your mum about towels and tampons. Most likely she'll buy these for you at first. She may not know about press-on towels or mini-tampons since these are relatively new. You could ask her to buy some to keep in a particular place. Then if you start when she's not at home, you'll be prepared.

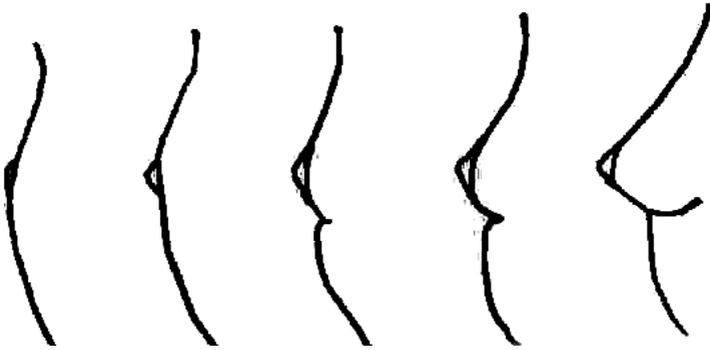
Of course, an older sister, a good friend, or anyone else you feel close to is equally good to talk with. Anyone you can rely on to give you the answers you need is a good person to share your feelings with.

The more you know about periods, the less scary and strange they will be. Knowing what's going on inside your body will help you understand why you feel the way you do. The better prepared you are, the less worried or embarrassed you'll be when your first period happens. There is nothing dirty about periods, so you shouldn't be afraid to mention them. Sometimes this is easier said than done, but it's probably worth it because other people can help you sort out the things you're unsure about.

Breasts:

The first things you'll notice is that your nipples become larger and stand out. They also become darker and may be sensitive to touch. Their colour will depend on your skin-colour





-if you're fair-skinned, your nipples, will be lighter than if you're darker-skinned. Later, some girl's nipples stand out a lot, others look as though they've been pushed in (known as inverted nipples) and some look quite flat.

Gradually, breasts develop. Some people have a tingling feeling or notice that from time to time their breasts are sore and tender. This is quite normal and has to do with their growing. Breasts are made up of fat and milk-producing glands. If later you have a baby, these glands will produce milk to feed it. The baby will suck the nipples to draw out the milk.

Breasts, like other parts of the body, come in all shapes and sizes and there are no particular advantages one way or another. There's not such thing as perfect breasts even if magazines and advertisements try to persuade you otherwise. If your mother and female relatives (on either your mother's or father's side) have small or large breasts, the chances are that your breasts will end up a similar size. If you have small breasts and have had periods for some time, your breasts are unlikely to grow much bigger. If you've only just started your periods, or not started yet, and your breasts are growing, you can expect them to grow some more.



Breasts don't always grow evenly. Sometimes one grows faster than the other. This is nothing to worry about; they will even out in time. It's unlikely, in any event that they will match up exactly. Yours hands and the sides of your face don't match up either and who worries about that?

People have different feelings about growing breasts, for some it's a pleasure and for others it's an embarrassment. If you develop before anyone else you know you may feel pleased, but equally you may feel the odd one out. Similarly if you develop later than some of your friends, you may feel left out. Feelings about your body can be influenced by all sorts of things: friends, family, fashion, etc, and feelings may change too. What you feel now may not be what you feel in a few years' time. What ever size your beasts end up, there's not much point in worrying about how you match up with anyone else.

Take a look at your vulva

Other changes, apart from your size and shape, are also happening. For instance, changes are happening to your vulva. This is the name for the female external sex organs, which lie between your thighs. If you've never had a look at it before, now is a good time, if you're interested. You'll also find it useful if you want to try using tampons during your periods.

Make sure you're not in a rush and have a bit of privacy. You'll need a mirror and a good light. Wash you hands first. Sit down on the floor or on a bed with your legs apart and your knees bent. Hold the mirror where you can see the area between your thighs.

Prop this book up where you can see it easily. Open it at the page with the picture. Look at the picture and see if you can identify everything. Remember though, this is only a picture. Your vulva won't look exactly the same as this one. Your lips might be bigger or smaller, or you may not have a



hymen. People's vulvas are as different as other parts of their bodies.

- The Mons is the area which becomes covered with pubic hair. It is a fatty pad which protects the pubic bone inside.

- The big, outer lips are the two folds of fatty tissue, which you see first. They protect the opening to the inner area and help keep it moist and healthy. They too become covered with pubic hair on the outside. During puberty, they gradually become darker, fleshier, more prominent and sensitive to touch.

- The smaller, inner lips are the two folds of tissue you will see if you gently part the outer lips. They are hairless and may be pinkish or brownish. They are rich in oil-producing glands and blood vessels. Usually, they lie together and protect the opening to the vagina. These too grow during puberty. Some girls have inner lips which stick out beyond the outer ones, some have one lip longer than the other, and some have very small ones. All these are quite normal. At the top of the lips, the folds are joined together and cover the clitoris.

- The clitoris is the most sensitive part of your vulva and lies in front of the urinary opening. You will be able to see only its tip, a bump about the size of a small pea. The rest is hidden under the inner lips. If you can't find the clitoris, gently press where you think it should be. When you notice a peasant feeling, you're bound to have found it.

There are two openings under the inner lips:

- 1) The urinary opening (called the urethra), looks like a tiny dot just below the clitoris. This is the opening where urine comes out through a tube from your bladder.



2) The opening to the vagina is the bigger opening below the urethra. It looks quite small, but it can stretch a great deal. This is the opening where blood comes out during a period. If and when you have a baby, the vagina will stretch a lot to let the baby out.

The hymen

-is a thin stretchy fold of skin, which may partly cover the opening to the vagina. In the past, people thought they could tell that a girl was a virgin if her hymen was unbroken. In fact many girls are born without a hymen at all. These days, a girl's hymen is often stretched or broken quite naturally by exercise, such as jumping, or riding a bike or a horse. Virginity has nothing to do with whether you've got a hymen or not. You only stop being a virgin if you experience sexual intercourse. Usually there are one or more openings in the hymen and during a period, the blood can flow through them.

Pubic and body hair

When pubic hairs first start growing it is soft and colorless. Eventually it darkens and coarsens. It is usually darker than the hair on your head. Some girls have quite thick pubic hair; others have only a scanty amount. It doesn't matter either way – it is part of normal body variation.

Hair will also grow under your arms and on your arms and legs. It is not uncommon for girls to find hair growing around their nipples and across their tummies as well.

A Muslim woman, after puberty, has to remove her pubic and auxiliary (under arm) hair, ideally every 15 days, but a delay up to 40 days is permissible. Most women prefer to use hair removing creams or powders, but electrical mechanical depilators, which pull out the hair from the roots, much the same way that in olden days was done by pulling the hair by



hand or by special sticking plasters. Depilating in either way, in women usually, leads to, reduced or no hair growth after some years. This is specially so if this process is started at a young age, i.e. at puberty.

Electric shavers specially made for ladies can also be used for removing hair from the body. These shavers don't remove the hair as close as in men's shavers, but are good enough for the purpose of women.

An inside look

As well as all the changes you can see happening, other vital changes, which you can't see, are happening inside your body. The sex organs, which you were born with, start to grow and develop. Each one is designed to play a part in producing a new life. Since they have such an important role, these organs are well protected inside your body. To find out where these are, feel with your forefingers for the bone just above where your thighs meet. Feel with your thumbs for the front of your hip bones. The sex organs are enclosed in the bony pelvis well within this triangle made by your fingers.

Things you might like to know about your sex organs

The size of women's sex organs is very similar and not related to their body size. The organs are really quite small.

□ The ovaries are about the shape and size of almonds in their shell.

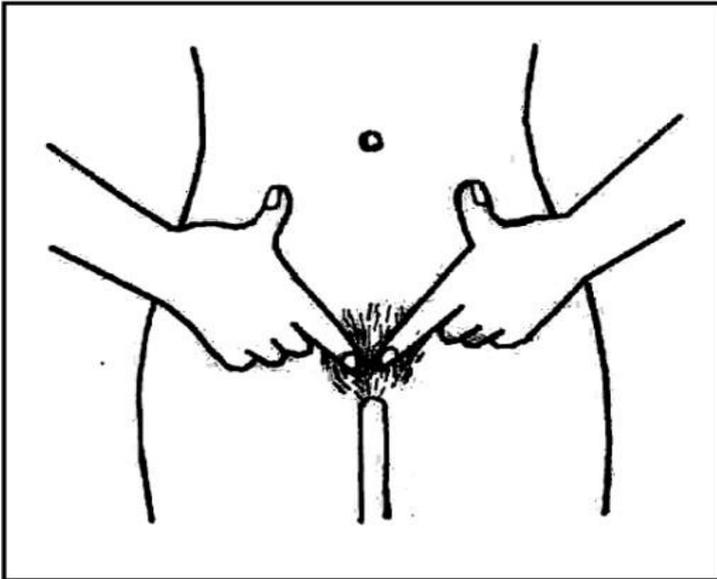
□ The uterus starts growing when you're about ten. By the time you're eighteen it will have doubled in size. A fully grown uterus is the shape of a pear and about the size of your closed fist. In pregnancy it expands to the size of a football. It goes back to its normal size after the birth of the baby.



□ Each Fallopian tube is about the length and thickness of a ballpoint pen. The passageway inside is narrower than the tip of the pen. Thick muscular walls protect the passageway.

□ The vagina is about 3-4 inches (7.5-10 centimeters) long. Its walls are folded rather like an accordion and can stretch a great deal.

Can stretch a great deal.



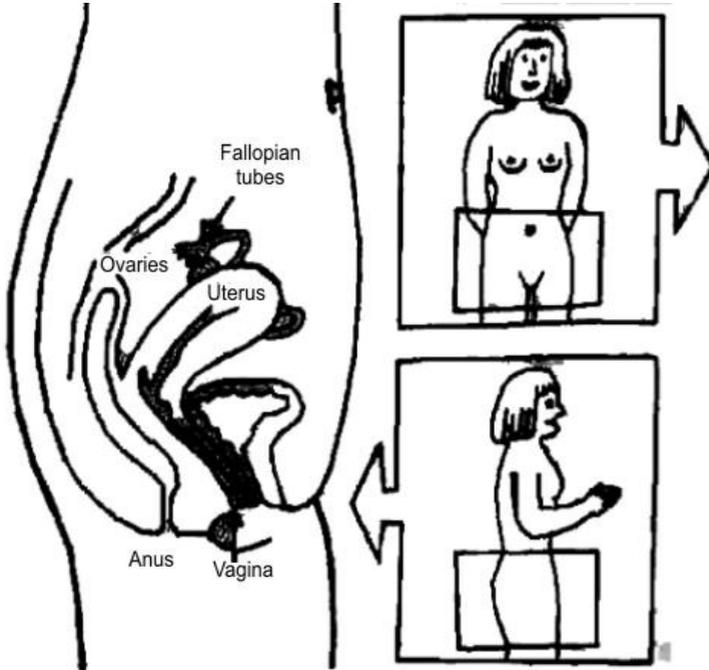
Inside girls' bodies

The ovaries are storehouses for egg cells and also a hormone factory. From birth, a girl has as many as 200,000 unripe egg cells (known as ova). They are stored in little sacs, called follicles, in her ovaries. When she reaches puberty, the pituitary gland starts producing sex hormones. Ten to twenty



egg cells ripen each month, but usually only one is released in

each ovary. Only four hundred or so of the thousands of eggs will be released in her lifetime. The hormones also control all the changes that happen to her body.



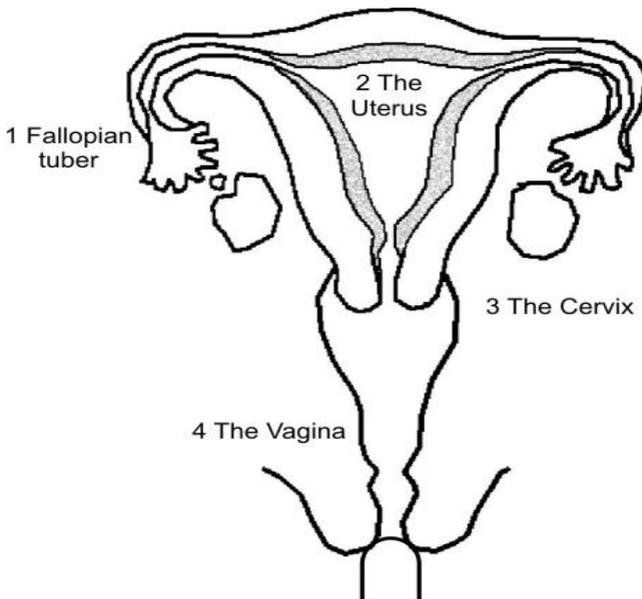
1. There are two Fallopian tubes. Each is attached at one end to the uterus. The other end is wrapped partly round each ovary. This end is funnel-shaped. When a ripe egg pops out of an ovary, the fringed ends of the tube moves toward it and draws it into the tube. The tube is lined with tiny hairs which propel the egg towards the uterus.

2. The uterus (also called the womb) is where a fertilized egg grows into a baby. It has walls of strong muscle, and the inside lining is rich with glands and blood vessels.



3. The cervix is the entrance to the uterus. It usually stays closed. It opens slightly during a period to let the menstrual blood trickle out and fully when a baby is born.

4. The vagina is the passage from the uterus to the outside of the body. It has walls of soft folded skin. It can stretch very easily to allow a baby to be born. It is often known as the birth canal. This is also where the flow comes out during a period and where the penis is inserted during intercourse.



For the first two years after your periods start, you're unlikely to ovulate. An egg will ripen and send a hormone signal to the uterus. The lining thickens in readiness, but for some unknown reason the egg is not released, although the lining is shed. Until you ovulate, your periods may be very irregular.

Once you begin ovulating you should notice a pattern to your periods. The time between the start of one period and

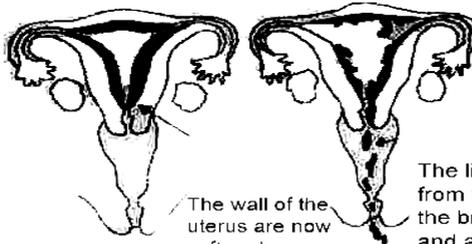


another is called the menstrual cycle. On average it lasts twenty-eight days but this is only an average, most people have a cycle that is a few days longer or shorter than that.

The chart below shows roughly how long each part of the cycle takes to happen,

1 The egg travels down the tube towards the uterus

2 If the egg is not fertilized, it breaks up and the uterus has no need of its soft lining



The wall of the uterus are now soft and spongy ready to receive the egg if it is fertilized

The lining cells from the uterus the broken up egg and a little blood leave the body. This is a period

3 The fringed ends of the fallopian tube draws the egg into the tube, the egg travels along it towards the uterus. If it is fertilized, the egg will attach itself to the uterus lining and start growing into a baby. The empty follicle turns yellow, as it starts to produce another hormone which makes the lining of the uterus soft and spongy and rich in blood. It is now ready to feed the egg if it should become fertilized.

4 If the egg is not fertilized the cell of the extra lining break down. This lining along with the remains of the egg and a little blood, pass out of the uterus and through the vagina. It is this shedding of the lining that is known as a period, or menstruation.



whatever the length of your cycle, you will usually ovulate ten to fourteen days before the start of period.

How an egg becomes fertilized

The only way an egg can become fertilized is if it joins with a male sperm cell. There are only a few days in the menstrual cycle when this can happen. This is generally midway between periods, just after an egg is released from an ovary. If a man and a woman have sexual intercourse at this time, then there is a good chance that the egg will be fertilized.

First period

Before your periods start, you may wonder how you will know when to expect your first period, what it will look and feel like and whether it will be painful. There's no one answer to any of these questions. It varies from person to person.

There is one sign that many girls notice. It's often a sign that their periods will start soon. This is how two girls describe it:

Six months before I started, I sometimes got a slight white discharge.

I used to have a slight discharge, which stained my knickers we called it 'the white'.

This is a vaginal discharge and is quite normal. It's one of the signs that show your sex hormones are becoming active.

Like other first experiences, you will probably always remember your first period. Girls' feelings about it differ a lot, some feel excited, impatient or pleased. It's something they've been looking forward to. For the other girls it can be a terrible shock, particularly if no one has told them about it. They think they must have hurt themselves or become ill.



Some times, even if a girl knows about periods, her first one comes as a surprise, without any warning.

The period flow

When the first period happens it doesn't always turn out to be as girls expect. It's longer or shorter, painless or painful, and girls are often surprised by the colour.

What to do

Periods can start at any time and not necessarily when you're best prepared for them. Lots of people first notice they've started when they're in the toilet and see bloodstains on their trousers. If you're at home or at school, your mother, a friend or a teacher can help you and show you what to do.

Pads and Tampons

Once you start having periods you will need to wear something to catch the flow. The flow is usually a slow trickle with an occasional spurt and lasts several days. You can't control it unlike urination, it happens automatically. To avoid staining your clothes you can use either sanitary pads (often known as STs) or tampons. There are several brands and types of each.

Sanitary pads

These are pads of soft wadding, which you wear between your thighs inside your pants. Many have a leak proof backing to stop blood coming through. Some have a marker thread or coloured backing to show which way round you should wear them. Make sure you wear the pad with the backing away from your body.



There are three different types of sanitary pads

Looped pads

Until a few years ago these were the most common pads available. They have a loop on both ends and are usually worn with an elastic belt with hooks to keep them in place. Some people find these rather bulky. Many mothers buy these for their daughters because these are the types they have used. If you don't feel comfortable wearing them, you could tell your mother about the smaller, slimmer press-on ones and ask her if she would buy those for you instead.

Pads with special under pants

Some pads are specially designed to be worn with pants that have some kind of fastening to hold the towel in place. The pants are close fitting and look more or less like ordinary ones. People who do a lot of sport may prefer these. Once the pad is fixed to the pants it can't slip, twist, or move out of place. If you don't want to keep washing the same pair of pants every day you will need several pairs. There are also leak proof plastic bikini briefs with special fastenings for a towel, which you wear inside your own pants.

Press-on pads

These are probably the most convenient and comfortable pads you can buy. They vary considerably in thickness and in length. Some makes are short and are particularly designed not to show under tight clothes.

These pads have sticky strips which you press on to your under pants or panties so that the pad is held in place. You will need to wear close-fitting under pants or panties, stretchy ones are best. The pads peel off when you need to change and doesn't leave a mark on your pants.



Tampons

These are tight rolls of cotton wool with a cord attached to one end. You push a tampon into your vagina (the opening from which the blood comes out). The tampon absorbs the blood whilst in the vagina and expands. When you need to change it, you pull it out by the cord and flush it away.

There are two kinds of tampons, those with applicators (to help put the tampon in) and those without applicators. Both of them come in several sizes. It's probably best to use the smallest size first. Once you're used to using tampons, you can then buy a larger size if you need something more absorbent.

You will need to change a tampon every few hours, particularly for the first few days of your period, when the flow is usually heaviest. You can tell when it needs changing because you will notice a kind of bubbling feeling or you will see that the cord is bloodstained. If you have a heavy flow you might want to wear a pad as well. If the pad becomes bloodstained you will know the tampon is full and needs changing. Some people like to wear a pad as well as a tampon at night. If the tampon becomes full during the night and cannot absorb any more blood, the pad can catch any blood that trickles out of the vagina.

Putting in a tampon

It's up to you to decide when you're ready to use a tampon. Some girls, who are not fully developed, can't use tampons easily, although it would not be harmful if they did. They may find it difficult at first to insert them because the vagina will be rather dry. Many girls prefer using pads until they've got used to the idea of periods.

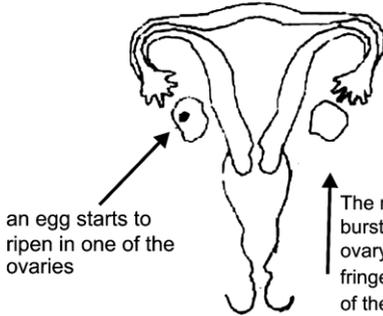
Some mothers have strong ideas about girls using



tampons and this can be a touchy subject. If you want to use tampons and your mother doesn't approve, it may be a better idea to talk to your friends about them. See if they use them and how they find them.

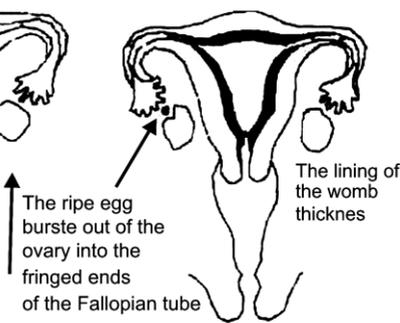
1

Beginning of the cycle



2

Ovulation an egg is released



1. just after a period, the pituitary gland sends a hormone 'signal' to the ovaries. this causes egg-cell (ova) in some of the follicles of the ovary to ripen. The egg-cell are minute, about the size of the full stop at the end of this sentence.

2. The ovary in turn sends a hormone signal to the uterus. The lining of the uterus begins to thicken as new cells grow. Meanwhile, as the egg ripen, the follicles move towards the surface of the ovary. when the first egg is ripe, it bursts out of the follicle and the ovary this is called ovulation.

If you want to use tampons, it's a good idea to get a feel what your vagina is like. Many girls have problems putting their first tampon in. The reason is often that they don't understand their bodies well enough to know what they should do. Wash your hands first to avoid the risk of any infection. Now part the lips of your vulva and put a finger or two inside your vagina. Feel which direction the vagina goes in, this is the angle to aim at when you put in a tampon. Feel the muscles of the vagina walls. These will keep the tampon in place.



Every packet of tampons contains a leaflet which explains how to put them in, read it carefully before you try. The instruction may seem complicated at first, but once you get used to putting in a tampon you can do it in a matter of seconds. You may like to read these simplified instructions so you can see what is involved, before you decide to try using tampons. Make sure you have plenty of time and feel relaxed when you first try to put one in. Some people find a good time to try is after a warm bath, since this relaxes the muscles. You may find it easiest during the first day or so of a period when the flow is quite heavy. When the vagina is moist it's easier to slide a tampon in, rather than at the end of a period when the vagina is much drier.

Remember to wash your hands before you open a tampon and never let it fall on the floor, if it does, don't use it! If you find you can't get the tampon in, don't worry. Wait a few months and then try again until you succeed.

Tampons without applicators

Unwrap a tampon gently pull the cords to make sure they are firmly in place.

Put one foot on the commode or a chair. Push the tampon with your finger as far into the vagina as it will go. Make sure the cord is hanging outside your body. If the tampon is the right place, you shouldn't be able to feel it at all. (If you can feel it, it probably isn't in far enough.) It will be kept in place by the muscles of your vagina, so it can't fall out. To remove it, gently pull on the cord. The tampon will slide out.

Tampons with applicators

Some tampons have a pair of cardboard tubes (rather like a telescope). This is called an applicator. They help to put in the tampon.



Unwrap a tampon. Make sure the cord is showing outside the smaller tube. Stand with one foot on the commode or a chair. Hold the larger tube (which contains the tampon) with one hand, and separate the lips of the vulva with the other.

Push the outer tube gently into your vagina. Point it towards the small of your back. Don't force it in further than it will go easily.

Push it until most of the outer tube is in your vagina. Keep holding the outer tube. Put your forefinger over the end of inner tube to hold the cord in place. Push the inner tube completely into the outer tube so the ends are level. This pushes the tampon out of the tube and into the vagina.

Let go of the cord. Remove both tubes and flush them away. Check that the cord is hanging freely outside your body. When you need to change the tampon, gently pull the cord to remove it. You can flush it away.

Things you might like to know about tampons

□ Tampons are not painful or difficult to put in (except perhaps for the first few times). If it hurts to put one in, it's probably because you haven't aimed at quite the right angle. Remember, the vagina is a very stretchy passage, it can stretch wide enough to let a baby's head come through. If you have any difficulty putting in a tampon, the best time to try is when your flow is the heaviest.

□ Tampons cannot get "lost" inside you. The opening to the uterus is tiny, so tiny that it is impossible for a tampon to go through. A tampon will always remain inside the vagina. There is nowhere else for it to go.

□ Once a tampon is in place you shouldn't be able to feel that it's there. If you can, you haven't pushed it in far enough. Pull it out and try again with another one.

□ Make sure you've removed a used tampon before you put in a new one. Try not to forget to take out the last tampon



of a period. If you notice a smell, even though you've washed thoroughly, check to see whether you've left in a tampon.

□ If, by mistake, you push the cord up into your vagina, you can still pull out the tampon. Squat down and put your first two fingers into your vagina. If you can't reach the tampon, try straining hard as if you were going to the toilet. Then you should be able to grasp it. You may find it helps to smear your fingers with Vaseline. If you still can't reach it, ask someone to help you. Lady Doctors are used to taking out tampons.

□ Tampons absorb the flow inside the vagina so, if you want, you can go swimming with it on.

Which to use?

Both sanitary pads and tampons have their advantages and disadvantages. In the end it's up to you to decide which you find easier and more comfortable to use. Here's what some girls say about them.

Advantages of sanitary pads

"They're discreet, secure and I feel confident wearing them.

"Press-on pads are comfortable. I don't think I'd like to try tampons yet. They frighten me a little, but I don't know why."

"Pads are easy to dispose off and you know when to change them."

"At night I wear a pads, it's more comfortable and gives better protection. In the day I wear tampons."

Disadvantages of Sanitary pad

"They're always there and you can't forget them. You can't go swimming or anything like that."

"Pads are bulky and horrid. They make me shudder."

"I always worry about the smell if I can't change pads often enough."



“Pads sometimes slip out of place and rub the top of my thighs.”

Advantages of tampons

“Using tampons makes a period easier. They’re invisible, there’s no worrying about smells or disposal. They make me feel more comfortable and relaxed.”

“I like tampons because they get rid of that messy feeling, but I think they’re expensive.”

“Tampons are clean and easy and don’t take up much space in a bag. They’re easy to pack when I go away somewhere”.

Disadvantages of tampons

“I find it difficult to tell when to change them, sometimes I feel them leaking and then it’s too late.”

“I can’t always control my bladder with a tampon in, and I find it hard to put them in when my flow is light.”

“For the first two days a tampon isn’t enough for the night time.”

“I use a pad as well held in place with underpants.”

“Just occasionally, I find I get the angle wrong when I’m putting one in. It kind of bends over and becomes uncomfortable – in which case I replace it with another.”

Be prepared

Once you’ve started your periods, you should know roughly when the next one will happen. Around that time it’s a good idea to carry a pad or tampon with you when you’re out, or when you go to school. You may even prefer to wear a minipad, just in case your period starts when you’re nowhere near a toilet.

If your periods are very irregular it would help to be more prepared, you could always keep a spare pad or tampon on you or in your locker at school if you have one. A spare pair of pants is useful too. If you don’t need the pad or tampon you



may find it comes in handy for one of your friends. Sometimes your period might start when you least expect it. You might have nothing on you and find there's nowhere to buy anything. You can always use tissues, rolled up sheets of toilet paper or a clean hanky. Use them like a sanitary pad.

Don't feel embarrassed to ask other girls or women if they have a spare pad or tampon you can use. They too have periods, so they'll be sympathetic and helpful. If you start at school, the place to go for supplies is often the medical room or the office. In the west some schools have slot machines where you can buy supplies, as do some public toilets.

Although you may feel self-conscious and aware of buying your supplies, other people probably don't even notice what you're buying. If you feel awkward, why not buy your supplies in a large chemist store or supermarket where you can help yourself and put them in with the rest of the shopping?

Getting to know your cycle

Periods are only one part of the menstrual cycle. They're the part that seems most noticeable, so people often don't bother to think what's happening in their bodies during the rest of the cycle.

Perhaps you've noticed though that some days you feel great, have lots of energy and your skin and hair look good. Other days you feel awful, you can't concentrate properly, you have rows, feel depressed with the way you look and may be cry more easily.

Sometimes there's a good reason for the way you feel. Maybe you've had a celebration or a disappointment, or you've been praised or told off, or heard some good or bad news. But sometimes you can't see a reason at all. There is one. It's tied up with your menstrual cycle.

Use a calendar to work out the length of your menstrual cycle.

You can work out the length of your cycle by noting the



day on which you started each period. The length of the cycle is the number of days in between.

Copy out a calendar, and then circle the day your period starts and cross out each day that it lasts. It is as normal for your cycle to be as short as twenty-one days, as long as thirty-five days or anything in between.

Keep a chart of your feelings (See pages 59 and 60)

You can find out whether and how your cycle affects you by keeping a chart of your feelings. After three or four months you'll be able to see whether any particular feelings happen again and again at the same intervals. Even if you haven't started your periods yet, you may still be able to see a pattern.

Some ideas for filling in your chart

Mark each day of your period with a star. Write down the number of days in your cycle in the left-hand boxes. Note how you mainly feel each day with a letter or a symbol. Or, if you prefer, note only those days when you feel particularly good or bad. These are some suggestions for letter and symbols to put on your chart. You won't notice all these things necessarily.

Nobody's cycle is exactly the same. You might not find any noticeable pattern at all to yours:

"I don't notice any changes in mood due to my periods. I'm very moody anyway and my moods change from hour to hour and day to day without any reason I can see."

"My moods are more affected by whether I have a good or bad day at school and have a good or bad social life, than by my periods."

On the other hand you might find that you feel all right most of the time, but not so good when your period starts.

"Sometimes my nipples hurt the day before a period. I get



constipated for the first few days and I get cramps.”

“I’m a bit clumsy during my period. I seem to get a lot of cuts and scratches on my hands. I put on a couple of pounds and sometimes my breast feels sore.”

You may notice that your moods change noticeably at different times of the month.

“I feel very high after a period, and then just when I think I’m going to do great things in the next weeks, I get low. Now I know what it is and I try to plan for it.”

Or you might feel good for most of your cycle except for the week or so before your period is due. Then you might notice all sorts of changes in your body such as:

“I can’t bear to be touched.”

“My stomach feels bloated. I have stomach ache and back ache.”

“My hair gets greasier quicker and so does my skin.”

“My breast swell and my tummy feel tender. I feel heavy and overweight and I get spots.”

“I feel tired and want to eat sweet foods more.”

Your moods may change at this time as well.

“I get snappy and can’t seem to help it.”

“I’m miserable a week before I’m due. I behave a bit quiet.”

“I feel stupid and slow.”

“I feel grumpy, uncomfortable and cry easily.”

“I’m impatient and have a row with people for no reason.”

No one knows for certain why girls and women have these body changes and ups and downs in moods, but it is known that up to fifty per cent of all women experience some of them. If they affect you here are some suggestions which may help you:

If you feel bloated or your breasts feel heavy or you put on a few pounds in weight, this is probably because you are retaining extra water. Don’t be tempted to slim; the weight will disappear once your period is over. Instead, it helps if you cut



down on salt.

Chart of feelings

| Days | MONTH 1 | MONTH 2 | MONTH 3 | MONTH 4 |
|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1 | | | | |
| 2 | | | | |
| 3 | | | | |
| 4 | | | | |
| 5 | | | | |
| 6 | | | | |
| 7 | | | | |
| 8 | | | | |
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| 27 | | | | |
| 28 | | | | |
| 29 | | | | |
| 30 | | | | |
| 31 | | | | |



Write here how you feel every day. Choose from the previous Page.



□ If you feel weak or suddenly get cross, irritable or panicky, particularly in the week before a period, notice whether this happens a long time after you've eaten. If so, try to eat something (even if only a snack) at short intervals throughout the day.

□ If you feel tired and lazy, try to have extra rest and sleep in the fortnight before your period is due. It may also help to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. If you feel weak and have food cravings eat more peanuts or peanut butter, ripe bananas and drink fresh orange juice. These will provide more potassium, which your body may be lacking.

□ If you keep a chart of how you feel, you will be able to work out the days when you're likely to feel more down. It will help you prepare for them and to avoid making too many busy arrangements at those times. You may also find that once you know why you're feeling a certain way, it will help you cope with the feelings better.

Other people have suggestions of things to do and do not to do.

"I put off anything that can possibly be left until after my period."

"I save up nice things to do for the days when I know I'll feel down, a good book, knitting, making things, listening to my favorites discs."

If none of these suggestions help, it's a good idea to go and see a doctor. Take your chart with you. It will help the doctor to see how your symptoms relate to your periods.

Treat your self right

Periods are a normal fact of life, and while you have one you can carry on as usual. If you have aches and pains, you may want to do something about those, but don't use periods as an excuse for not doing your daily activities.

Some mothers still believe that you shouldn't wash your



hair or have a bath when you have got a period. You should respect your mother's views even if you end up disagreeing with them.

"I quietly ignored what mum thought about baths. In the end, when she saw me having them she said, 'well, if you are having baths I might as well too.'"

More to the point are good things to do all the time, not just when you have got a period. If you treat yourself right in general, you feel fitter and healthy throughout the month.

Sleep

People need different amounts of sleep. You may need nine or ten hours at night, while your friend might need only seven or eight hours, or the other way round. You may need more sleep simply because you're growing.

What you can do

Your own rhythm is what suits you best; get to know it and don't try to fight it. If you find you're particularly tired during your periods, have some early nights.

Too much sleep, however, can make you feel just as bad as if you don't have enough. If you go to bed because you've got period cramps, don't stay there longer than you have to.

Rest is just as important as sleep not only when you have got a period, but all the time. Try to find a half hour or more every day to relax. Try lying on the floor and letting your muscles relax one by one. Or sit in a chair and concentrate on a spot on the wall; or go for a walk and concentrate on breathing and not on thinking; or lie on the floor with your eyes closed and listen to music.



Exercise

Daily exercise, even if only for five minutes a day will help your body stay in good shape. It may also help lessen or prevent period aches and cramps.

A quick and easy exercise is to run up and walk down ten stairs five times a day. Or you could buy a book of exercise and do those. Of course, any exercise that uses your whole body and that you enjoy, such as dancing, jogging or swimming is good for keeping you fit. Some people think that swimming is the best way to help period cramps (you'll need to wear a tampon).

What you can do

□ What ever exercise you choose to do, do it regularly. People often find an excuse to give up exercise after a while. If you find it a bit boring, try doing it with a friend or in time to music. You might think you don't have time to do it. If you do it at a regular time each day, say when you get up, it will become as much a habit as washing your face or brushing your hair. Wear loose, comfortable clothes for doing the exercise.

□ At first, only repeat each exercise a few times. Stop and rest between each one and don't overdo it. If an exercise is painful, it's best not to do it.

□ Once you begin to find the exercises easy, increase the number of times you do them. If you feel stiff after doing them the first few times, it's because your muscles aren't used to working so hard. The stiffness will wear off as you keep doing the exercise each day. Don't give up because you feel a bit sore. It takes time to get really fit.



□ If you get period cramps, then it's time to do a few more exercises to loosen you up and relax your muscles. The exercises given below are designed to strengthen your tummy and pelvic muscles and so should relieve cramps. You might not notice any difference for the first month or so, but if you do the exercise regularly you should notice a big difference. If, however, you don't find they help your cramps, there are lots of alternative suggestions for things to do.

Exercise 1 – repeat ten times

Stand straight with your feet apart and your arms stretched out at shoulder height. Keeping your arms straight, swing your body to the right and touch your foot. Come back to your starting position and then swing to the left.

Exercise 2 – repeat ten times

Stand in the starting position. Twist your body and arms to the left. Don't move your feet and keep your arms straight and at shoulder height. Return to the straight position and then twist to the right.

Exercise 3 – repeat eight times

Stand with feet apart and arms stretched above your head. Keeping your knees straight bend down to touch your toes. Return to the starting position with your arms still at full stretch.

Exercise 4 – repeat eight times

Sit on the floor with your legs and feet together and your knees straight. Start with your hands on your shoulders. Then stretch forward and put your hands on your ankles (you may find you need to bend your knees at first).



Exercise 5 – repeat five times on each side

Stand up straight, with your feet together 18 inches (50 centimeters) or so from a wall. Put one hand on the wall and your other hand on your hip. Tighten your tummy and bottom muscles so that your hips tilt forward. Keeping your hips forward and both legs straight touch the wall with your hip. Don't twist your body, or let your elbow move. Change positions and repeat the exercise facing the other way.

Sweating

You have sweat glands in almost every part of the skin. When you are hot, your body perspires. The perspiration is a mixture of water and salt and doesn't smell. At puberty, new sweat glands develop. These are scent glands. They give each person an individual smell of her own. These glands are under the arms, around the nipples and navel and in the inner lips of the vulva. They give off a characteristic smell, which is not itself unpleasant. Unpleasant body smells happen only if sweat is left on the body so that bacteria can act upon it.

What you can do

If you wash well or have a daily bath or shower in warm water, this helps prevent unpleasant smells. Remember to wash particularly under the arms and between your legs.

It's especially important to wash your vulva and bottom regularly (whether or not you've got a period). Wash from front to back. Similarly, wipe your bottom from front to back when you have been to the toilet. This is so you won't infect your vagina with any of the germs from the anus. After washing, pat your vulva dry and try to keep it dry.

Warm water and perhaps an un-perfumed soap are



enough to keep your vulva clean. If you wash regularly, you shouldn't need to use any of the vaginal deodorants you may have seen advertised. Some girls have found that these irritate or damage the skin around the vagina.

□ The vagina is, in any case, self-cleaning. It produces a clear or milky fluid, which is mildly antiseptic and so keeps the vagina clean. Sometimes you may notice a slight discharge. This is quite normal and you don't need to do anything about it.

□ After the wash or bath, it's a good idea to change into clean pants. Cotton ones are best, as nylon ones tend to keep in heat and moisture unless they have a cotton gusset.

□ When you have got a period, remember to change your pads or tampon regularly, three or four times a day or may be even more during the first few days. Menstrual blood begins to smell only when it reaches the air. The warmth of your body increases the smell. Moreover, germs breed quickly and easily in stale blood. To avoid the risk of infections it's best to change as often as you can manage.

□ When you have a bath, the flow will stop while you're sitting in the water. If you use tampons, you can leave one in while you have a bath if you want to. Put in a clean one afterwards. If you use sanitary towels, make sure you have one handy when you come out. Dry your vulva with tissues or toilet paper before you put it on. If you become sore from wearing sanitary pads, dab on some talcum powder.

□ If your pants are blood stained, soak or rub them in cold, salty water before you wash them. You might find it handy to keep a jar of salt in the bathroom for this purpose. If you wash your underwear by hand, avoid using detergent powders or liquids since they can irritate your skin.



Skin Pimples

The hormones that cause all the changes in your body take some time to become properly adjusted. They make your skin glands particularly active. The extra oil produced by the glands clogs the skin pores. This is what gives you spots.

What you can do

- You can prevent the pores from getting clogged by washing your face twice daily with warm water.
- If you do get spots, try your best not to pick them. This makes them worse and doesn't do your skin any good.
- Using a medicated soap or a spot cream at night may help to clear up spots.
- Eating fresh fruit, drinking plenty of water and avoiding fatty and greasy foods helps as well

Oily Scalp

The oil glands in your scalp keep your hair healthy and shiny. At puberty, they may work overtime, so that your hair becomes greasy.

What you can do

* Wash your hair every five or six days but not much more often as this tends to increase the greasiness.

Washing it while you've got a period will help you feel and look good at this time.

Periods are natural

Periods should be no more bother than eating, sleeping or going to the toilet. However, some people have sneaking worries about them. This chapter looks at some of their queries. If you have a problem, share it with someone, such as your mum or a close friend. Don't keep it to yourself. The sooner someone can help you out, the less time you will spend worrying about it.



Once you have started your periods, you may wonder if yours are normal. There's no such thing as a perfectly normal period. What counts as normal varies widely.

- A period starts and stops by itself. It can last anywhere between two and eight days.

- For some people, the flow is heaviest for the first two days and then slowly tapers off. Others don't notice much difference in the flow from day to day and have a light or a heavy flow for the whole period. Some people start with a light flow which becomes heavier on the second or third day.

- The length of the menstrual cycle (the number of days between the start of each period) varies from person to person. Some girls' cycles are twenty one days, some are thirty five days. Most are somewhere in between.

Each period you have won't necessarily be the same. Some will be heavier or lighter than others; some will last longer than others; some may happen sooner or later than you expect, especially at first.

Heavy periods

Although the flow may look like blood, in fact, blood makes up only half of it. The rest includes the remains of the extra lining of the uterus and sticky mucus from the cervix and the vagina. The amount of blood you actually lose is very little, the equivalent of between four and eight tablespoons, even if it looks a lot more.

How much blood there is varies from person to person and from month to month. If there's good deal of blood, that's just as healthy as not very much (your body soon replaces whatever blood you lose).



Some months you may find your periods are heavier and last longer than other months. Although you may think your period is heavy, it's not easy to tell if it really is.

Periods are considered heavy if:

- You need (rather than choose) to use more than six pads or tampons a day, every day of your period.
- Your period lasts for much more than a week.
- You have more than one period a month and you feel tired and sleepy even though you're eating well and sleeping normally.

Heavy periods can be caused by shock or worry or an upset to your usual routine such as changing schools, going on holiday and so on. On the other hand, it could mean that your uterus is not working quite the way it should. If your period suddenly becomes heavier and you can't think of a good reason, like those just mentioned, tell your mum. She may think it's a good idea for you to see a doctor.

The doctor may suggest that you eat some iron rich foods such as brown bread, liver or watercress, or might prescribe iron tablets.

Vaginal discharges

A normal vaginal discharge is a small amount of clear, colourless fluid. Once you have started your periods, you may notice a discharge just before your period. You may also have one at the time you ovulate, ten or twelve days before a period. Both are quite usual and normal.

If your discharge changes in any of the following ways, it's worth telling your mother or going for a check up with a doctor:

- If it becomes discoloured (yellow or blood stained) and smelly. First make sure you have not left a tampon in.



- If it becomes thick and heavy.
- If you notice an irritating, burning or itching feeling that persists.

A doctor can quickly tell whether a discharge is normal or not. Often there is nothing wrong at all. Or, you may have an infection called thrush. This is very common and nothing to be embarrassed about. It's just like an infection in any other part of your body and can be treated quite easily.

No periods

If you have not started your periods yet, and most of your friends have, don't worry. It doesn't mean you won't; it just means that your body timetable is different from theirs, in the same way as your weight, height, face and features are. Even if you have to wait until you're seventeen before you start, this is quite normal.

Irregular periods

For the first two years or so, more often than not, your periods will be irregular. After the first one, it's quite likely that you won't have another one for several months and you might have only four or so in the first year. Or you might have them every two or three weeks, or they might be regular right from the start. It varies from person to person.

Your cycle is irregular at first because you have not started ovulating. Hormones are sending erratic messages. As your ovaries mature, you will begin ovulating not every month at first, may be every two or three. Once you ovulate regularly every month or so, you should notice a pattern to your cycle. Lots of things can upset this cycle. Illness or emotional upsets, sudden changes such as travelling, moving school or exams, or a crash diet, all these can affect it.



Your periods may stop for a while, or you may have lighter or heavier periods than usual. After a break you may find that the length of the cycle changes.

Once you have a regular cycle, you need only worry about irregular periods:

If the pattern changes for no good reason and becomes much heavier or much lighter.

If you miss two periods in a row and there is no chance of your being pregnant, or if you miss one period and think you may be pregnant.

If you have bleeding between periods.

It's worth going to a doctor for a check-up about any of these.

Spotting (bleeding between periods)

If you notice any spotting between periods, you should always see a doctor about it, because it's not a common thing to happen. If it's only light spotting during the middle of the cycle, it's probably to do with ovulation. At this time some people notice a slight pain in either the right or left side of their tummy. This means that an egg is leaving the ovary. However, it might be a sign of illness, so it's worth consulting a doctor, if it persists.

Feeling faint

Occasionally, some girls feel faint at the time of their periods. If this happens to you, try to have some early nights at this time and try to avoid standing up for long stretches of time, sit down or walk around instead.



When you feel faint, sit down with your head between your knees until you feel better and then have a drink of cold water. Alternatively, lie flat on the floor with your feet resting on a chair or lie with your knees bent and feet drawn towards your body.

Sore breasts

Sore breasts are quite common before and during a period. It doesn't mean anything is wrong with them. Fluid builds up in them as a result of the hormone changes at this time. After a period the breasts go back to normal. These changes often go completely unnoticed. If they bother you, wear a slightly larger bra during the time your breasts hurt and try to have a soak in a warm bath.

Your breasts shouldn't hurt or feel lumpy after a period. If they do it may be normal but you would be wise to see a doctor.

Cramps and pains

Before you start ovulating it's unlikely, though not impossible, that you will have painful periods. Once ovulation happens regularly, periods may be painful but not necessarily so. People feel pain differently; what one person can bear quite easily may be unbearable to someone else. Many people notice discomfort. Some people have quite severe pains (this is more unusual). The pain is usually to do with the period, but not always. It may be because you're constipated as well. If so, try to eat foods with plenty of roughage (such as brown bread, fruit, salads and raw vegetables) and drink water. Or it may be because you're worried about your periods. This can make you feel tense and knotted up and makes the pain seem worse. It might even be that you get



pain because you're expecting it.

If you do get pains, you don't have to grit your teeth and bear them. There are plenty of things you can do yourself to relieve them. Here are some suggestions of things that some people do. What works for one person won't necessarily work for another. Try these out in turn and see which works best for you.

Difficulties

There are lots of awkward situations people imagine they might be in, but it's unlikely that most of them ever happen. Even if they do happen, they're not always as awful as you might think, as these girls' stories show.

"I was staying in someone's house once and I stained the sheets. I went and quietly apologized and it was quite OK. It happened somewhere else as well. That time I washed the sheet out in the bath. I didn't think it would have been nice to leave it. I left the sheet on the bath and went and said, 'sorry, but I've had an accident. I've washed the sheet and it's in the bathroom. She said, 'It doesn't matter, we all have accidents'. She understood."

5.5 (a) Reference about menstruation from The Quran

(1) Surah-e-Baqra-Ayat No. 222: "People ask you about menstruation. Tell them this is a period of stress. So keep away from women until they have become clean. And when they are clean, you may go to them as ALLAH has enjoined. For ALLAH loves those who seek pardon and those who are clean."

5.6 (b) References about menstruation from the Hadees:

(i) From Sahih Muslim:

□ "The revered Anas Bin Malik⁽²⁾ states that it was the custom among the Jews to shun menstruating women. They



would not eat in their company and even turned them out of their houses. When the companions of the prophet⁽¹⁾ mentioned this he replied “Every social and physical contact is allowed except sexual intercourse.” The Jews criticized the prophet⁽¹⁾ and complained that he was violating all their customs.”

□ The revered Ayesha⁽²⁾ states “During menstruation I would drink water and give the unfinished glass to the prophet¹ and he would drink from that glass, putting his lips exactly on the spot where my lips had been. I would break off with my teeth meat from a bone and the prophet¹ would then eat the rest of the meat from the very place that I had taken a bite from.”

□ The revered Ayesha⁽²⁾ states “The prophet⁽¹⁾ would rest his head in my lap while I was menstruating and even recite the Holy Quran (This has been transmitted by Bukhari also)”

□ The revered Ayesha⁽²⁾ reported that once during menstruation the prophet⁽¹⁾ asked her to hand him a prayer rug, but she refused saying she was menstruating. The prophet¹ answered “Your menstruation is not on your hand.”

□ The wife of the prophet¹, the revered Maimoona⁽²⁾ said that once when she was menstruating the prophet⁽¹⁾ was offering prayers near by, while the same blanket which he had on was also partly covering her.

□ The revered Ayesha⁽²⁾ said that she heard Fatima Bint-e-Habeesh⁽²⁾ ask the prophet⁽¹⁾ whether she should stop prayer if she has vaginal bleeding apart from menstruation. The prophet¹ said “Stop prayers only during the regular days of the menstruation and if bleeding continues after that wash your self and offer prayers” (transmitted by all the books of Hadees accepted as correct)



□ The revered Asma Bint-e-Abu Baker⁽²⁾ reported that a woman asked the prophet⁽¹⁾ about the method of purification of clothing polluted with the blood of menses. He stated that dry blood should be scraped off and then the garment should be washed. After that one can offer prayers while wearing it. (Also transmitted by Bukhari)

(ii) From Sahih Bukhari

□ The revered Ayesha⁽²⁾ states that because of menstruating during the Haj pilgrimage she got nervous and started to cry. The prophet⁽¹⁾ approached her and on finding out the problem stated “This thing (menses) has been imposed on women by ALLAH, but still you can perform all the rites of Haj pilgrimage except the circumambulation of the holy Kaba”.

□ The revered Arva⁽²⁾ was asked whether a menstruating woman can serve another person? He replied this is not forbidden at all as the revered Ayesha⁽²⁾ has stated that “While menstruating I used to comb the prophet’s⁽¹⁾ hair even though he was sitting in the mosque and I was in the adjoining room.”

(iii) From Tirimzi

□ The revered Abu Hurera⁽²⁾ reported the prophet⁽¹⁾ as saying “A person is not a Muslim who performs intercourse through the anus or during menstruation, or goes to fortune tellers (Kahin)”

(Also transmitted by Ibn-e-Maja)

□ The revered Sain Arba⁽²⁾ heard the revered Ibn-e-Abbas⁽²⁾ quote the prophet⁽¹⁾ as saying “When a man performs intercourse with his wife during menstruation (he commits a sin and so for expiation) he must give half a dinar in charity. (In modern terms a dinar is equal to Rs.200/=)”



- The prophet⁽¹⁾ stated “A man must pay one dinar* as charity, for atonement of the sin, if he performs intercourse when red blood discharges during menstruation, and half a dinar when the discharge is yellowish.

(iv) From Abu Dawood:

- The revered Razeen⁽²⁾ heard Hazrat Maaz Bin Jabal⁽²⁾ ask the prophet¹ “What part of the body can a husband have physical contact with a menstruating wife?” The prophet¹ replied “The body above the navel and it is better to avoid that too.”
- The revered Fatima Bint Abi Hubais⁽²⁾ was told by the prophet¹ “The menstrual blood is black; avoid offering prayers at that time. However when it is of another color (red) it is from a blood vessel. One should take a bath and offer the regular prayers.”
- The revered Imam Malik⁽²⁾ and Abu Dawood Dawarmy⁽²⁾ have reported that the revered Umme Salma⁽²⁾ the wife of the prophet¹ inquired about the prayers of a lady who has constant vaginal bleeding. The prophet⁽¹⁾ replied
“She should avoid prayers during the days and nights that she had regular menses before this bleeding and thereafter she should bathe, wear proper pads and underwear and offer regular prayers.”
- The prophet⁽¹⁾ said “A woman with prolonged vaginal bleeding should not offer prayers during the days in which she formerly used to have menstruation, then she should bathe, and perform ablution before every prayer, and offer prayers, as well as keep fast.”



(v) From Mishkat (Chapter on Menstruation)

The reverend Usaid bin Khusair⁽²⁾ and Ibad bin Basar⁽²⁾ suggested to the prophet⁽¹⁾ that they should perform sexual intercourse with menstruating women in order to show their difference from the Jews. The prophet¹ became very angry at this suggestion.

5.7 References about Menstruation from the Fiqah:

(1) Blood that is excreted from the vagina, for a few days every month, in an adult woman, is called menstruation. However this does not include the bleeding due to illness or the bleeding after childbirth.

(2) Menstruation (حَيْضٌ) lasts at least three days and three nights i.e. 72 hours. If the period is less even by a minute then it is not considered menstruation. (حَيْضٌ) Its maximum limit is ten days and ten nights.

(3) The earliest age for the start of menstruation is nine years and maximum age of cessation is fifty-five years.

(4) The time of the start of the menstruation is when the blood is discharged outside from the vagina. If some absorbent material is inserted in the vagina so that the blood does not come out, then that will not be considered as menstruation and the woman is required to offer prayers and observed fasts.

(5) Menstruation (حَيْضٌ) may have six colors: black, red, green, yellow, dark brown, & light brown. White discharge is not considered menstruation. (حَيْضٌ) If a woman menstruates for ten days and then passes no blood for a year and after that has regular bleeding then during the period of bleeding she should consider ten days of every months as menstruation and the remaining twenty days as vaginal bleeding.

(6) The vaginal bleeding after childbirth (نَيْسَبٌ) is considered as forty days. However if the usual period of bleeding after the



past deliveries was less than forty days then that period will be considered as normal and any excess bleeding days will be considered as abnormal, and in the abnormal period prayers and fasting etc. will be obligatory.

(7) During menstruation and the normal bleeding after childbirth it is forbidden to read the Holy Quran, or even to recite it from memory. It is also prohibited to touch it with the hand or any part of the body or any garment that the lady is wearing. Even the margins of the Quran should not be touched. However, she can hold the Holy Quran if it is wrapped in a cover.

(8) During menstruation a woman is forbidden to hold the Holy Quran even while her hand is covered with part of her dress i.e. Scarf (شال) or shirt etc.

(9) During menstruation a woman can read and recite the Islamic creed, (شاهد) send blessings on the prophet (ﷺ) and offer supplication other than the Holy Quran, and this is considered a good deed (سنة). She can also hold such documents if she wants. Although this can be done in any condition but it is better if beforehand ablution (وضوء) is performed, or at least the mouth is rinsed.

(10) The menstruating woman is not forbidden from going to the Eid prayer ground. However, she is forbidden to go into the Kabba or perform the circumambulation around it, even though it may be from outside the actual masjid (مسجد الحرام).

(11) The menstruating woman is forbidden to offer prayers or observe fasts. She does not have to repeat the missed prayers, but she must later observe the fasts that she has missed.

(12) It is better for the menstruating woman to perform ablution and recite prayers (نوافل) and blessing on the Prophet



(ررر) at the time of the obligatory prayers, for the period it normally takes to offer the regular prayers.

(13) If the menstrual flow stops before the stipulated three days, then she can offer obligatory prayers and keep fasts even without bathing.

(14) If a woman usually menstruates more than three days but then the menstrual flow stops after three days, then she should bathe and start her usual prayers. Similarly if bleeding after childbirth (نفاس) stops after a period which is less than her usual period, then she should bathe and offer her regular prayers.

(15) If during a fast a woman starts menstruation or the bleeding of the childbirth (نفاس) then she has to break her fast but she should observe the fast later on. If the fast was obligatory; then it's obligatory for her to observe it later on. If the fast was not obligatory than to observe it later on is not essential but it is still highly recommended (واجب).

(16) (a) During menstruation or lochial (after child birth) discharge, prostration (سجده) to Allah for thanks and recitation of Quran are forbidden.

(b) If a menstruating woman finds in the morning that she has no stain of blood on her vaginal pad then she is obligated to offer the previous night's (عشاء) prayers as well

(17) It is forbidden to have intercourse with a menstruating woman. If the intercourse is performed it is a great sin. One should ask for pardon from ALLAH. Besides that, in expiation, charity should be given, one dinar (Rupees Two Hundred) if performed in the early period and a half a dinar (Rupees One



Hundred) if performed in the later period.

(18) It is forbidden to touch the naked body of a menstruating woman from the navel to the knee, whether for sexual pleasure or otherwise. However it is allowed if the body is covered in such clothes that one cannot feel the heat of the body.

(19) Kissing and petting, or any other kind of physical contact beyond the limits mentioned above (between the navel and the knee) are allowed.

(20) The menstruating woman can touch any part of her husband's body. She can eat and sleep with her husband, rather it's a sin (گناه) if the husband does not allow her to sleep with him due to menstruation.

(21) After ten days of menstruation intercourse is allowed, even though the woman has not had a bath, but it is better that prayer is performed before intercourse.

(22) If menstruation is less than ten days, then it is obligatory that the intercourse be performed after bathing and after the passing of the time of a prayer.

(23) If the menstruation stops before its usual time, intercourse will be deferred till the end of the usual time, however the woman should bathe and start her regular prayers. For instance if a woman usually menstruates for six days, but this time the menstruation stops earlier, then she should bathe and start her regular prayers that day and delay intercourse for one more day.

(24) If the vaginal bleeding is so intense that it continues even during ablution (وضو) and prayers; then the lady would be considered incapacitated (معذور) and she can perform ablution and offer prayers during that bleeding, meaning thereby that the bleeding, will not make void the ablution or prayers, but other actions that make them void will have to be considered



as usual. For instance if she passes wind she will have to perform ablution again. However if she can stop the blood with the help of a pad for so long as to perform ablution (وضوء) and prayers then she should do so, and thus she will not be considered incapacitated (معذور).

(25) If an incapacitated person gets a dirty spot on her clothes bigger than a quarter inch diameter (ONE DAHRAM) than she should wash or change her clothes, if there is enough time remaining for obligatory prayers. However if this happens during the prayers then she should finish her prayers in the same condition, even though the prayer rug is also affected. It is not obligatory to wash the vaginal discharge from the body or the clothes, but it is better to do so.

5.8 Pregnancy

After menarche comes the softening of nipples as female sex organs prepare for pregnancy and lactation.

This change, which is gradual, is an indication that the woman is ready to perform her role as a mother. This physical change also affects her thoughts and emotions. The body is now getting ready for its final function of producing a “child”. The term adult itself implies marriage, pregnancy and motherhood.

The fear of labour pains at the time of child-birth and possible complications during delivery overwhelms most pregnant women, but in the vast majority of women, delivery is normal.

After becoming a mother, a woman should try to take good care of her sex organs which may have endured stress during pregnancy and delivery. After the delivery of the child a new leaf is turned in the book of life lasting for a period of one to two years. During this time the child is totally dependent on the mother. During this period the breasts are engorged with



milk.

5.9 Breasts

During puberty, like other physical changes, prominence of breasts due to growth is a normal phenomenon; this is a natural change to prepare the girl for becoming a woman and a mother. Apart from this physical need, the prominence of breasts has been considered a focus of feminine beauty for thousands of years. The painters and poets, in every era, have expressed themselves eloquently about the attraction of female breasts.

Balanced diets as well as psychological and sexual well-being are the basic requirements for keeping a woman happy and healthy. If the breasts are small they almost always become prominent after marriage and child birth.

Questions about Breasts:

Q-1 My age is 32 years. I have two children. My breasts are very small. What are the methods by which their size can be increased?

A. Nowadays the size of breasts can be increased by surgical procedures. You should consult some plastic surgeon in this matter. However one should not worry if breasts are small.

Q-2 My daughter is 30 years old. She is weak and under-weight. Her breasts are not prominent. I am worried for her. I shall be thankful for your guidance in this matter.

A. It seems that even at the age of 30 years the physical growth of your daughter is incomplete. Generalized weakness and possible hormonal disturbance could cause this. It is possible that her breasts will become prominent after marriage and pregnancy. If diet is improved and she gains weight the breasts will become more prominent. Plastic surgery is also an option.



Q-3 My wife is 22 years old and she is also the mother of a child. Her breasts are small. My wife feels uneasy on this account as she thinks she is physically incomplete. When she was nursing her child the breasts had grown in size but the size again became small when she stopped nursing. Will some medicine help in increasing the size?

A. Like any other organ, breasts may be small in size. Increase in size during nursing is a natural process. Medicines are not helpful.

Q-4 I nursed my first child for ten months. The child is healthy in every way but I feel my breasts have become smaller in size. I am pregnant again. Is there a possibility that nursing for a second time will reduce the size of my breasts still further?

A. Nursing cannot be a cause of reduction in the size of breasts. In some women size may become small due to unknown causes. To nurse ones own children is a pleasant duty of every mother. After years of research, now the mothers are being advised that nursing is helpful for the psychological and physical growth and satisfaction of both the child and the mother. Keep on nursing your children and consider it a healthy act. You cannot do any better.

5.10 Leucorrhoea

A problem in women, for which they are overly worried, is Leucorrhoea, meaning watery discharge from the vaginal canal. If the discharge is negligible, it is no cause of worry. If the discharge is copious, thick or bad smelling, it should be treated by some qualified lady-doctor. Ignorant, non-qualified quacks talk about it as a very serious illness whereas actually it is not. This is caused by inflammation due to infection of the vaginal canal with bacteria and some other organisms, and is easily treated. Washing the perineum well after urination and



defecation and wearing clean underwear is a good prevention.

5.11 Female Masturbation

Some girls learn to insert a finger in their vagina and rub it for sexual enjoyment. This is harmless. This procedure is used as treatment for women who are sexually un-aroused and frigid even after marriage. Single girls worry that masturbation may result in damage to the hymen and that the future husband will come to know about their indulgence in such acts. Usually the hymen is not affected and husbands feel no difference during sexual intercourse.

5.12 Hymen

This is a fine membrane covering the opening of the vagina. This membrane has an opening from which menstrual blood flows out every month. Usually during the first intercourse it is ruptured and there is slight bleeding, but sometimes it disappears before intercourse or it may not be present even at birth.

5.13 Fear of Intercourse

Some girls are afraid that intercourse will be very painful and that during the act heavy bleeding may occur, but this is not true. Sexual intercourse is a very pleasurable act both for man and wife. In the beginning women may feel some pain but if they remain calm during intercourse, pain will be less and enjoyment will be more.

During the first two or three weeks after marriage, intercourse may be rather difficult at times. This is no cause for worry, and if it is so the wife should not propagate that her husband is impotent and she should not make it a point of confrontation. On the other hand if she treats him with love and affection the result will be easy intercourse and better relations.



Before the first intercourse liberal lubrication should be used on the penis as well as the vagina. Moreover one or two lubricated fingers should be inserted in the vagina and the vagina stretched beforehand. Then the legs of the lying woman should be raised and the husband should also kneel down in front and guide the tip of the penis into the vagina with his fingers. Then thrusting should begin.

In the beginning there may be slight pain, but soon the intercourse becomes pleasurable. In women, sometimes, a feeling of intense pleasure occurs during intercourse, this is called orgasm. Of course a man gets this orgasm or climax every time he discharges.

(1) May Allah bless with eternal peace

(2) May Allah be pleased

