

LOLA's
personal,
honest,
real-life
guide to your
first period

By the LOLA team and Dr. Lisa Stern

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO LOLA!

You probably have a million questions about your first period. We did, too. In fact, years later, we found ourselves with even more questions: “Why are periods such a hassle?” and “Why haven’t period products changed since our grandmothers were teens?”

That’s why we created LOLA: period products made with 100% organic cotton—available in unique assortments, delivered to your door—and feminine care products for your life stages ahead.

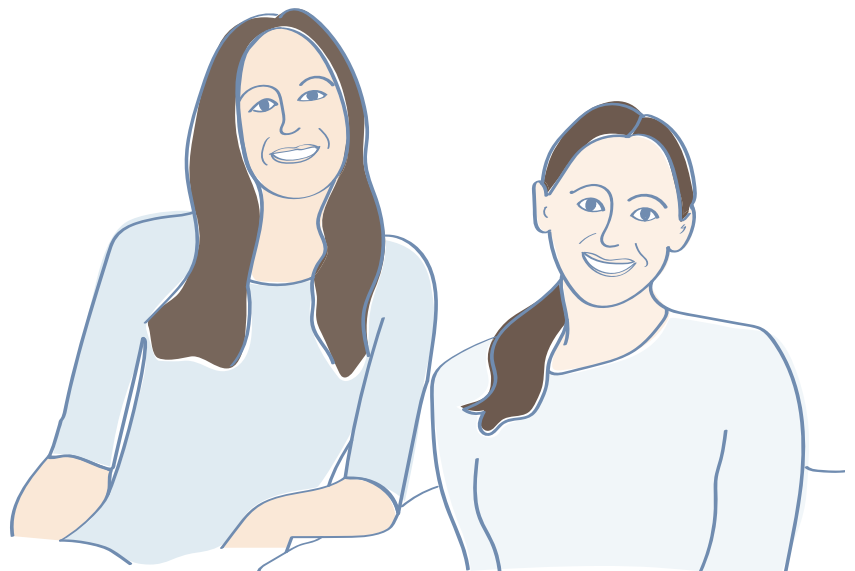
We partnered with leading pediatrician Dr. Lisa Stern to create this essential guide. It’s filled with everything we wish we’d known about periods as teens, plus our tips for navigating what’s up next. Because we know puberty can be awkward, but your first period doesn’t have to be.

Happy reading!

Jordana (first period at 13)

Alexandra (first period at 14)

CO-FOUNDERS, LOLA



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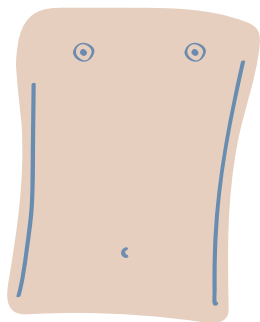
BODY BASICS

Female anatomy can be split into two sections: the body parts you can see and those you can't. Understanding how these parts of your body change as you get older and how they function together is key to taking good care of yourself.

THE PARTS YOU CAN SEE

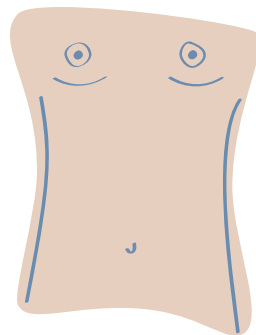
Let's start at the top.

One of the first signs that you're entering puberty is the development of breasts. You'll start to notice some swelling and puffiness under your nipples—this is called budding. At the same time, the area around the nipple, called the areola, begins to get larger and darker. As your breasts grow, they'll probably start off pointy before rounding out to a fuller shape. During this time, the nipple and breast tissue are very sensitive, and you may feel pain, tingling, or an achy sensation. If so, it's totally normal. This just means that it's probably time to consider wearing a training bra.



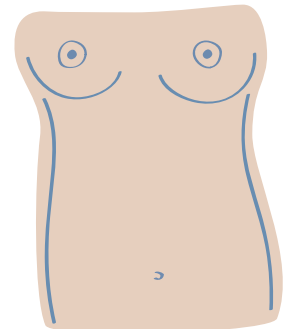
Stage 1

Budding



Stage 2

Initial breast growth



Stage 3

Filling out

There's no way to predict how fast or big your breasts will grow.

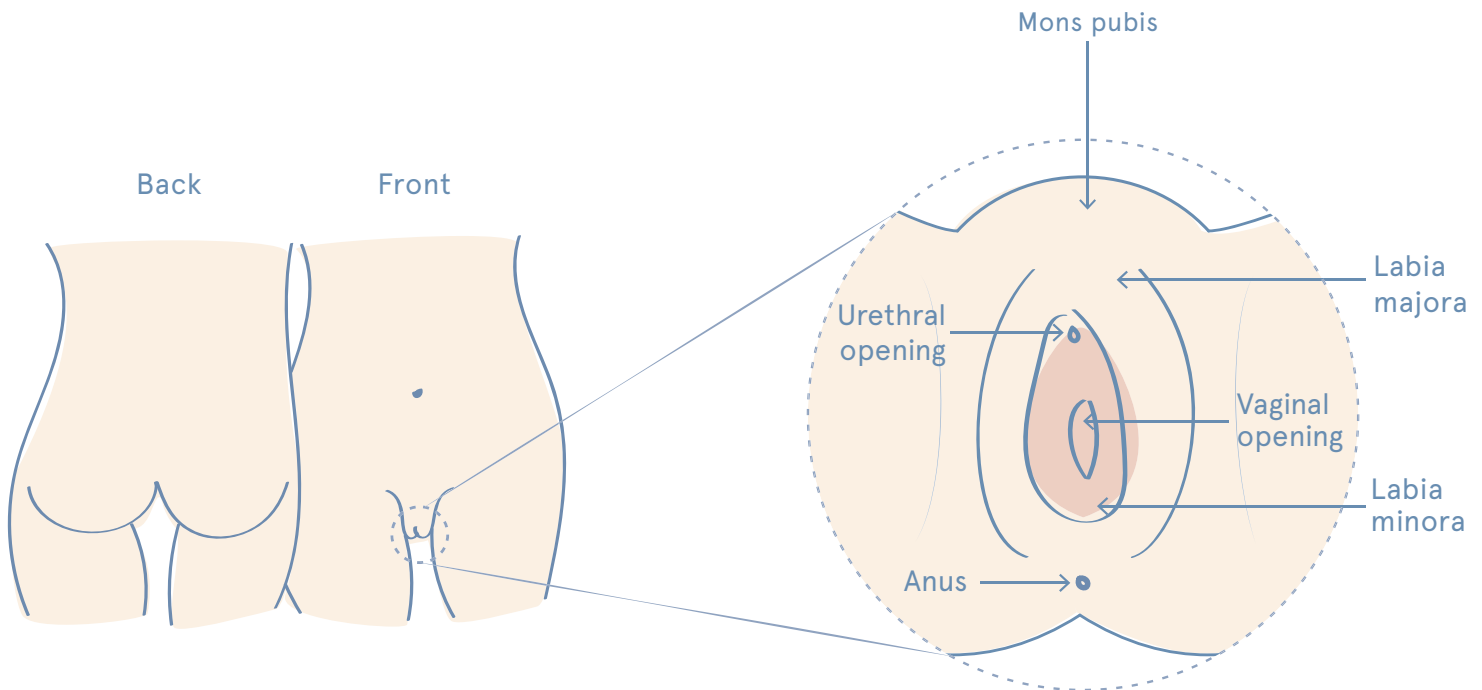
There's no way to predict how fast or big your breasts will grow. You may start to develop on one side first, and it might take four to six months for the other side to catch up. In fact, most women don't ever have perfectly symmetrical breasts. Also, not all nipples and areolas are the same. Some women's nipples stick out, while others grow inward. Some women have very dark areolas, others are light pink, and some have hair growing along the edges.

Now, let's move down.

This is where things get more complex since there are parts you can see and parts you can't (because they're inside you).

First, let's review the parts you can see.

You have three holes in your pubic region, and each one serves a different function.



Starting from the front, you have the urethral opening where your pee comes out. The middle hole is the vaginal opening where your period will come out. The back hole is the anus (it's a scientific word, we promise) where your poop comes out.

The fleshy parts around the urethral and vaginal openings are collectively called the vulva, which protects your internal organs and urethral opening from infection. The vulva has three distinct parts: the mons pubis—the padding covering the front of your pubic bone; the labia minora—the small flaps, also known as lips, around your vaginal opening; and the labia majora—the larger set of lips outside of the labia minora.

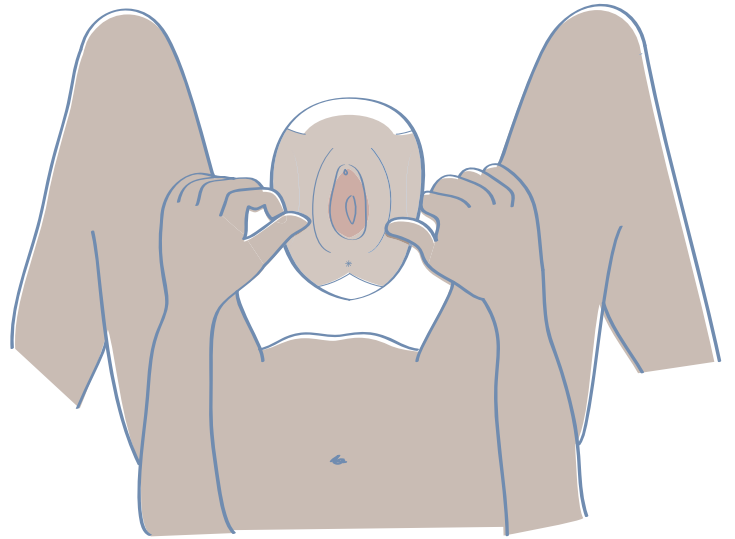
“Pubic hair serves as a protective barrier from bacteria.”

Around the same time as your breasts start to bud, you may notice the labia growing and changing. The inner labia minora might get longer, and the color of the skin may darken. It can be hard to see this area of your body, so if you want to get a sense of what you look like down there, take a hand mirror and hold it between your legs.

Another big change will be the growth of pubic hair, which serves as a barrier to protect the vulva from bacteria. It may start as peach fuzz or a few strands here and there, but eventually pubic hair will become coarser and curlier. It will grow around all three holes, including around your anus.

Option 1

Lie down and hold a mirror between your legs.

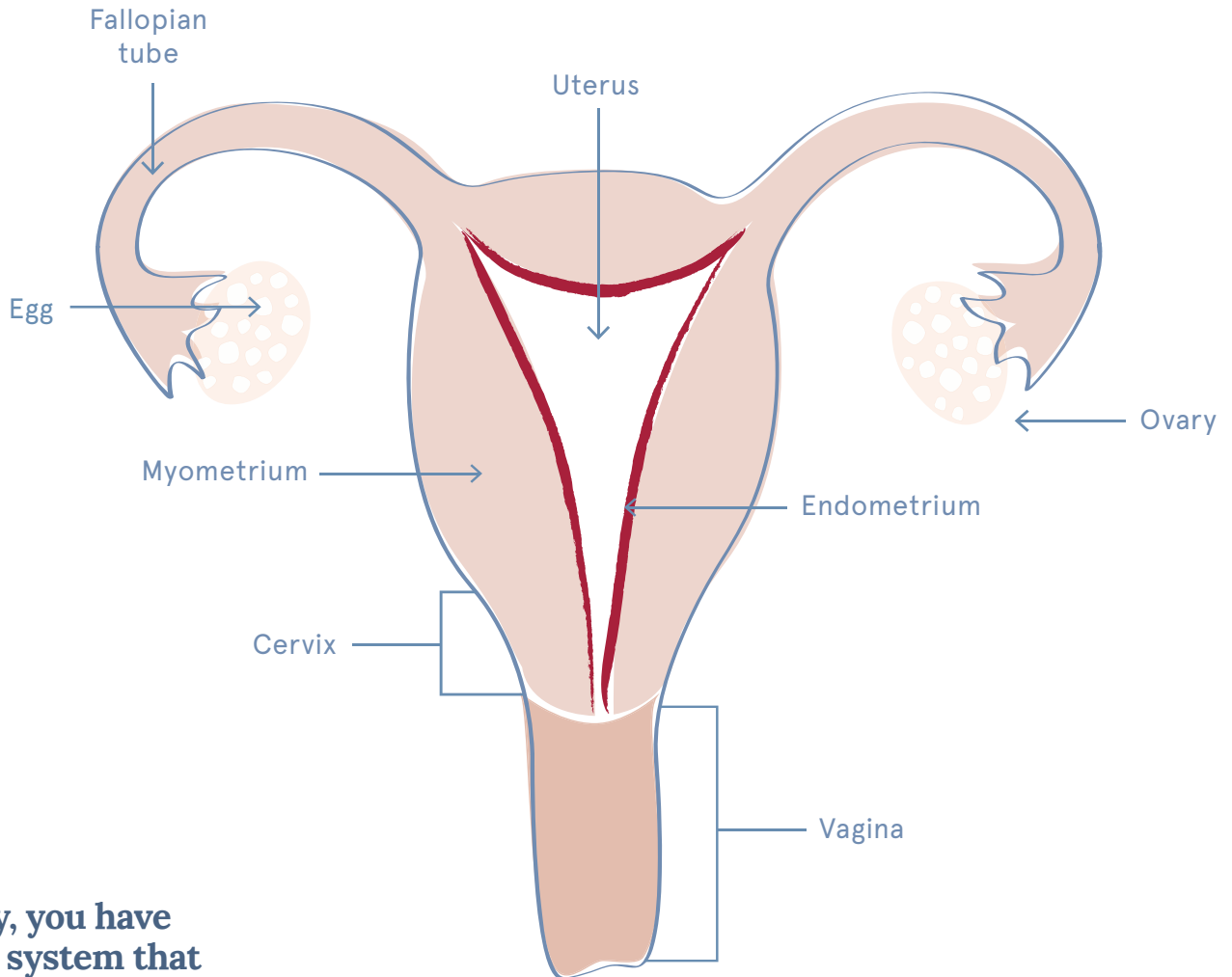


Option 2

Stand with your leg propped up and hold a mirror in between your legs.

THE PARTS YOU CAN'T SEE

Although the word “vagina” is often used to describe all female body parts, in reality it is a canal that connects your internal anatomy to your external anatomy. Internally, you have an entire system that formed while you were in your mother’s womb. Before puberty, this system remains in a resting state and doesn’t change much.



“Internally, you have an entire system that formed while you were in your mother’s womb.”

You have two ovaries, one on either side of your body. They are walnut-sized glands that house eggs that are so small you’d need a microscope to see them. When puberty begins, your brain sends a hormonal signal to your ovaries to start producing increasing amounts of two hormones: estrogen and progesterone. Estrogen causes your ovaries to grow and the eggs inside them to mature. Combined with progesterone, it also causes the lining of your uterus to thicken.



LOLA MYTHBUSTER

While it might be alarming when it first appears, vaginal discharge is actually critical for your vaginal health. It acts like a cleanser for your vagina, while maintaining a healthy pH balance.

While this growth and maturation is happening, you may feel and see vaginal discharge in your underwear. Discharge can first appear one to two years before you get your first period. Discharge is a natural bodily fluid that protects your internal systems from bacteria and infection.

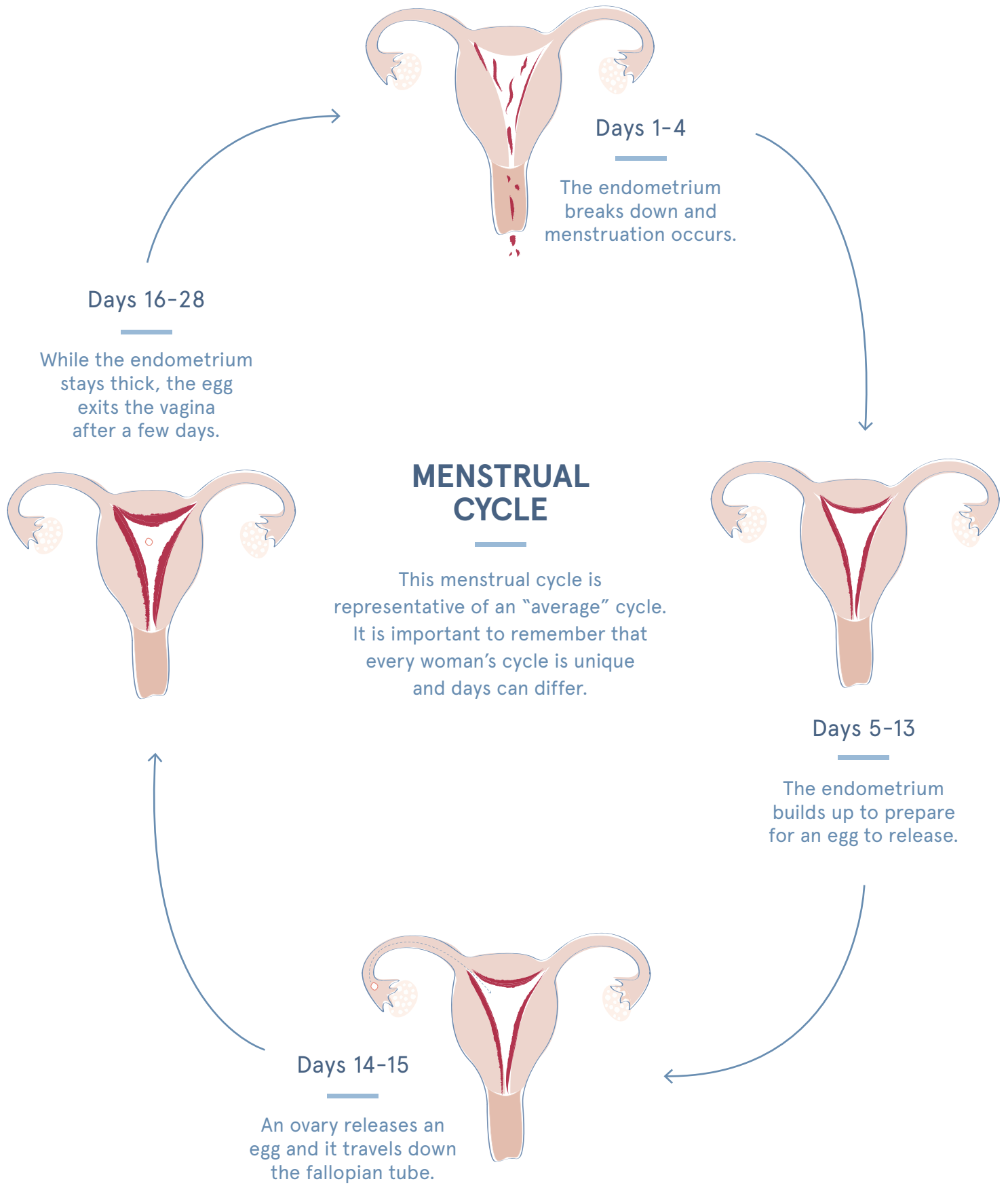
Discharge can feel crusty and appear white, or it can feel sticky and appear clear to milky white. Both forms will wash out of your underwear in the laundry, but if the damp feeling in your underwear bothers you, wearing a liner is a great solution to keep you feeling dry (see our [how to use period products](#) section for more info). If the discharge is smelly or appears yellow to green, it could be a sign of infection, so you should alert a parent or doctor.

When one egg is done maturing and the endometrium, or uterine lining, has thickened, a process called ovulation releases the egg from your ovary. Over the next 24 hours, the egg travels down a canal called the fallopian tube. While most women cannot feel ovulation, some women do and describe it as a mild ache in the lower abdomen.

When the egg exits your fallopian tube, it enters your uterus. A few days later, the egg exits your uterus through your vagina. About ten days after the egg's exit, the top layers of the lining start to break apart. The broken-down lining will then shed from your uterus through an opening called the cervix and exit out of your body through your vaginal canal. Two weeks later, another egg leaves your ovary and the cycle continues.

This entire process is known as menstruation, and your first period is the start of your menstrual cycle. You can count your menstrual cycle from the first day of one period to the first day of the next. It isn't the same for every woman, but most cycles are around 21 to 35 days. The average cycle is 28 days, which is why most women get their period once a month. You'll go through about 400 menstrual cycles during your lifetime!

You'll go through about 400 menstrual cycles during your lifetime!



3

PERIODS

Now that we know the biological process behind menstruation, let's talk about what actually happens when you get your period.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT YOUR PERIOD

First, let's review a few terms to help you talk about your period with your friends, family, or doctor:

MENARCHE

This is the scientific word for a first period.

PERIOD DURATION

The number of days that you have your period can be described as short (2 to 4 days), medium (4 to 7 days), or long (7 to 10 days).

MENSTRUAL FLUID (PERIOD BLOOD)

Commonly referred to as "period blood," this is the fluid that you're "bleeding" during your period. It's actually a combination of blood, cervical mucus, vaginal secretions, water, and protein. It's usually reddish brown and has a chunkier consistency than the blood in your veins.

PERIOD VOLUME (FLOW)

Based on the amount that you bleed during your period, you can be described as having a light, regular, heavy, or very heavy flow. Over the course of your period, you may have some light days when you're barely bleeding at all and some heavy days when you're bleeding a lot. It's important to pay attention to how light or heavy your flow is throughout your period when deciding which products are right for you.

SPOTTING

This happens during a very light period, when only a few "spots" of fluid are seen on your pad or underwear. Spotting can also occur in between periods, especially during the few months after you get your first period. If you're spotting, your flow is too light to use a tampon safely, so it's best to wear a liner.

CYCLE

Your cycle is the length of time from the first day of one period until the first day of the next period. Your cycle can be regular or irregular, and the length of your cycle can be short (under 21 days), average (around 28 days), or long (more than 45 days).

- **REGULAR CYCLE**

This is a cycle that is predictable, so you know the date (within a day or two) of your next period based on your cycle length.

- **IRREGULAR CYCLE**

This is a cycle that changes in length, so you can't predict the date (within 3 to 5 days) of your next period.

- **ABSENT CYCLE (MISSED PERIOD)**

This is a cycle when you do not have a period, after you've had your first.

PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROME (PMS)

PMS refers to symptoms like nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, and insomnia that occur in relation to your period. They usually start a few days before your period begins. If you're experiencing more severe mood symptoms, such as depression or anxiety, you should consult an adult and your doctor.

DYSMENORRHEA (MENSTRUAL CRAMPS)

Commonly referred to as "cramps," dysmenorrhea describes the achy feeling in your pelvis, abdomen, and back that occurs just before and during the first few days of your period. It's estimated that 90% of teens experience cramps.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR FIRST PERIOD

Now, let's talk about when to expect it and what you'll experience.



LOLA TIP

If you think the day your period will start is approaching, you can wear a liner or a pad, even when you don't have your period, just in case it starts. This way, you won't have to worry about staining your underwear or rushing to the bathroom. Remember — don't use a tampon unless you have your period.

Most girls get their first periods between ages 9 and 15 (the average age in the U.S. is 12.5). Whether you're the first in your class to get your period, the last, or somewhere in between, it's nothing to be too concerned about. In fact, each has its benefit—kind of like being the oldest, middle, or youngest sibling. If you're first, you get to teach all of your friends what it's all about. If you're last, you escape a few extra years of menstrual cramping. And, if you're somewhere in the middle, many of your friends will probably be going through the same changes at the same time!

Signs that you're starting puberty include breast budding and sensitivity, pubic hair growth, underarm hair growth, and vaginal discharge. On average, about two years after starting puberty, you will get your first period.

One sign that your first period is fast approaching is premenstrual syndrome (PMS for short). PMS can affect your breasts, internal organs, hunger, and mood. A few days right before your period starts, your breasts may swell and be extra sensitive to touch. You may also experience menstrual cramps, which are caused by hormones that cause the uterus to contract at the start of your period. These same hormones may cause other symptoms like nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, and insomnia that occur in relation to your period.

There are other times in your cycle when you may develop physical symptoms. Two weeks before your period starts, also known as the mid-cycle, you may feel a sharp pain on one side of your lower abdomen. This pain is called mittelschmerz (German word for middle pain) and it's caused by ovulation. The pain typically lasts a minute or two, but for some it can last anywhere from 24 to 48 hours.

Apart from these physical side effects, you may also experience emotional changes over the course of your cycle. Mood swings can be a side effect of the changing hormone levels, so you may notice that leading up to your period, you may cry easily, have trouble concentrating, or get angry for no reason.



LOLA MYTHBUSTER

Ibuprofen and other over-the-counter medications aren't the only solution for menstrual cramps. Try a more natural approach like taking a warm bath, or massaging the area with warming essential oils. A healthy diet that includes vitamins B and D also helps reduce inflammation and bloating.

If PMS is interfering with your everyday life, it's important to speak to your doctor about other available treatment options, especially if you're experiencing any signs of depression or anxiety.

Although the signs might be there, you can't control when or where you'll get your first period. Most girls are taken by surprise. Alex got hers at a family holiday party, Jordana got hers on her birthday, and Dr. Stern got hers during gymnastics practice!



LOLA TIP

In addition to having a kit handy, open up a few period products to see what they're made of and understand how they work before you get your first period. Read the directions and go over them with a trusted adult. Make sure to keep a set of instructions in your kit in case you forget how to use the products when you get your first period.

When you start developing signs, you should make sure to have a kit filled with all of the period product essentials in your backpack or locker, so that you'll be prepared in case it happens away from home. Also, it's a good idea to familiarize yourself with liners, pads, and tampons before you get your first period. That way, you won't ever have to experience the moment that too many of us experienced when we were caught totally unprepared by our first periods.



LOLA TIP

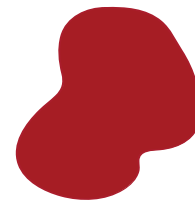
It's good practice to keep track of the date that your periods start and stop. This way you can count the number of days between each cycle and get better at predicting when to expect your next period. Use stickers to mark the dates on a calendar and jot notes in your planner.

Everyone's first period is different. When you do get your first period, it could be a full period, or it could just be spotting; it could be irregular (for months), or it could be totally predictable and return like clockwork. Most girls start with an irregular cycle for the first few months, but it should become more regular and predictable over time.

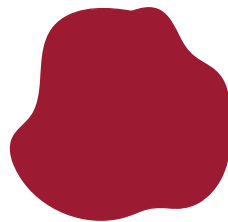
Your flow and menstrual fluid can also change in consistency and color over the course of one period and from one period to the next. The average volume of menstrual fluid is between 3 and 8 tablespoons per period, and every day is different. You may experience days of heavy flow and notice dark clumps or clots (smaller than a quarter) in your menstrual fluid. Or you may experience days of light flow where the color is more red than brown.



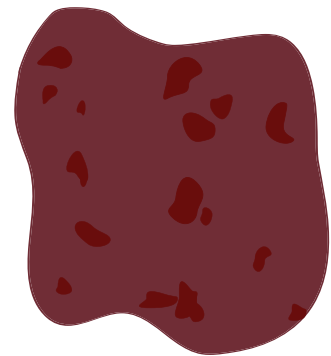
Spotting



Light



Moderate



Heavy

The bottom line: your period is as individual as you are and will probably change over the course of your lifetime. As you have more periods, you will learn the rhythm of your cycle and be able to define what a "normal" period is for your body.

HOW TO USE PERIOD PRODUCTS

There are multiple products that can help you keep your body clean and healthy before, during, and after your period. It can be confusing to figure out which products to use. Trying them out and figuring out over time what works best for you is the best way to know, but we've broken it down to help make that discovery process easy.



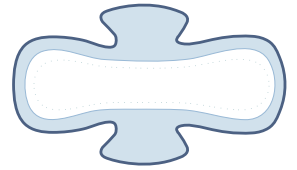
Non-applicator
tampon



Applicator
tampon



Ultra thin
liner



Ultra thin pad
w/ wings

There are other products that exist, too, like menstrual cups and absorbent underwear, but we're going to stick to telling you about the products that we know best.

Pads, liners, and tampons work by absorbing your menstrual fluid so that you feel dry, stay clean, and can maintain your normal day-to-day activity. They are designed to be easy to use, convenient, and safe. Liners have a specific use for very light days and spotting. Pads and tampons can be used interchangeably since there are many different sizes of each that are made specifically for light, moderate, heavy, and very heavy days. Many women start out using pads and then switch to tampons, some go directly to tampons, some never use a tampon, and some use a combination for each period. It's really a matter of personal preference.

The most important thing to remember is that no one knows your body as well as you do and all periods are unique, so always pick what feels right for your individual needs.

“Many women start out using pads and then switch to tampons, some go directly to tampons, some never use a tampon, and some use a combination.”

Ultra thin pads w/ wings

When would I use a regular pad?

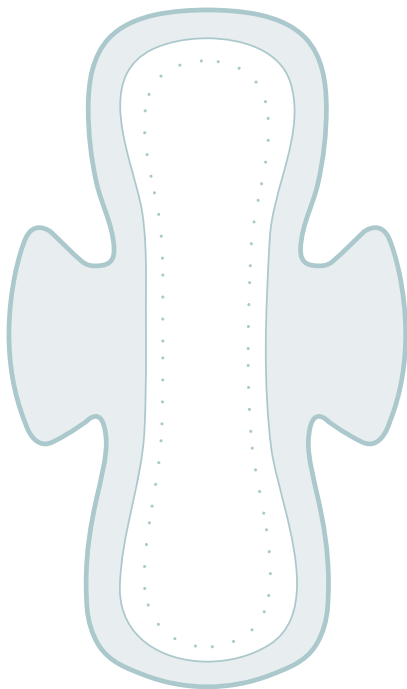
A regular pad is best for days when your period is moderate. It is usually the go-to first period product since it's really easy to use while you learn about your period.

Alex used pads for her first period and for several months later. That summer, she was at a beach house and wanted to go swimming so she decided to try out tampons (she taught herself how to use them by reading the pamphlet in the box), and tampons are still her go-to product. But on extra heavy days, she will also wear a pad for additional protection.

Pads are usually the go-to first period product since they're really easy to use while you learn about your period.

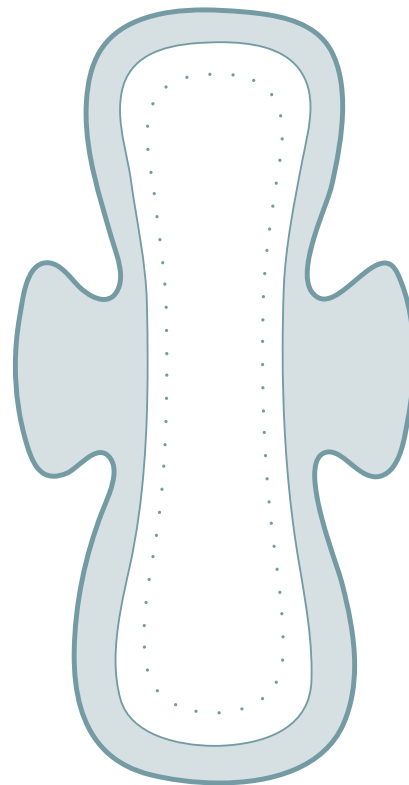
When would I use a heavy pad?

A heavy pad is best for days when your period is heavy. It's also great for overnight protection, since it's longer and wider than a regular pad.



Regular pad w/ wings

9.4in long



Heavy pad w/ wings

10.7in long



LOLA TIP

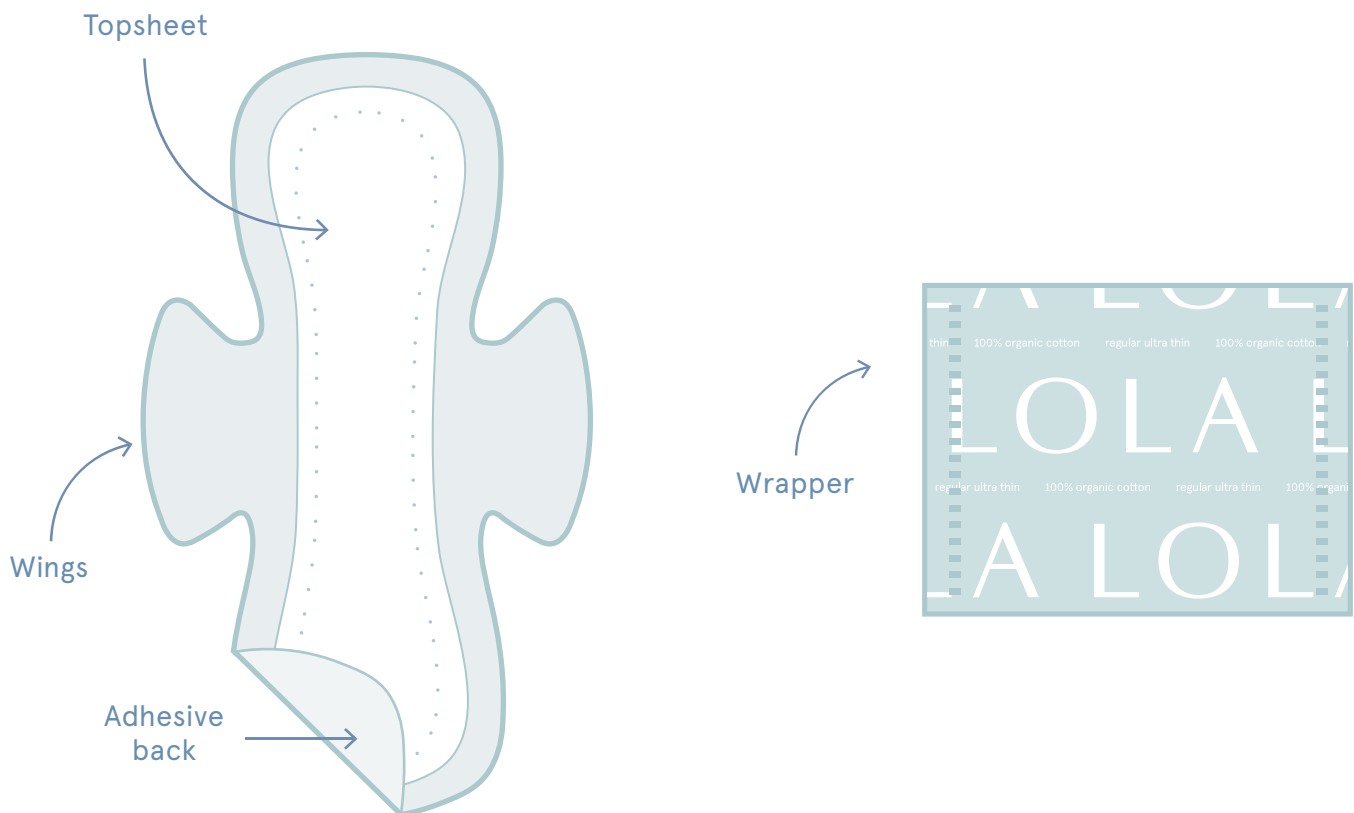
Remember to change your pad as often as needed. If you're fully soaking a regular pad faster than every two hours, try a higher absorbency product, such as a heavy pad.

How do I use a pad w/ wings?

1. Pull the opening at the edge of the wrapper to unfold the pad.
2. Pull the pad off the teal wrapper.
3. Stick the adhesive bottom to the inside of your underwear and press them together, making sure the pad is centered and secure.
4. Pull the white paper off of the wings to expose the adhesive on the wings. Fold the wings around each side of your underwear and press them on the outside of your underwear.
5. Pull up your underwear and throw the wrapper away in a trash bin.

How do I remove a pad w/ wings?

1. Pull the wings off the outside of your underwear first, and then pull the pad off completely.
2. Roll up the used pad, wrap it with toilet paper, and throw it out in a trash bin. Never flush it.



Ultra thin liners

When would I use a liner?

A liner is best for days and nights when your period is very light or as backup during the first months while you learn about your period flow and cycle. Dr. Stern still uses liners to this day!



LOLA TIP

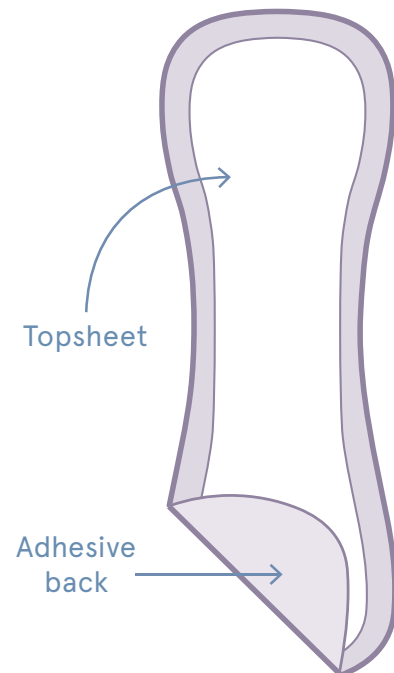
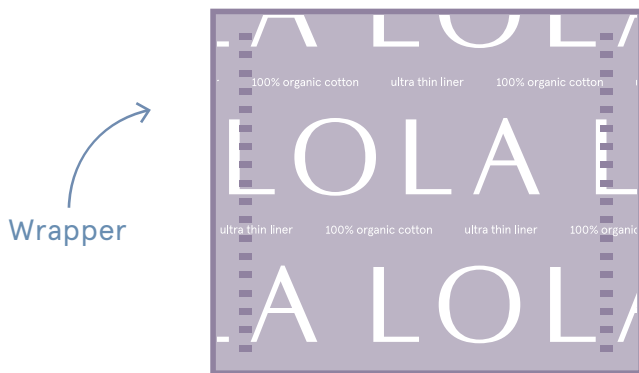
Remember to change your liner as often as needed. If you're fully soaking a liner, try a higher absorbency product like a regular pad or light tampon.

How do I use a liner?

1. Pull the opening at the edge of the wrapper to unfold the liner.
2. Pull the liner off of the purple wrapper – the white paper should come off with the wrapper.
3. Stick the adhesive bottom of the liner to the inside of your underwear and press them together, making sure the liner is centered and secure.
4. Pull your underwear up and throw the wrapper away in a trash bin.

How do I remove a liner?

1. Pull the liner off your underwear.
2. Roll up the used liner, wrap it with toilet paper, and throw it out in a trash bin. Never flush it.

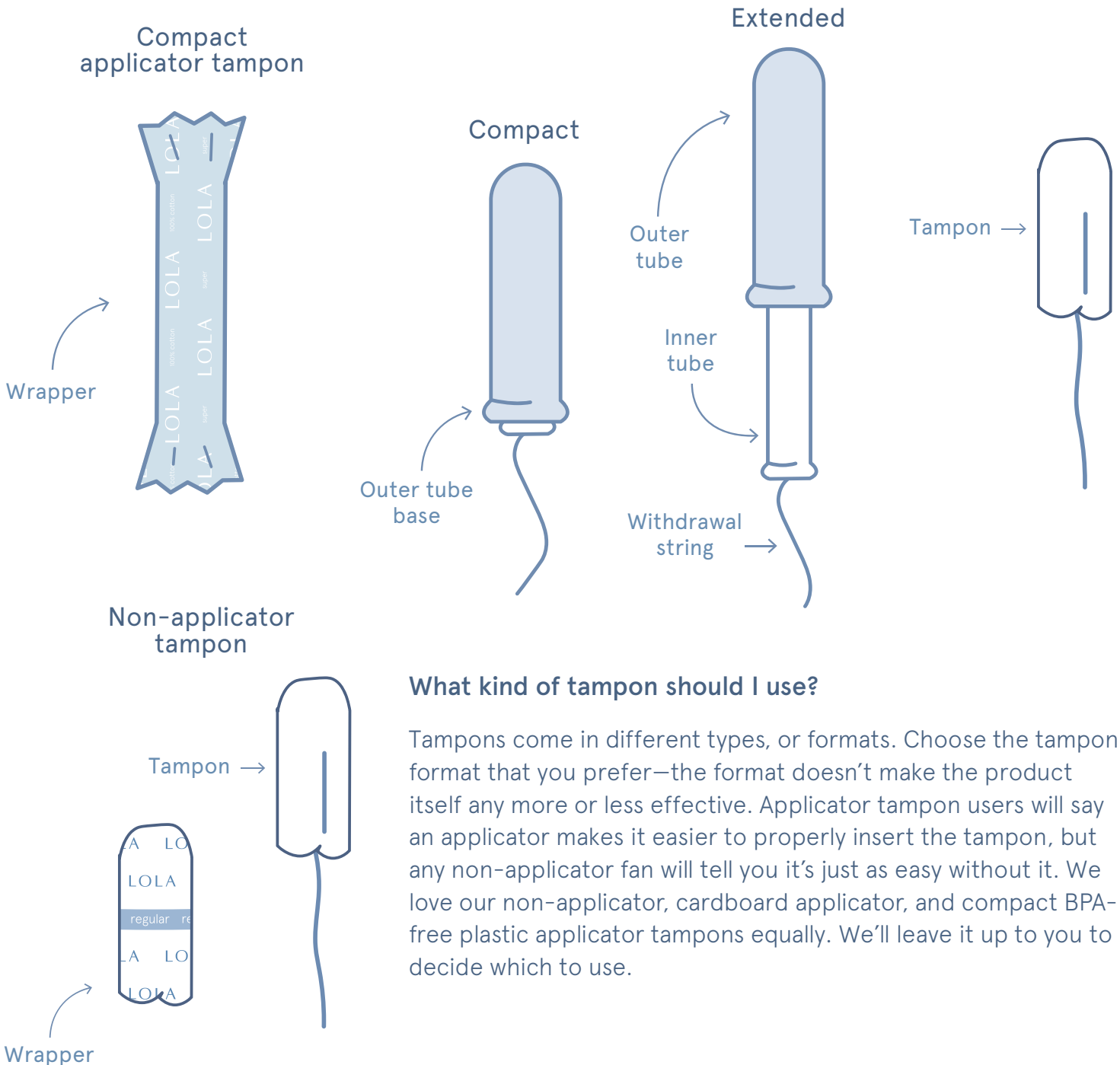


Tampons

“Try a tampon when you’re ready and familiar with your period.”

When would I use a tampon?

A tampon is best for days when you’re playing sports or exercising, especially if you’re swimming. Try a tampon when you’re ready and familiar with your period. Jordana was ready the first time she got her period and used tampons right away.



What kind of tampon should I use?

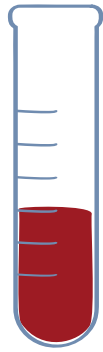
Tampons come in different types, or formats. Choose the tampon format that you prefer—the format doesn’t make the product itself any more or less effective. Applicator tampon users will say an applicator makes it easier to properly insert the tampon, but any non-applicator fan will tell you it’s just as easy without it. We love our non-applicator, cardboard applicator, and compact BPA-free plastic applicator tampons equally. We’ll leave it up to you to decide which to use.

Tampons also come in different sizes, called absorbency levels, based on how much menstrual fluid each size can absorb:



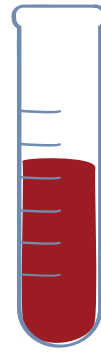
Light

< 6 grams



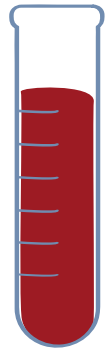
Regular

6-9 grams



Super

9-12 grams



Super plus

12-15 grams

These levels are based on standardized laboratory tests, which means that they're the same no matter which brand or packaging type you use. Most women end up using different absorbencies during the course of each period. Here at LOLA HQ, we each need our own unique mix of light, regular, super, and super+ tampons—no two of us are the same! As your cycle and flow become more regular, you'll find out what mix works for you. Until then, we recommend also wearing a liner just in case the tampon absorbency you choose isn't absorbent enough.

With practice, tampons will become easy to use; however, there are a few things we wish we'd known about period products before we got our first periods:

1. We recommend sitting a specific way to place and remove liners, pads, and tampons. It's really easy! Pull your underwear down between the lower part of your knees or your calves and then sit on the toilet. Open your legs so that your underwear is stretched out a little. This way if you're using a pad or liner, you can place it evenly on your underwear and remove it without dripping. If you're using a tampon, this position lets you reach and look between your legs, making it easier to insert and find the withdrawal string for removal, instead of just feeling around.
2. If you have to pee, but it hasn't been long enough to also change your tampon, find the string and hold it out of the way while you pee, so you don't completely soak it. This way, you can keep your tampon in without feeling wet for the next few hours (never more than eight though!).



LOLA MYTHBUSTER

Your menstrual fluid won't leak out while you're swimming. This is because the pressure of the water actually keeps your fluid inside you; however, getting out of the water is a different story, so we recommend using a tampon when you swim.

3. If you have to poop, you're probably going to have to change your tampon even if you haven't completely soaked it yet, so get one ready. This is because, when you push down to poop, you're also clenching muscles that push out your tampon. Rather than attempting to stick it back in, just replace it with a new one.
4. Don't throw away the tampon wrapper too soon—save it until you're done putting in your tampon. The empty wrapper makes a great pouch to put your used applicator in, so you can throw it away without getting your hands (or your trash bin) bloody.
5. If you're trying tampons for the first time, it's important to use the lowest absorbency you can. We recommend starting with a light, or at the very highest a regular tampon.

How do I use a compact applicator tampon?

1. Remove the wrapper. Gently pull the inner tube out of the outer tube until it comes to a stop. It will feel almost like a click. Do not pull on the string—it should be hanging out of the tube.
2. Holding the outer tube base with your thumb and middle finger, push the tip of the applicator into your vaginal opening until the outer tube is almost completely inserted.
3. While still holding the base of the outer tube, use your index finger to push the inner tube up until the rings of the tubes are pushed together to release the tampon from the applicator.
4. Gently remove the entire applicator from your vagina. Do not flush the applicator—you can put it back inside the open wrapper for clean trash bin disposal.
5. The tampon should now be in and the withdrawal string should be hanging out of your body.



LOLA TIP

It's really important to remember to change your tampon at least every eight hours. If you need a refresher about how to use a tampon properly, every box of tampons has a safety pamphlet inside with instructions to guide you.

How do I remove a tampon?

1. Slowly pull the withdrawal string, so that the tampon slides out. Wrap the used tampon with a wad of toilet paper and throw it out in a trash bin.
2. It's easiest to remove the tampon when it's fully soaked. If, after six to eight hours of wear, it's not fully soaked, consider switching to a lower absorbency tampon, regular pad, or liner.
3. Remember to remove the current tampon before inserting another and at the end of your period.

What should I know about Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS)?

TSS is rare but can be life-threatening, so it's really important to know what causes it, how you can reduce your risk of it, and what to do if you develop TSS symptoms.

TSS results when normal bacteria found in our bodies—called staph and strep bacteria—multiply, overgrow, and release a poisonous toxin in our bodies. Although it can develop without the presence of a tampon (men can get TSS, too), it has been connected with the use of tampons because tampons can act like a good home for the bacteria to multiply.

To reduce your risk of TSS, there are a few easy rules to follow:

- Use the lowest absorbency level possible.
- Never leave a tampon in for more than eight hours.
- For overnight protection, use a heavy pad instead of a tampon.

Since TSS can be deadly, it must be recognized and treated early. Symptoms of TSS can appear suddenly during or just after menstruation and closely resemble the flu. Symptoms will not all necessarily occur at the same time.

Symptoms include the following:

- Sudden high fever (>102° F) and chills
- Fainting, dizziness, and/or weakness
- Vomiting, diarrhea, or both
- Headache, muscular pain, and/or sore throat
- Sunburn-like rash

If these symptoms appear, you must take the following steps:

- Remove your tampon and tell an adult immediately.
- Call your doctor and get medical help.
- Tell your doctor that you have your period and had been using a tampon.

We know TSS sounds scary, and we certainly don't want to scare you since using a tampon as directed is perfectly safe. But it's important that you know the facts, learn how to use a tampon properly, and follow directions every time you use one.



LOLA MYTHBUSTER

Men can get TSS, too! That's because the bacteria that causes TSS can be found in both male and female bodies; however, tampons act like a good home for this bacteria to live and multiply. That's why you should never leave a tampon in for more than eight hours.



LOLA TIP

If you prefer to sleep with a tampon in, set an alarm to make sure you wake up before eight hours have passed, so you can change your tampon in time.

What are these products made of?

Like everything else you put in and on your body, you should know what ingredients and materials are used to make your period products. At LOLA, we believe in telling you exactly what our products are made of and, equally important, what they're made without.



LOLA TIP

Even though our tampons are made of 100% organic cotton, you still shouldn't flush a used tampon down the toilet, since it may clog your plumbing or septic system.

LOLA tampons are made from 100% organic cotton (the string too!). The compact applicator is made from BPA-free plastic and packaged in a polyethylene wrapper. Our cardboard applicator is made from cardboard and packaged in a paper wrapper. Our non-applicator tampon is packaged in a polypropylene wrapper. Our tampons (both applicator and non-applicator) do NOT contain synthetic fibers, superabsorbent polymers, fragrances, dyes, chlorine bleach, parabens, or formaldehyde.

LOLA ultra thin regular pads w/ wings, heavy pads w/ wings, and liners are also made with 100% organic cotton in both the topsheet and core ([see product diagrams](#)). The pads have a siliconized paper covering the non-toxic adhesive on the wings while the liners have a siliconized paper covering the non-toxic adhesive on the backsheet. Both pads and liners have a plant-based bioplastic backsheet and wrapper. Like LOLA tampons, LOLA pads and liners do NOT contain synthetic fibers, superabsorbent polymers, fragrances, dyes, chlorine bleach, parabens, or formaldehyde.



All LOLA tampons are Certified Organic by the Environmental and Ethical Certification Institute (ICEA) Global Organic Textiles Standard (GOTS) 2016-027. ICEA is the leading authority in organic certification.

4

OTHER BODY CHANGES

When it comes down to it, three key hormones: estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone, are responsible for most of your body changes during puberty. Estrogen and progesterone are responsible for triggering the body changes we just covered, like breast development and getting your period. While you may be used to talking about testosterone in relation to boys, girls produce testosterone too, just in a lower amount. Testosterone triggers things like growth spurts, body odor, and hair growth in your armpits.

Let's dive into some of these other changes that happen during puberty so you know what to expect.

GROWTH SPURTS AND NUTRITION

During puberty, you will likely experience one or more growth spurts, which means that you'll grow a few inches taller in a short amount of time. Because you're growing so fast, you might experience cramping in your legs and feet, or soreness in your bones. A charley horse is a common name for these cramps, which are actually muscle spasms that you can't control. They can be really painful, but they usually only last a short period of time—we're talking a few seconds to a minute. Sometimes they can be so strong that you can see your toes curling or muscles twitching. A charley horse usually happens at night when you're falling asleep or just as you're getting up in the morning. It's common for many teens going through a growth spurt to get charley horses. If it occurs, try massaging the muscles or stomping on the foot that's cramped up. It can help with the immediate pain until it stops.

The best way to avoid these (literal) growing pains is with a healthy, balanced diet. Your growing bones need extra calcium (about 1,200 mg) and vitamin D (600 IUs), and your cramping muscles need potassium (about 4,700 mg). The best sources of calcium and vitamin D nutrients are dairy products, but you can also find calcium in fortified foods like almond milk and dark, leafy greens. A great way to get the potassium you need is by eating a banana or other potassium-rich foods, like avocado, spinach, and sweet potato. Generally, you can't go wrong by eating a balance of fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins.



LOLA MYTHBUSTER

Boys aren't always taller than girls. In fact, from ages 11 to 14 many girls are taller than the boys in their class. This is because, on average, boys go through puberty two years later than girls, so girls have their growth spurts first.

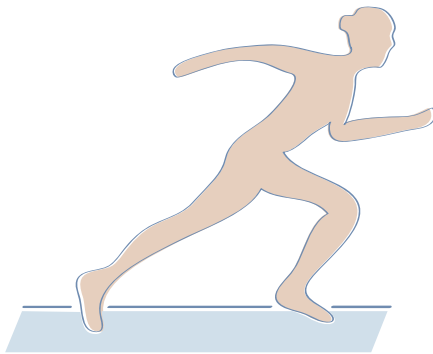


LOLA TIP

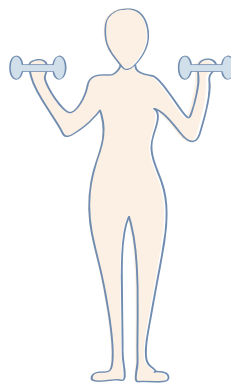
Carry a 16-ounce water bottle to school and keep count of the number of refills you make each day. If you're in the 4+ zone, you're drinking the recommended 2 liters of water per day. Plus, you can fill-up without wasting a lot of plastic.

Avoiding sodas (even the diet ones) and sugary drinks as much as possible will also help you feel your best. Diet sodas may be calorie-free, but they're loaded with artificial sweeteners, flavors, and dyes. A rule of thumb we like to follow is that if there are a handful of ingredients on a food label that you don't understand, you should probably do your research before consuming it. Also, drinking water is important to stay hydrated and flush toxins out of your body. You should be drinking enough water so that your urine is clear and light instead of yellow and dark. If it's dark yellow, you need to up your water intake.

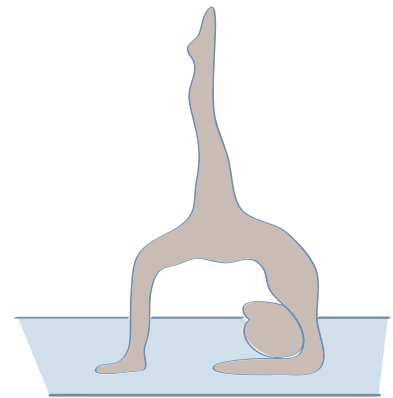
Another way to help your muscles develop properly is with exercise. Playing on a sports team at school can be a fun way to get the exercise you need, while also developing teamwork and leadership skills. But for those of us who have interests and talents outside of sports, there are tons of ways to get your heart rate up and sweat. Try to mix it up with 20 minutes of cardio—any exercise that makes your heart rate go up—and 20 minutes of strength training.



Cardio



Strength



Stretching

Exercise not only makes you strong and healthy physically, but it also releases hormones called endorphins that improve your mood and promote well-being.

For example, Jordana started playing tennis when she was 14 and now mixes up her routine with yoga, while Alex played basketball, soccer, and softball in middle school and currently loves to swim. Dr. Stern was on her school gymnastics team and now enjoys swimming, hiking, and strength training to balance her exercise routine.

Exercise not only makes you strong and healthy physically, but it also releases hormones called endorphins that improve your mood and promote well-being. Whatever form of exercise you choose, just make sure you enjoy doing it. That way you'll stick to it, since it will be something you look forward to, instead of feeling like a chore.



LOLA MYTHBUSTER

Douching, which is a method of spraying water directly up your vagina, is not a good way to clean your vagina, because the water can disrupt your pH balance and cause infection. Your vagina cleans itself with vaginal discharge (read [the parts you can't see](#) for more details).



LOLA TIP

If you happen to run out of shaving cream, using your hair conditioner is actually a great substitute versus using body wash or bar soap. To help prevent skin irritation, don't use a dull blade and shave at the end of your shower, when the hairs are soft and pores are open.

SWEAT AND BODY ODOR

As your body matures, it's important to remember that good hygiene is not only important for looking and feeling your best, but it's also key to a healthy body. Testosterone is the main player in this area, increasing body hair growth and perspiration, also known as sweat. During puberty, and especially during your period, you'll notice that you will sweat under your arms and in your groin area. This sweat may smell bad, but it's actually good for your body and gets rid of toxins.

To manage this new body odor, you may want to wear deodorant. As with all other products you start to use regularly, you'll want to review the label carefully to ensure you're familiar and comfortable with the ingredients in your deodorant product. If for some reason you do get a rash, it's probably an allergic skin reaction (fragrance is the likely culprit), and you should stop using the product and see a dermatologist for an allergy test.

You should also shower daily, and wash your hair every other day using shampoo and conditioner. Make sure to use a sulfate-free body cleanser and shampoo, since sodium lauryl sulfate (SLS) and sodium laureth sulfate (SLES) are harsh sudsing agents that strip your skin and scalp of natural moisture, leaving you with dry, itchy skin. Most bar soaps and conditioners are inherently sulfate-free, but it's always best to check for SLS and SLES ingredients on the label or look for labels with "sulfate-free" on the front. This is, of course, in addition to all of the other hygiene practices you already do every day, like brushing your teeth at least twice daily and washing your hands after you go to the bathroom.

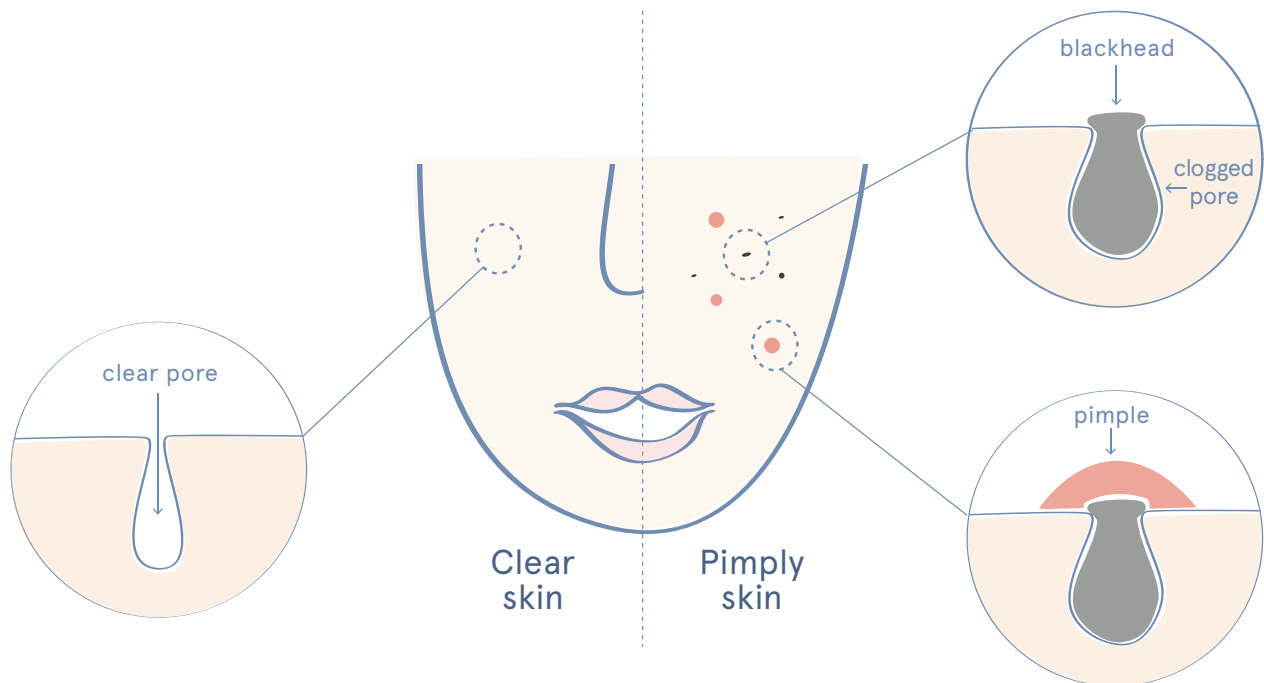
NEW HAIR AND MAINTENANCE

In addition to new pubic hair, you'll probably notice new hair growing under your armpits and the hair on your legs and eyebrows getting darker or thicker. It's up to you how to treat your new hair growth on your legs and armpits! Body hair maintenance is not for everyone. Some women leave it alone forever, some start later in life, and others decide to shave.

If you decide to shave your legs or your armpits, the most common way to start out is with a razor and shaving cream (remember to opt for sulfate-free creams, if you're going this route). If you decide to groom your eyebrows, many women use a tweezer. Ask a parent or friend if you want to shave or tweeze but don't know how.

SKIN CARE AND ACNE

Estrogen and progesterone increase the production of oils (or sebum), causing the pores in your skin to get larger, which can lead to pimples and acne. This happens because the oils that clog your pores trap bacteria that inflame your skin. To adjust for increased oil production, wash your face in the morning and at night using a sulfate-free facial cleanser. You may think you need the strongest treatment, but if you use something too harsh, you'll cause an oil imbalance, which triggers your body to produce even more skin oils. Start with something gentle, and consult a dermatologist if a gentle cleanser doesn't do the trick.



If you use a facial cleanser that's too harsh, you'll cause an oil imbalance, which triggers your body to produce even more skin oils.

There's a difference between the occasional pimple and acne. For treating pimples, apple cider vinegar and aloe vera lotion are natural remedies that have been reported to be beneficial. When using either of these natural remedies, make sure to use a cotton ball and dab your pimple only in the affected area; don't apply it to your whole face. Over-the-counter treatments containing benzoyl peroxide, salicylic acid, and adapalene are also available and can be effective either by themselves or in combination with the natural remedies. Make sure you're only applying these as spot treatments directly on and just around the pimple and let the pimple come to a whitehead and dry out. There are even concealers with acne medication in them that you can use during the day. If any treatment is causing you to develop redness, itching or other signs of irritation, stop this remedy and consult a dermatologist.



LOLA MYTHBUSTER

Eating greasy foods and chocolate does not cause pimples; however, some healthy foods are good for your face. Try making a face mask from a ripe papaya or oatmeal—both have natural properties that help exfoliate skin. Whatever remedy you try, make sure to look for the term non-comedogenic on the label of any product you use on your face. This means that the product was tested in a lab and clinically proven to not clog pores.

There's not one best treatment for acne; different things work for different people. The one universal truth is not to squeeze or pick at your acne. You'll only increase the inflammation and redness and could potentially cause a scar, which does much more permanent damage than a pimple. If your pimples are getting you down, consult with your doctor or dermatologist. Don't get discouraged. There are many effective treatments for stubborn acne.

In addition to washing your face properly, it's very important to moisturize on a daily basis and protect your skin from sun damage with a noncomedogenic moisturizer with a broad spectrum UVA/UVB sunscreen and an SPF of 15 to 30. You should wear sunscreen even when it's cloudy since UVB rays (which cause premature aging—i.e. wrinkles and spots) penetrate through the atmosphere and clouds.

Another skin change you may notice is the appearance of stretch marks (or striae), which are caused by growth spurts. Essentially, your skin stretches to catch up with your body's growth. For girls, stretch marks usually occur in two places: alongside your breasts or around your hips. There's no quick cure for stretch marks, but making sure that your skin is properly moisturized is a great start. For stretch mark spot treatments, essential oils like sage and lavender are great natural aids. However, as with any natural remedy, you want to be careful of skin allergies. If you're allergic to essential oils, you can talk to your doctor or dermatologist about over-the-counter treatments—and even prescription treatments—for really stubborn striae.

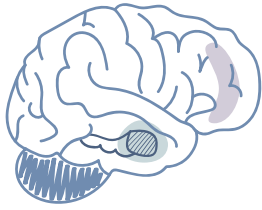
EMOTIONS AND MOOD SWINGS

We have talked about what puberty does to your body, both inside and out, but other important changes are happening in your brain. Estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone alter your mood and motivation, change how you socialize, and also affect how you learn.

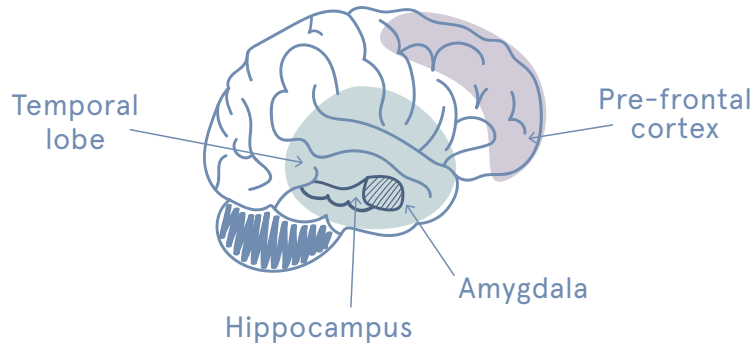
For any budding neuroscientists, there are estrogen and progesterone receptors in your amygdala (the emotion center of your brain) and the hippocampus (which plays a role in memory and learning). Adolescence is considered the period of time from the beginning of these hormone level changes (puberty) to when these hormones balance out (about age 25), after which you are considered to have an adult brain.

Hormones alter your mood and motivation, change how you socialize, and also affect how you learn.

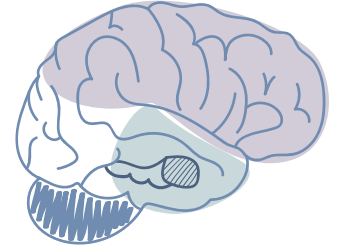
Child



Adolescent



Adult



Activity of Amygdala in the Temporal lobe (emotional reactions/mood monitor)

Activity of Pre-frontal cortex (executive functions, rational thinking, mature decision making)

These changes in hormone levels may cause mood swings. You might find that you have higher emotional highs and lower emotional lows than you did before. An example of how this could play out is feeling very excited and passionate one day, and other days feeling hurt or upset more easily than when you were younger.



LOLA TIP

It might sound old-school, but keeping a personal diary in a book (not on an app, phone, or cloud where someone can hack it) is a great way to let out your emotions. Writing about how excited you are to have made a new best friend, or why an old friend may have upset you, can help you see the situation more clearly or just let you blow off steam in a productive way.

Your increasingly complicated social life may feel overwhelming at times. You may or may not be arguing with your parents more frequently, feeling like you're not sure who your "real" friends are, and developing romantic feelings or "crushes." All of this is normal and happens because of the hormones being released in your brain. Most of the time you will figure it out on your own and may just need some alone time in your room to think, complain, or have a good cry.

But when you need a sympathetic ear, try to identify at least one older person, like a sibling, aunt, uncle, cousin, or coach, that you think will be a nonjudgmental sounding board and whose advice you can trust. While they probably did not have Snapchat growing up, a lot of the issues you're facing are the same ones they dealt with at your age—from how to deal with a bully to feeling (un)popular to how to prepare for your first school dance.

The important thing to remember is that there is always someone to turn to, no matter how big or small the issue—and we're always here for you if you need an independent ear!

5

Q&A: WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED



Q: What if I get my period at school/away from home?

A: At some point you WILL get your period when you're away from home. Don't panic! Especially around the first few months, while your period cycle is still irregular, make sure to always carry a few period essentials in your backpack or keep some in your locker at school. We suggest you keep three regular pads, heavy pads, and/or light tampons, plus three to five liners in a pouch, so you never have to worry.

Q: What if I get my period at school/away from home and I forgot my period products?

A: Best case scenario, you find a bathroom with period products or a prepared friend to save the day. Worst case scenario, roll up toilet paper in a wad and place it in your underwear until you can find a pad or tampon. Remember, at school, you can always ask a nurse or teacher (even a male teacher) for period supplies.

Q: What if I get my period in the middle of a party?

A: Always try to remember to bring one or two period products with you, no matter where the party is located. LOLA's compact applicator tampons and liners fit in the smallest of purses. Some public restrooms will have a 25¢ or 50¢ tampon vending machine, but this is a fading trend. As a last resort, the toilet-paper-in-the-underwear trick works for most period emergencies.

Q: What if I get my period in the middle of class?

A: It's good practice to wear a liner if you think you're going to get your period that day, but it's 100% OK to raise your hand and ask to be excused to go to the bathroom. You can always say, "It's an emergency."

Q: What if I bleed through my clothes away from home?

A: If there's a blood stain on your pants or skirt, wrap a sweater or jacket around your waist to cover the stain. If you don't have one, ask an adult what to do. If you're really nervous about this happening, keep an extra change of clothes in your backpack or locker.

Q: What if I bleed on my underwear, but not onto my clothes?

A: Put a new pad over the blood stain, or if you're wearing a tampon, put in a new tampon like you normally would and wrap toilet paper around the stain. If you're at home or have access to a change of underwear, it's easiest to wash menstrual blood out of underwear before it dries. Some menstrual blood will come out with hand soap and water in your bathroom sink, but it's a good idea to ask an adult for help the first time this happens. This way they can help you figure out the best way to clean your underwear going forward.

“It's good practice to wear a liner if you think you're going to get your period that day.”

Q: What do I do if my period products fall out of my bag in public or at school?

A: This is not a big deal and has happened to most of us at some point. Just pick them up and put them back in your bag! It's nothing to be embarrassed about. In general, we've noticed that most people will ignore seeing the pads/tampons on the floor, and you can simply scoop them up and put them away. Or if you feel the need to comment, saying something quick, like "Whoops!" while you reach down to pick them up tends to be your best bet.

Q: What do I do if a boy asks if I have my period?

A: It's totally up to you. You can either tell him, "yes," or "no," or "it's none of your business." After all, it's nobody's business but your own.

Q: What do I do if I'm the first one of my friends to get my period?

A: Everyone gets her period eventually. If you are first, you can choose to share the news or not—it's totally up to you. It might feel lonely to be the first in your friend group to get your period, but it probably won't be long before other girls start getting their periods too. And, remember, you will be the "expert" that your friends will turn to for their questions in a few short months when they all start getting their periods.

Q: What do I do if I'm the last of my friends to get my period?

A: Everyone gets her period eventually. We know that being last can feel just as isolating as being first, but there are some advantages to being last. For example, while your friends are dealing with menstrual cramps, you are not! And while you might be the last among your circle of friends, many girls don't start their period until they are 15 years old, or even older.

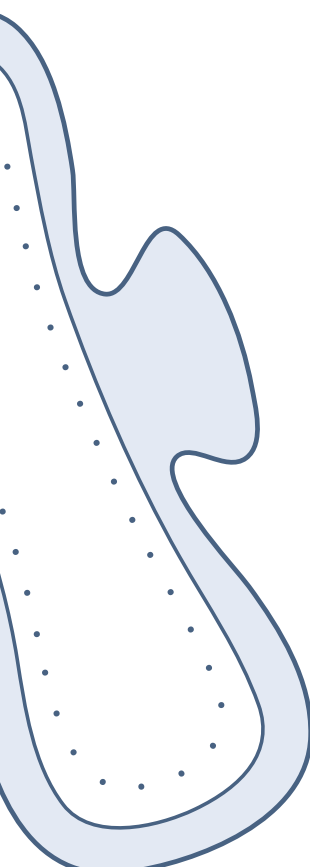
Q: Can people smell my period?

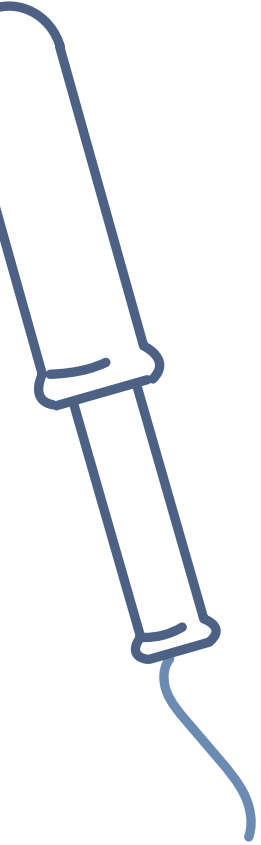
A: Maybe, but probably not. Your period blood has an odor. If you're using pads, the wet blood in the pad may smell. If this is an issue for you, try changing your pads more frequently or try a tampon. Also, it's important to take a shower every day and wash your genital area with plenty of water and a mild sulfate-free cleanser. There are even cleansers that are specially formulated for vaginal pH balance.

Q: Can eating certain foods make my vagina smell?

A: Yes and no. Certain bacteria are responsible for most bad smells. Your vagina has a naturally low (acidic) pH that prevents bad bacteria from growing, so it doesn't smell. However, certain foods, especially sugar, can raise the pH of your vagina, which can promote bacterial growth that leads to odor. Other foods, like yogurt, contain lactobacilli, which lowers the pH and is good for the vagina.

If a boy asks if you have your period, you can either tell him, 'yes,' or 'no,' or 'it's none of your business.' After all, it's nobody's business but your own.





Q: Can I swim with my period?

A: Yes! If it's a light flow day, just jump in the water. The water pressure will hold your menstrual flow inside your vagina, but as soon as you get out of the water, hurry to the bathroom. When you sit on the toilet there may be a small gush of blood, which is normal. On moderate to heavy flow days, it's best to use a tampon—just tuck the string into your swimsuit, so it doesn't hang out.

Q: Can I play sports with my period?

A: Absolutely! You should play sports and exercise when you have your period. You can wear either a pad or a tampon, but a lot of athletes prefer tampons, since there's no risk of the tampon accidentally moving.

Q: Can I pee with a tampon in?

A: Yes. To prevent the string from getting wet, hold it to the side before you start peeing and then pee normally.

Q: What happens if I can't find the string?

A: If the string of the tampon ever "disappears," don't panic—it's not an emergency. Usually it's simply tucked under a labia. In the very rare event that you can't find it, the string somehow got tucked inside your vagina with your tampon. To get it out, wash your hands and stick your finger in your vagina and feel for the string. Once you get it, pull it out like you would normally. If you're having trouble, try bearing down as if you're pooping, as this will push the tampon lower in the vaginal canal and make it easier to find the string.

Q: Will the tampon disappear inside my body?

A: No. If you look back at the [drawing of the parts you can't see](#), you will see that your cervix acts like a narrow gate between your vaginal canal and your uterus. Your tampon can't fit through your cervix, so it will always remain in the vaginal canal.

Q: What will happen if I accidentally leave a tampon in for more than eight hours?

A: Remove the tampon as soon as you can, and don't panic. Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) is VERY rare. Tell an adult though, so that you can monitor for signs of it. If you start to experience any of the symptoms we went over in the TSS section, like fever and chills, tell an adult and call your doctor.

Q: Will I start craving chocolate?

A: All women experience hormonal fluctuations around the time of their period, usually two days before and a few days after their period starts. This fluctuation can cause a variation in appetite. Some women crave sugar (like chocolate), others crave salty or fried foods, and others may actually lose their appetite.

“**Yes! You can swim, play sports, and even pee with a tampon in.**”

Q: Why are my parents saying things like “cut the attitude”?

A: Changes in your hormone levels may cause mood swings. You might find that you have higher emotional highs and lower emotional lows than you did before. An example of this is feeling very excited and passionate one day, and other days feeling hurt or upset more easily than when you were younger. If you’re feeling snappy, take a breath and excuse yourself to your room.

Q: I heard that once I get my period, I can have a baby. Is that true?

A: Yes. But that doesn’t mean that you’re ready. If you want to talk about this more, you should reach out to your parents or another trusted adult, like your doctor or teacher.

It may feel like there’s nowhere to turn with the millions and millions of questions you have. That’s not true, even though it may be hard or awkward to ask right now. Your parents, older siblings, friends, teachers, family members, doctors, or anyone you trust are all great resources and would love to help you through this often confusing time in your life (they all went through it too). If none of those feels like a good option, the team at LOLA is always here to help. There’s no question we haven’t heard, you can’t ask, or we haven’t wondered ourselves.



**Other questions? Concerns?
Or just want to chat?**

Call us toll-free at
866.232.0970

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



About Dr. Lisa Stern

Dr. Lisa Stern joined the LOLA team in 2016 as a go-to medical expert, bringing with her 25 years of experience in pediatric medicine. A leading pediatrician, she is passionate about promoting health and wellness among her patients. She engages children and young adults in health topics ranging from nutrition, exercise, stress management, sexuality, and a holistic approach to healthy living. As a mother of two young adult daughters, she had her own private pediatric lab rats to experiment on. Fortunately, they survived and have shared their first period stories with LOLA.

Dr. Stern is a practicing pediatrician at Tenth Street Pediatrics in Santa Monica, CA, where she has been for 20 years. She received her medical degree from New York Medical College and completed her pediatric internship and residency at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles before moving crosstown for a one-year fellowship at UCLA in Pediatric Hematology-Oncology.

About LOLA Co-Founders, Jordana Kier and Alexandra Friedman

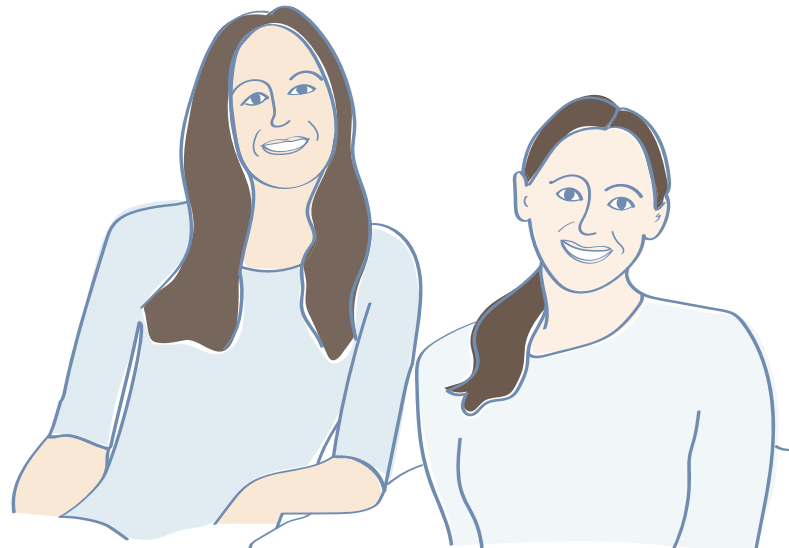
Our co-founders met in the summer of 2014, introduced by friends who had a hunch they’d hit it off. Jordana was in grad school at the time, working on the idea that would become LOLA, while Alex was working for a tech company. They got to talking about periods, even sharing their own first period stories. That’s when Jordana asked a simple question that changed everything:

“Have you ever wondered what’s in your tampon?”

That simple question sparked a bigger idea: what if they could create a feminine care brand committed to ingredient transparency, one that delivered real solutions to women based on their unique needs? After all, if women care about the ingredients in food and face creams, why should feminine care be any different?

One year later, LOLA was born. And what started as period products made with 100% organic cotton—available in unique assortments, delivered to your door—has evolved into a collection of feminine care products for your reproductive life stages ahead.

Jordana and Alex want you to always have what you need. For your first period, and beyond.



LOLA

mylola.com



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