



The Girls' Book

Smoky Trail Rangers

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The Girls' Book

This book is for girls aged about 8 to 16, and for the women who support them. It is about periods: what is normal, how to look after yourself, and where to get help, at home, on the road or in a camp.

It is written in plain, calm words. Read it on your own, or with a trusted woman: your mum, an aunt, a big sister, a teacher or a health worker. Every question you have is a good one.

Some parts are marked **12+**. Those are for older girls.

If anything worries you, or anyone makes you feel unsafe, tell a trusted woman or go to the health tent. **It is never your fault.**

Girls Only: Periods

Your period is a normal, healthy part of growing up. Every girl's body does it in its own time. This page tells you what to expect and how to take care of yourself, at home, on the road or in a camp.

What to know

What a period is. About once a month, the body lets out a small amount of blood and tissue from the womb (uterus) through the vagina. It lasts about 2–7 days. It means your body is growing up as it should. It is not dirty, and you are not sick.

When it starts. Most often between about 10 and 16 years old; some girls start as early as 8. Earlier or later can be normal too. Signs it may be coming within a year or two: breasts starting to grow, hair under the arms and between the legs, and sometimes a little white or clear wetness in your underwear.

What's normal. - The first year or two can be irregular: sometimes 3 weeks apart, sometimes 2 months. - Later, periods usually come every 21–35 days. - The blood can be bright red, dark red or brown. - Mild cramps, a sore back, tender breasts, tiredness, or feeling more emotional are all common. - Stress, travel, illness and not enough food can make a period late or skipped.

Pads. - **Disposable pads** stick to the inside of your underwear. Change one every 4–6 hours, or sooner if it feels full. Wrap the used pad in its wrapper or paper and put it in a bin. Never put it in a latrine unless you are told that's allowed. - **Reusable cloth pads** are washable pads, often in aid kits. They are safe if they are washed and dried well. Change them as often as disposable pads. - **A clean cloth** folded into your underwear works too. Wash and sun-dry it like a reusable pad. - **Period underwear** (washable underwear with a padded layer) is in some kits. Wash and dry it the same way. - Some kits include menstrual cups or tampons. See the note for older girls below, and ask a trusted woman or health worker before you use one.

How to wash reusable pads. 1. Rinse in **cool** water first. Hot water makes blood stains set. 2. Then wash with **soap** in **warm** water if you have it, rubbing until clean. 3. Rinse well in clean water. 4. **Dry completely in the sun**, which helps kill germs. If you want privacy, hang them out of sight, or under a light cloth with the sun still reaching them. Don't dry them hidden in a dark, damp place, because damp pads can cause infection. 5. Store dry pads in a clean bag. Wash your hands before and after. 6. Use a

separate small basin or bucket if you can, away from the drinking water.

Change in a private, safe place. Ask for a toilet or washing place with a door or screen, and a light at night. Go with a friend after dark.

Keeping clean. - Wash your private parts once or twice a day with clean water and a little plain soap on the outside only. Always wipe and wash **front to back**. - Change into clean underwear every day if you can. - Wash your hands before and after changing a pad. - **Washing during your period is safe and good for you**, including your private parts with water and a little soap on the outside. You can still bathe, wash your hair, play, swim and go to school.

Pain and comfort. - Put a **warm** cloth or a bottle of warm (not boiling) water wrapped in cloth on your lower belly or back. - Rest, curl up, stretch gently, or take a slow walk. - Sip water, and eat something if you can. - **Medicine only from a trusted grown-up or health worker.** Never take pills on your own or from a friend.

Myths and facts. - Periods are **not dirty**, and you are not unclean. - **No foods are off-limits** during your period. - You can play, wash, swim, cook and go to school or the learning space. - **Keep learning:** if you miss school because of pads or pain, tell a trusted woman or teacher. They can help. - Feeling grumpy, sad or tired before or during a period (PMS) is common.

For older girls (12+)

- **Tampons and menstrual cups:** wash your hands first. Change a tampon at least every 4–8 hours, and never leave one in overnight for longer than 8 hours. Rare but serious: sudden high fever, a rash, vomiting or dizziness while using a tampon means **take it out and go to the health tent straight away**. Empty a cup every 12 hours or sooner, and boil or wash it as its instructions say.
- **Your body and growing up:** once periods start, the body can get pregnant. A health worker or trusted woman can answer questions privately.
- **Protection:** a first period does **not** mean a girl is ready for marriage or sex. No one should ask

you for anything (favourites, touching, pictures, money) in exchange for pads or kits. If anyone does, tell a trusted adult or protection staff. It is never your fault.

Go to the health tent (or tell a trusted woman) if...

- you are soaking through a pad every hour for more than 2 hours, or passing large clots
- the bleeding lasts more than about 7–8 days
- you feel dizzy, faint, very tired or short of breath (this can mean low iron, called anaemia)
- pain is very bad, isn't helped by rest and warmth, or keeps you from walking or eating
- you have a fever, bad-smelling discharge, itching, sores, or pain when you pee
- bleeding comes between periods, or periods were regular and then stop for 3 months or more
- you started before age 8, or haven't started by about 16
- anyone touches you in a way that feels wrong, or forces you to do something. That is never

your fault. Tell a trusted woman or the health or protection tent straight away.

What to pack in your go bag

- 3–4 pads (disposable and/or reusable)
 - 1–2 spare pairs of underwear
 - a small dark bag or pouch, for used reusable pads until you can wash them
 - a small piece of soap
 - wipes or a small cloth
 - a few sheets of paper or tissue for wrapping
- These fit alongside the Go Bag items in Card #GB1.

Finding help

- **A trusted woman:** your mum, an aunt, a big sister, a teacher, or a woman helper you know.
- **The health tent or clinic:** women health workers can answer questions and give supplies.
- **Women and girls' safe spaces:** many camps have one, a quiet place to talk, learn and get kits.

- **Dignity kits:** aid groups such as UNFPA and UNHCR give out kits for women and girls. They often hold pads (disposable and reusable), underwear, soap, washing powder, a comb, a toothbrush and toothpaste, and sometimes a flashlight and a whistle. Ask at the health tent, the women's space or a distribution point. They are free; you should never have to pay or trade for them.

A note from an older girl (optional, Daryna)

"When mine started, I was scared I'd done something wrong. I hadn't. Now I keep a little pouch in my bag, and if a younger girl looks worried, I tell her to come and find me. You're not alone."

Ranger checklist (private, for you)

- ☐ I know what a period is and that it's normal.
- ☐ I know how to use and change a pad.

- ☐ I know how to wash and sun-dry a reusable pad.
- ☐ I have period items in my go bag.
- ☐ I know who my trusted woman is and where the health tent is.
- ☐ I know the signs that mean go to the health tent.

Optional private badge: "Ready & Confident"

There are no levels and no one checks or watches. If you've read this page and packed your pouch, you can colour the flower yourself. It's just for you.

Watch and learn

- Handbook Chapter 9 (Keep Clean): washing front to back
- Hygiene reel HY17 "Period Kits Are Normal" (DRAFT, older girls 10+, pending David's decision)
- Go Bag Card #GB1

Grown-up note

Talk before the first period, not after. Use calm, simple words and the correct names. Make sure girls have products, privacy, water, soap, a place to dry reusable pads in the sun, and a bin. Respect family and cultural practices while correcting harmful myths: periods are not dirty, and girls can wash and bathe. Boys should learn that periods are normal and never something to tease about. Any sign of abuse or coercion goes to protection staff.

Sources (our own words; links checked Oct 21, 2026)

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