

What is

the *ideal* period.



Contents

- 04. What is a period and why do we get them?
- 05. What is an ideal period?
- 06. Period problems.
- 07. FAQ about periods.
- 08. Tips for better periods you can try right now.



What is a period and why do we get them?

When you menstruate or "get your period", the menstrual cycle begins. This is also known as Day 1 of your cycle. During your period, the lining of the uterus sheds and makes its way out of your body through the vagina.



Menstruation

Periods are a monthly bleed that are a part of the menstrual cycle.

So why do we get them?

- Firstly, to support conception. During the menstrual cycle, our body builds up and thickens the lining of our uterus, which is called the endometrium. The body does this in order to prepare for the possibility of pregnancy happening in that cycle. The first step in pregnancy is for sexual intercourse to take place within the 3-5 day leading up to ovulation so that an egg from your ovaries can be fertilised by sperm. The final step is for this egg to implant into the lining of the uterus (endometrium). This is why the endometrium needs to be nice and thick. However, most months, most people do not get pregnant and therefore the body doesn't need the thick endometrium, so it sheds this lining in the form of your period.
- Secondly, we have periods in order to make the hormones we need for our best physical and mental health. Ovaries are part of our reproductive system. They have an important role of supporting the creation of the corpus luteum. Once an egg bursts from a follicle each month, which is referred to as ovulation, that follicle becomes the corpus luteum. The corpus luteum is responsible for making hormones such as oestrogen and progesterone. Our reproductive hormones are important for healthy bones, protect against heart disease, support sleep, managing stress and mood regulation, increasing fertility, and supporting our vaginal health.

Periods are like an extra vital sign for your health.

What is an ideal period?

Now that we have discussed what a period is and why we have them, let's talk about what an 'ideal period' is.

What is an ideal period?

You don't have to have a perfect "28-day cycle". As long your period starts every 21 to 35 days, you have a healthy cycle. It can even vary a little month to month (by more than about eight days at a time). Your actual bleeding should last between two and seven days, and you don't want to lose more than 80 ml in total during menstruation. More than this is considered heavy menstrual bleeding. To give you an idea, a regular tampon holds 5 ml, so you can fill 16 tampons and still be within the normal range.

You may experience tiredness, mood changes, achiness, acne, or other symptoms. Mild symptoms during, or before, your period are okay. Extreme versions of these symptoms are not considered ideal.



Cervical fluid

Cervical fluid is often referred to as discharge. It is a fluid that changes in consistency and appearance throughout the menstrual cycle. It might be unnoticeable one day, and sticky, dry, crumbly, creamy, or stretchy another day. Cervical fluid also protects you from vaginal infections. If discharge becomes green or yellow, looks like cottage cheese or presents with burning, itching or pain, see your doctor as this can indicate infection.

Period problems.



1.

Irregular Periods | It's okay to miss the occasional month of having a period. This can happen for a few different reasons such as stress levels and your diet. If you are missing more than the occasional period or it doesn't come at all, then something might be up. The first step is to see your doctor so they can rule out pregnancy, peri-menopause or medical causes such as thyroid disease and celiac disease. Your doctor will then test your hormones and hopefully be able to offer you a diagnosis. Two of the most common explanations for irregular periods are, Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS), and Hypothalamic Amenorrhea.

2.

Heavy Periods | If you bleed for more than seven days or lose more than 80 ml of menstrual fluid (16 fully soaked regular tampons), then you have heavy periods. Please see your doctor so they can rule out possible causes such as fibroids, clotting disorders and thyroid disease. If you suffer heavy periods, you may have become deficient in iron, which in turn, can make your periods even heavier.

3.

Period Pain | Severe period pain is not normal and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Period pain is common and is usually nothing to worry about, as long as it is not severe or affecting your quality of life. Standard period pain occurs during the first day or two, and is mild enough that it does not interfere with school or work. This pain is caused by a type of mild inflammation from prostaglandins, which help the uterus contract. Standard period pain can easily be relieved by an over-the-counter anti-inflammatory such as ibuprofen. Severe period pain however, can be a sign of an underlying medical condition. such as endometriosis.

FAQ about periods.

Why do I feel tired and anxious on my period?

During your period, both oestrogen and progesterone are at their lowest levels. Oestrogen supports energy, mood and confidence, and progesterone helps us feel calm and relaxed. Because of this, you might find yourself feeling a little more withdrawn, tired and maybe even agitated. You may want to rest more than you usually would. This is only natural — be patient and gentle with yourself. Do the things that make you feel grounded and take things at your own pace.

Should I worry that my period was late?

All sorts of diet and lifestyle factors can affect your hormones, which can in turn affect when your period arrives, such as:

- Pregnancy and menopause
- Going through a particularly stressful time
- Sickness
- Excessive exercise or restrictive diets
- Taking certain herbs, supplements and medications

A little variation month-to-month is normal and to be expected, but if your periods are consistently irregular, you'll want to investigate why this might be the case.

Is cramping normal?

It's normal to feel a dull ache, feelings of heaviness, or even a light twinge in your lower pelvis or back in the first day or two of your period, and sometimes the day before it starts as well. This shouldn't be anything that causes you too much pain, or prevents you going on with your day as usual. This feeling is the result of your uterus contracting and relaxing to expel the cosy endometrium lining it has built in the past month — a perfectly healthy and normal process. However, pain that goes above and beyond this is not normal.



Three minerals for better periods.

1.

Magnesium | Low magnesium levels can cause uncomfortable cramping of uterine muscles. Magnesium-rich foods include avocados, bananas, green vegetables, red meat, chicken and eggs.

2.

Zinc | Zinc is required for hormone production and can be helpful for reducing inflammation and improving pain tolerance. Zinc-rich foods include red meat, shellfish, poultry, legumes and nuts and seeds.

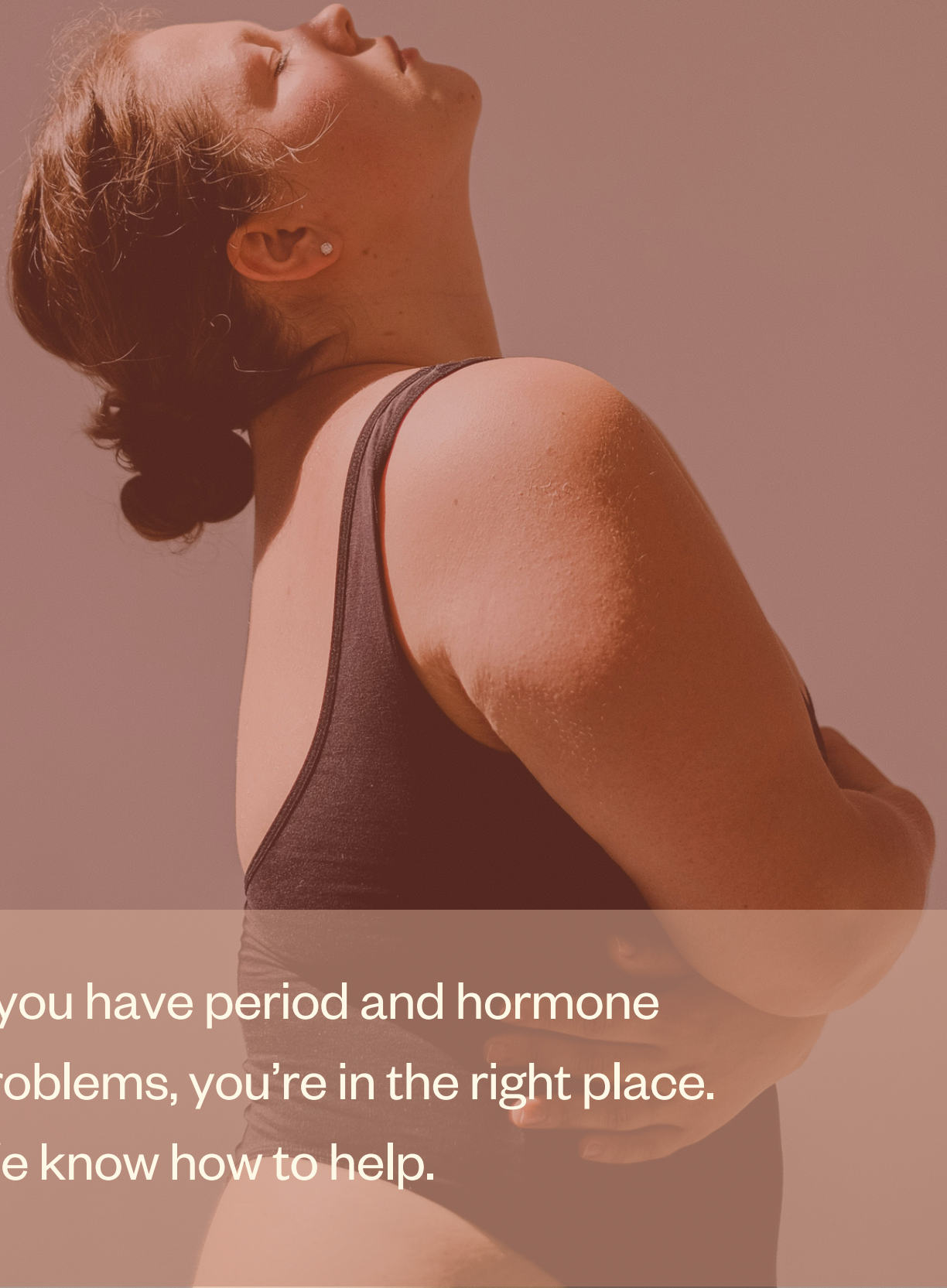
3.

Iron | Long term low iron levels, or iron deficiency anaemia, can be both the cause and a symptom of heavy periods. Untreated this can lead to fatigue, depression, breathlessness and difficulty concentrating. It is important not to take iron supplements without consulting a health professional, as symptoms of iron overload are similar to iron deficiency. Iron-rich foods include red meat, shellfish, spinach, liver, legumes, pumpkin seeds, quinoa, turkey, broccoli and tofu.

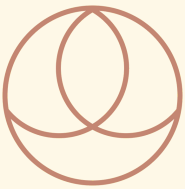


Our mission...

To empower you to take back control of your hormones, periods and body.



If you have period and hormone problems, you're in the right place. We know how to help.



We are on a mission to empower menstruators everywhere.

If you have period and hormone problems, you're in the right place. And we know how to help. We work alongside your doctor, pelvic physiotherapist, gynaecologist or specialist to achieve the best result for you. With our help, you'll build a team of professionals around you so you can get the results you're looking for.

As a leading private health clinic, we can see you for online telehealth appointments across Aotearoa New Zealand from the comfort of your home.

With a team of registered nurses, clinical nutritionists and medical herbalists, we support people (just like you) with period problems, hormones, acne, polycystic ovary syndrome, endometriosis and fertility journeys.

Learn more about how Hekate Clinic can help you.

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References on file, available upon request.