

Mind your body

A student-centred teaching guide on menstrual health written by and for Queensland's Indigenous and remote primary and secondary school students



Acknowledgement of Country

The authors of this guide respectfully acknowledge all Traditional Owner groups and families across the Western Cape York Peninsula on whose country where this teaching guide was created, evolved and delivered. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and family members who participated over the years and provided cultural guidance and leadership- especially in relation to the teaching of this guide to First Nations male students. We also respectfully acknowledge the Jagera and Turrbal Peoples on whose land this teaching guide was also developed. To all Traditional Owner groups and Peoples, we recognise their valuable contribution to this land, water, and communities. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Elders of the past and present.

Acknowledgements

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The authors would like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of Minnie King, Ronnie Bosuen and Embley Contracting, Weipa, for their initiation, commitment, support and cultural leadership for the conceptualisation, development and writing of this research project, including this teaching guide. Without their support, this work would not be possible.

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Note

The intended use of this guide is for all genders and both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students from school Years 3 to 12 (ages 7 to 18 years old) as well as the teachers and caregivers who support them. At the request of schools in the development of this guide, the content has been taught from Year 3 level. However, it is at each school's discretion as to how and when the teaching guide will be used.

Citation

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<https://public-health.uq.edu.au/mind-your-body>

*note: Milsom and Ghavamjoo both contributed equally to this work and are co-first authors

Artwork and photos

The artwork through this document was created by 12 and 13 year old students of Western Cape College, Weipa. Our thanks to Chelsea Steele (front cover), Zahlee Kemmerling (back cover) and Sharli Wallace (throughout the guide). The artwork intellectual property remains with the artists and is not for reuse. The photos included here were taken by Nina Lansbury in Western Cape York (2018-2024) and are shared with the appropriate permissions.

About the Authors

Minnie King is a Kaiwalagal, Umai and Kiwai woman whose family connections extend from the Western Cape (Kie Daudai) to the Western Province (Migi Daudai) and she is also Motu-Koita. Minnie is a local community businesswoman in Weipa and a Senior Adjunct Lecturer with the University of Queensland's School of Public Health. She initiated and led this locally-focused, community-based research on menstrual health that paved the way to this teaching guide. Minnie was motivated by the powerful and positive cultural learnings from her mother and grandmother about menstruation and the juxtaposition when observing and listening to stories of menstrual challenges and inequalities in remote First Nations communities.

Driven by the need to address colonial entrenched shame and stigma by defining and re-establishing menstruation as a biological process and basic human right that once had a place in cultural teachings by first nations people, Minnie reached out to Associate Professor Nina Lansbury at The University of Queensland to establish this Australian-first, remote community-based, student-led menstrual health collaboration in 2017.

Associate Professor Nina Lansbury is a non-Indigenous research and teaching academic in the School of Public Health at The University of Queensland. She undertakes research in areas of social inequity and environmental change with the hope that this provides the evidence for change to improve health and wellbeing for all. Her research mainly focuses on Indigenous peoples' health in remote communities, and on climate change and its impact on human health.

Dr Reshma Ratnapalan is a casual academic in the School of Public Health at the University of Queensland and a resident medical doctor with Queensland Health. She has a keen interest in menstrual health and joined this project as a research assistant. Her long-term goal is to undertake General Practitioner training in rural Queensland with an aim to contribute towards reducing health inequities.

Olivia Milsom is an Honours student in Public Health at The University of Queensland. She is researching the health and wellbeing of remotely living Indigenous women, under the supervision of Minnie King and Nina Lansbury. Olivia is going on to join the Queensland Government as a graduate policy officer, where she hopes to continue to work and advocate for improved women's health and menstrual education.

Masoumeh Ghavamjoo is a student undertaking a Bachelor of Health Sciences at The University of Queensland, specialising in public health. She joined this project as a UQ Winter Scholar. After graduation, Masoumeh plans to continue deepening her understanding of 'health' and contribute meaningfully to efforts aimed at promoting the health of diverse populations.

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Contents and structure of this guide

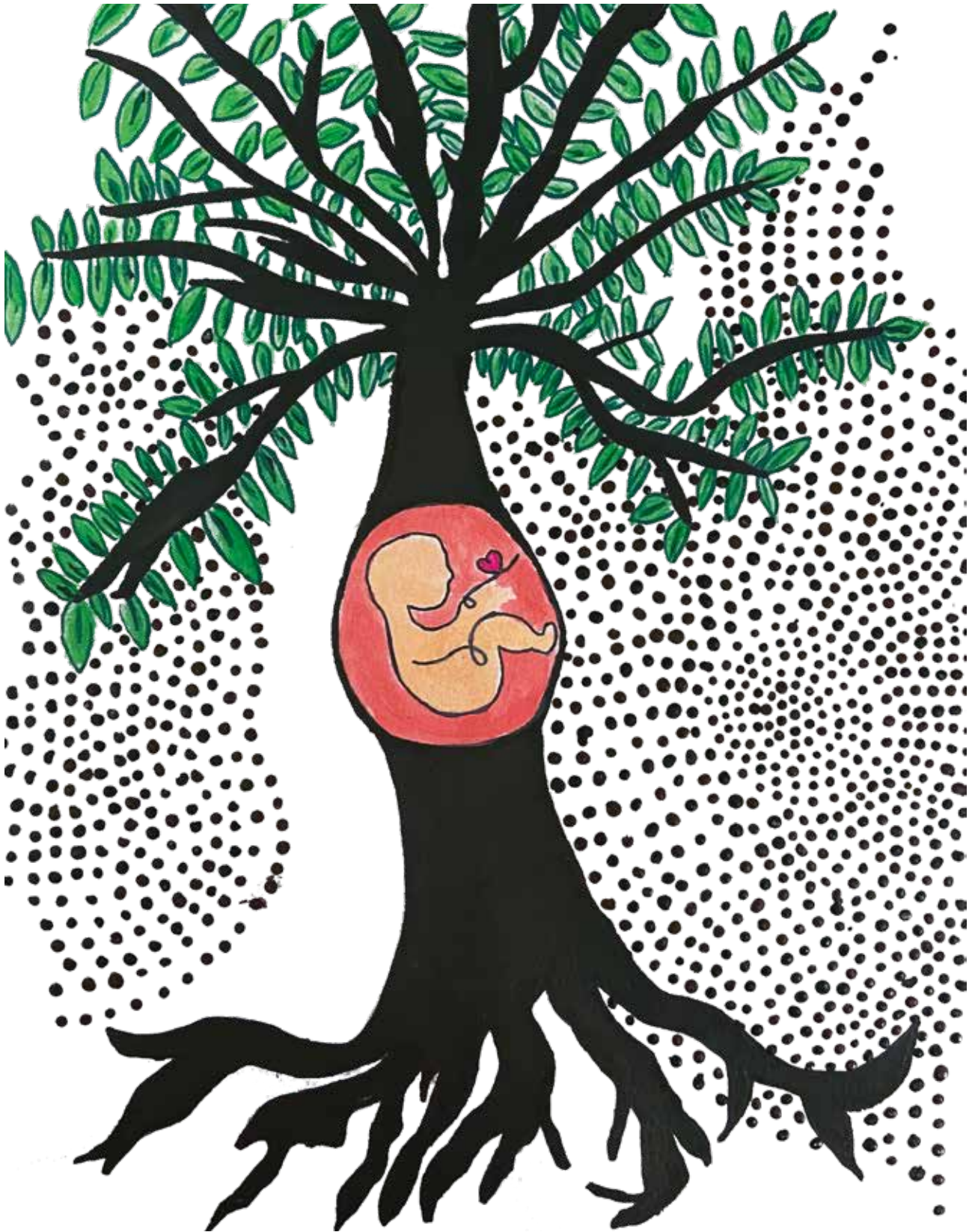
This guide contains 7 chapters. At the beginning of each chapter, we outline the Chapter Aim/s, estimated teaching time, resources required and structure. The general structure of each chapter is as follows:

1. Teacher preparation
2. Activity options

This guide contains two student questionnaires: one to be completed prior to teaching the content chapters to understand the students' knowledge baseline (located at the start of the guide), and the other to be completed after the content is taught to identify the knowledge change following use of this teaching guide (located at the end of the guide).

A teacher feedback form is also provided for sharing with the authors of this guide.

Photo: Aerial view over Western Cape York, near Weipa, Queensland



Contents



**Student questionnaire
on baseline menstrual
health knowledge**

Page 4



What is puberty?

Page 6



**Knowledge
about periods**

Page 9



**Changes experienced
during periods
(emotional & physical)**

Page 16



Period care products

Page 19



**Supporting
menstruators**

Page 24



**Empowering choices:
navigating consent
and contraception**

Page 27



**Keeping clean
to be healthy**

Page 32



**Student questionnaire
on menstrual health
knowledge**

Page 34

About this guide

Why is this teaching guide important?

Menstrual health¹ can have a direct impact on a student's academic performance, health, and quality of life [2]. Students' menstrual health 'literacy' (awareness and familiarity with information) can be insufficient to manage these challenges [2]. There has been an increasing focus to improve students' menstrual health literacy by focusing on providing specific information through curriculum [2]. Yet, teachers may find it challenging to address menstrual health, due to cultural norms and attitudes that underlies layers of complexity to this topic [3]. In some cultures it may be considered 'women's business' [3], and often "...people don't really want to speak about [menstruation]" [4].

Discussing health topics that have previously been taboos, such as menstrual health/periods, can be challenging for individuals. Engaging in open and honest conversations around menstrual health can help remove existing stigma and is essential to promoting the overall health and wellbeing of individuals and society [5].

This guide will provide free educational support for teachers, students, and parents, in addition to the government resources in schools.

What is this teaching guide about?

Menstrual health is crucial to a person's health and wellbeing and is recognized as a human rights issue, with physical, psychological and social dimensions, by the World Health Organisation [2,6]. This teaching guide was developed to support Queensland schoolteachers when teaching about menstrual health, puberty and consent for students in mid-primary and secondary schools. This guide provides menstrual health information, resources, and teaching activities to strengthen current learning about menstrual health in classrooms. However, this guide is not limited to school and is freely available to students and parents (available online or as a printable copy).

The health related information written builds upon, and is guided by the Health and Physical Education (HPE) Focus Areas from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), under section 'Relationships and Sexuality', where 'puberty' is first mentioned in years 5-6 [7]. This guide is also

according to the 'Student Learning and Wellbeing Framework', 'Building the capability of staff, students and the school community' regarding "providing health and wellbeing learning opportunities for students through curriculum focused on mental health, relationships and sexuality..." [8]. This guide covers many topics about menstruation including the development, experiences and health-impacts of menstruation, discussions on creating healthy and safe choices, as well as resources and supports available to help students develop skill and empower them in understanding and making better-informed decision about their own, or others' health, wellbeing, and safety.

Background on menstruators' experience and guide development

Previous research by the guide's authors, Nina Lansbury and Minnie King, collated 16 challenges associated with menstrual health as identified by female students who live remotely in Queensland's Western Cape York Peninsula [9]. These challenges (shown in the table below) guided the content development of this teaching resource, to ensure that we were able to discuss, teach, and answer the student's identified challenges.



Minnie King presenting to students at St Joseph's Parish School, Weipa (2024)

¹ 'Menstrual health' is defined as complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing in relation to the menstrual cycle 1.Hennegan, J.; Winkler, I.T.; Bobel, C.; Keiser, D.; Hampton, J.; Larsson, G.; Chandra-Mouli, V.; Plesons, M.; Mahon, T. Menstrual health: a definition for policy, practice, and research. *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters* 2021, 29, 1911618, doi:10.1080/26410397.2021.1911618.

Challenge
Pain and mood management: getting through day and night.
School attendance: feel moody and cramping
Household and housing: no storage, no privacy, teasing
Cost of sanitary products: price and quality, access to sanitary products. Where, who+how to buy.
Waste management for sanitary products: where's the bin?
Family life: different homes for sleeping.
Monthlies knowledge for girls: they don't know much and they tease us.
Cultural reasons around menstruation: shame
Hygiene and health: tricky to keep clean.
Bodily changes: growing up
Household priorities: pads aren't the main priority
Sanitary product preferences: I want to wear tampons but mom won't let me.
Disabilities and monthlies: extra difficult
Knowledge and education about menstruation: not sure what's happening and when
The effect of birth control on menstrual cycles: changes from the rod or the pill

Table 1: Challenges identified by female students regarding menstrual health.

How was this guide developed?

This guide was developed on Country, through collaboration with community, students, and teachers over the past eight years in the Western Cape York, Queensland. The main research framework was done on Alnigh Country in Weipa in the Western Cape. It was also facilitated through the other Western Cape remote communities with a particular acknowledgement to the Napranum and the Old Mapoon Aboriginal Communities. As a result, this is the first menstrual health teaching guide developed on Country and involving majority Indigenous students. It was important for the relevance and usefulness of this guide that it covers questions, topics and information derived directly from discussion with students. This ensures that the guide aligns and covers the information students from the Western Cape are wanting to know.

This teaching guide features contributions from five Western Cape campuses and schools: Western Cape College (Mapoon campus, Weipa junior campus, Weipa senior campus, and Weipa residential campus with students from 27 remote communities) and St Joseph's Parish School, Weipa.

This draft teaching guide has been taken back to the Western Cape to be tested with school students and teachers to gather feedback on what is sought

from a teaching guide. The guide was trialed in sessions with male and female students from years 3 to 12, with no content omitted based on gender. The delivery and complexity of information was adjusted for different age groups, and overall was well received by students and teachers.

Ethical and other permissions for working with the students were provided by The University of Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee (2021/HE002731) and Education Queensland (2022, reference number 550/27/).

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for anyone who wants to learn about menstrual health. The guide is intended to be easy for teachers to pick up and use, regardless of whether they are a menstruator or not.

Delivery of teaching guide: creating a safe space for menstrual education

In some cultures, and settings, menstruation may be considered a taboo topic, making it difficult to teach. However, through trialing menstruation education in the Western Cape, we have found that this is not always the case. By creating a safe learning space for students, the perceived taboo fades, allowing students to open up, fostering a 'period positive' environment for learning².

To create this safe space, the delivery approach of menstrual education is crucial. Below are some recommendations for creating a safe, culturally appropriate environment for your students to engage and open up whilst teaching previously taboo topics.

- Include family members and caregivers during menstrual education. Through having familiar faces to the students being there and involved in class, this helps to normalise menstruation.
- Have an Indigenous person present who has a cultural understanding of menstrual health (teacher, family member, community member, elder etc.). Having someone who students can relate to can also help to normalise menstruation, and help students understand menstruation is a normal biological process that others, like themselves, also experience.
- Have both female and male teachers teaching about menstrual health. This may encourage further student input for all students, and further opportunities to enhance their menstrual health learning.
- Use inclusive terminology. In this guide we use the term 'menstruator' to communicate without gender, as some people who menstruate do not identify as a girl or woman.

² We recognise the value of teachers bringing their own insights and working in collaboration with their students to identify how they will define what is a safe space and how they can create this together. In doing so, this could empower students in learning and teachers in teaching.

- Ensure there is someone present who is aware of any students' cultural or family dynamics that may impact their engagement and/or participation in class.

Every student may have a different level of exposure and understanding of menstruation, which in some cases can be affected by their family and living circumstances. It is important these students feel supported in a safe environment where they are free to learn and ask questions without judgement. This person may be the teacher, family or community members, or caregiver.

- Let students excuse themselves from the discussion whenever required. Sometimes students may feel uncomfortable and want to leave the room. Having this freedom to leave and come back proved beneficial to many students when trialing menstrual education in the Western Cape.
- If there are sufficient staff members, it can be beneficial to hold parallel discussions with students who are shy or uncomfortable with the information being covered. This approach allows these students to still engage with the content and have their questions answered.

For additional training and resources around providing cultural sensitivity for teaching menstrual health and general health education, The University of Queensland has free modules available on 'Creating Brave Spaces for Health Communication'. Visit: public-health.uq.edu.au/health-communication-essentials/creating-brave-spaces-health-communication.

Top tips for delivery to students

As we developed this guide, students asked us a range of questions shaped by their life experiences, living environment, access to social media and exposure to the adult world. For example, students inquired about topics like miscarriage, men being around the house, absence of a mother, and difficulties in talking to their father or mother. When such questions arise, use your discretion as you know

your students best, and try to stay on track with the content being taught.

Over the last 5 years, teachers' feedback has indicated the value in repetition to help reinforce the topics and information in this guide. We have also observed that young students (pre-pubescent) listen well and without awkwardness. If there is awkwardness, this indicates that the information may be relevant at a contemporary level, making it important to teach/address.

There may also be giggling and silly comments, but it is best to remain calm and remain in control to guide your students back on track. This awkward behaviour from students may reflect that those students have not had much exposure to open discussions on topics that are typically unspoken or considered as taboo.

Impact of this teaching guide to date

So far this teaching guide has been trialed in 2 schools, 3 campuses, for boys and girls, from years 3 to 12 in the Western Cape York (approximately over 400 students). Some of the key moments and feedback from students so far have been:

In an upper primary class of boys:

Male student: *"Why do we have to learn this [period information] when we are boys?"*

Other male students (various responses): *"so we can help the girls", "for our wives and girlfriends", "so you can help people", "in case there is a trans person in the class"*

In a teenage class of girls (various student responses):

Facilitator: *"What have you learned from this session?"*

Female students (various responses): *"I learned everything; I didn't know anything [before]", "We learned how to use a tampon", "we learned it's nothing to be ashamed of", "[I learned] that sometimes girls don't have products", "[we can] make them comfortable and show empathy."*



Nina Lansbury and Minnie King presenting to students at Western Cape College, Weipa campus (2024)

Student questionnaire

on baseline menstrual health knowledge



This quiz is designed to assess your current understanding of menstrual health. It is perfectly fine if you don't know much yet, as you will learn all about menstrual health soon!

Name: _____ Date: _____

Try to write down as much as you can, but if you don't know the answers, just leave the answer box blank.

1. How many parts of the female reproductive system can you name? If you know the purpose of any parts, write this down too.

2. What are some changes girls and boys might see/feel/experience during puberty?

3. What is contraception?

4. Can you name any contraception methods?

5. What does 'consent' mean to you?

6. How many period care products can you name?

7. Can you name any places where you may be able to find or buy period care products?

8. Name as many physical or emotional changes menstruators may face when they are on their period

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident are you in your ability to provide support to any menstruators in your life? 1 = not confident, 5 = very confident.

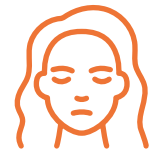
12345

10. On a scale of 1 to 5, how embarrassed or ashamed are you about talking about periods or getting a period? 1 = very embarrassed/ashamed, 5 = not embarrassed/ashamed at all.

12345

Chapter 1

What is puberty?



Chapter aim/s: Introduce the topic of puberty and ensure students are familiar with a variety of physical changes that occur during puberty. Establish an environment where conversation around puberty and growing up is normalised, fostering an open and inclusive environment for teaching, learning and discussion.

Estimated teaching time: Classroom activity 1 (25 minutes), Classroom activity 2 (15 minutes)

Resources required:

Classroom activity 1:

- Laptop/Device with internet access
- Somewhere to stream/project video to class

Classroom activity 2:

- Paper
- Markers/pens

Chapter structure:

1. Teacher preparation (5 Minutes)
2. Classroom activity 1: Video about puberty
3. Classroom activity 2: Group discussion
 - Identifying changes during puberty

Teacher preparation

To prepare for teaching this chapter, it is important to become familiar with what happens during puberty.

Have a read of the below visual representation of the Tanner Scale. The Tanner Scale displays 5 stages of body development during puberty from childhood, adolescences, and adulthood [10]. For additional preparation, it is recommended you read the suggested answers for teaching activity 2 and look up anything you want to know more about or with which you are unfamiliar.

Teacher's note:

For younger students (years 3-8), it is recommended to use both classroom activities, as Activity 2 reinforces what is learned in Activity 1. For older students (years 9-12), or if you are unable to view the video in class, Activity 2 can be used as a standalone activity.

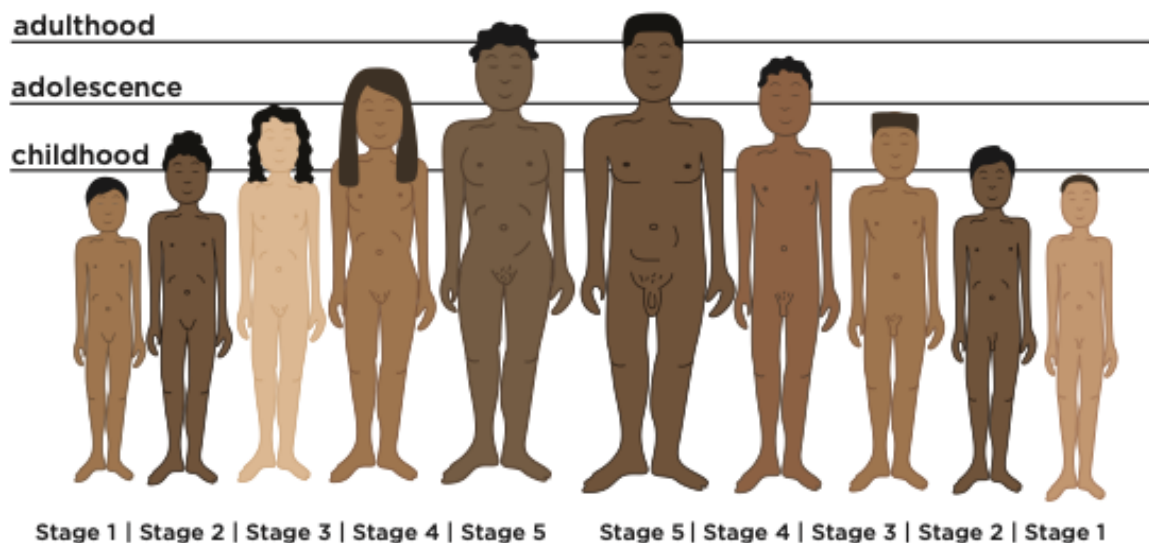


Students viewing period care products during an information session at after school care, Napranum (2022).

Puberty Tanner Stages Visual - Teacher resource

The Tanner Scale was created by doctors to show the progressive stages of body development for boys and girls. Everyone progresses from childhood to adulthood at his or her own pace.

THE TANNER SCALE



CHANGES FOR GIRLS

STAGE 1 (USUALLY AGES 8-11)

Hormone production begins; ovaries enlarge.

STAGE 2 (AVERAGE AGES 11-12)

Breast buds grow.
Height and weight increases.
Fine pubic hair appears.

STAGE 3 (AVERAGE AGES 12-13)

Breasts grow.
Pubic hair darkens.
Vagina enlarges and begins to produce discharge.
First menstrual period may occur.

STAGE 4 (AVERAGE AGES 13-14)

Underarm hair appears.
First menstrual period is likely; ovulation begins in some girls, but is irregular.

STAGE 5 (AVERAGE AGE 15)

Growth is complete.
Menstruation and ovulation are well established.

CHANGES FOR BOYS

STAGE 1 (USUALLY AGES 9-12)

Male hormone production becomes active.

STAGE 2 (AVERAGE AGES 12-13)

Testicles and scrotum begin to enlarge.
Height increases.

STAGE 3 (AVERAGE AGES 13-14)

Penis begins to grow.
Pubic hair darkens.
Voice begins to deepen.
Facial hair and pimples may develop.

STAGE 4 (AVERAGE AGES 14-15)

Penis and testicles continue to grow.
Underarm hair appears and facial hair grows.
Most boys have first ejaculations.

STAGE 5 (AVERAGE AGE 16)

Near-full adult height and physique attained.
Shaving may begin.

HUMAN RELATIONS MEDIA

THE PUBERTY WORKSHOP AND CURRICULUM



Figure 1: The Tanner scale



Olivia Milsom and Nina Lansbury presenting to students at Western Cape College, Mapoon campus (2024).

Classroom activity 1:

Video about puberty

This activity is a 26 minute video on YouTube about changes that occur during puberty [11]. Play this video to the class and ask the students to write down or remember some of the changes which may occur during puberty that are discussed in the video: youtube.com/watch?v=5oHwS3MivGs

Classroom activity 2:

Group discussion - Identifying changes during puberty

This activity can be used following Activity 1, or as a standalone activity.

In small groups, ask students to answer the following questions.

- What are some changes you may experience during puberty?
- Do girls, boys or both experience this change?
- (Feel free to add your own questions that you think may benefit your students learning too).

Give the students 5-10 minutes to discuss these questions. When students are done/have had enough time, ask groups to share what puberty changes they have come up with.

Below is a list of changes that occur with puberty. Use this list to guide students if they are unsure, correct incorrect answers, and share any changes that students did not think of. This list is based on the changes outlined by Queensland Health [12].

Girls

- Breasts and nipples start to develop and grow.
- Your menstrual cycle and period will likely start.
- Your body changes shape and hips may get wider. This is so a female's pelvis can give birth later in life.
- You might experience vaginal discharge from the vagina. This is a clear/white sticky/goosey liquid that may appear in underwear or toilet paper.

Boys

- You may start to develop facial hair and hair on chest.
- Your voice will get deeper and 'crack'. This is due to the vocal cords getting thicker.
- Your shoulders may start to broaden as growth occurs.
- Sperm production, made in the testes, occurs during puberty.

Girls and boys

- You will start to grow taller.
- Pubic hair will begin to grow around genitals and underarms.
- You might get pimples or acne as your face produces more oil.
- You might start getting sweatier as during puberty your sweat glands may start to produce more sweat when you get nervous or upset.
- You may start noticing sexual/romantic feelings due to hormonal changes.

Chapter 2

Knowledge about periods



Chapter aim/s: Provide students with a basic foundational understanding of what a period is, and what could happen to them or friends and family, physically and emotionally.

Estimated teaching time: Classroom activity 1 (3 minutes), Classroom activity 2 (5 minutes), Classroom activity 3 (15 minutes), Classroom activity 4 (15 minutes).

Resources required:

Classroom activity 1:

- Laptop/Device with internet access
- Somewhere to stream/project video to class

Classroom activity 3 and 4:

- Printer to print out activity. One copy per student recommended.

Chapter structure:

1. Teacher preparation (10 Minutes)
2. Classroom activity 1: Introduction to menstruation video
3. Classroom activity 2: Period names
4. Classroom activity 3: 'True or False' period facts
5. Classroom activity 4: Learning about the female reproductive system

Teacher preparation

To prepare for teaching this chapter, the below information is pre-classroom knowledge that may help when questions arise from students. Below are some of the frequently asked questions (FAQ) and answers that students in the Western Cape shared with us. Feel free to share these questions and answers with the students, as these were questions that got asked often, and these are probably questions on the students minds that some may be too shy to ask.

FAQ 1: What exactly are periods and who gets them? [13,14]

- People who are born with a uterus will likely get their period.
- Periods are when a female's body releases blood from her uterus. This blood is released out through her vagina.
- Periods are caused by hormone changes. Hormones

are chemical messengers that tell the body to do certain things.

- Every month the ovaries release hormones which cause a lining to build up in the uterus. This lining takes about a month to develop.
- If the uterus lining is not fertilised by an egg, it breaks down and causes bleeding (this is what is known as the 'period').

FAQ 2: When do I get my period? [13-15]

- Usually, most girls get their periods once a month.
- Periods are different for everyone. Some girls' periods may be earlier, and some may be later.
- When you get your period for the first time, your period may be irregular
- A common age to get your period is around 12-13 years old. However, many girls also get their periods younger, and some may get it later.
- You usually stop getting your period around 45 to 55 years of age. This is called menopause.
- Periods also stop when women are pregnant.

FAQ 3: How long does a period last for? [15]

- Periods usually last between 3 to 7 days.

FAQ 4: How can I tell when my period is going to start? [16]

- You may experience some of physical and/or emotional changes before your period starts that may signal that your period is on its way. These include cramps/stomach and backaches, tender breasts, bloating, tiredness, acne and mood changes.
- You can also use a period tracking app to help track when your period may start. Some example apps include Apple Health and Flo.

FAQ 5: What do I experience during my period? [13,14,16]

- Blood will come out of your vagina. Usually about 2 tablespoons of blood will be lost during each period cycle.
- Everyone experiences different things when on your period. Some girls do not experience any symptoms other than bleeding.
- You may experience stomach pain/aches/cramps, tender breasts, backache, headache, bloating, tiredness, mood changes, cravings, skin and acne changes.

FAQ 6: When do I visit the doctor? [14,17]

- If you have not started your period by 15 years old.
- If you have had your period for 2 years and it is still irregular/doesn't come every month.
- If you bleed between periods.
- If you have severe pain at any time of the month.
- If your period does not stop after 1 week.
- If you really struggle to continue with everyday tasks/activities.
- If you are ever in doubt or unsure about your period, it is always best to get it checked by a medical professional.

FAQ 7: Does having my period stop me from doing my day-to-day activities?

- No, it does not have to.
- There are many things you can do to help continue with day-to-day activities, such as pain medication or using the right period care products for certain activities.

FAQ 8: Do you have to get a period? Can't you just take a pill to stop it? [18]

- It is possible to reduce the frequency or prevent a period from starting however, this is decided between yourself and the advice from a medical professional as it requires taking a hormonal birth control/contraception.
- It is always important to discuss this with an adult and medical professional as this can affect and change your body and is not always suitable for everyone.

Teacher's note:

It is recommended you use all classroom activities.

Before starting the classroom activities, it is important to acknowledge that, for many students, talking about periods may be difficult and considered as a taboo. When students begin to understand that menstruation is not something to be ashamed of and needs to be celebrated, students are more likely to open up and engage. A simple addressing this stigma is to ask students to raise a hand if they feel embarrassed talking about periods. Following this, acknowledge that periods are totally normal for anyone with a uterus, and is a biological process. Having a period is not something to be ashamed of. Rather, it is something to be proud of! Puberty is a pathway to adulthood - a step towards exiting childhood and entering a new chapter of our lives, and potentially unlocking some wonderful future experiences such as parenthood. It is a natural process that shows you are growing and developing. It is a great idea to remind students of this throughout the chapter and teaching guide.

Classroom activity 1:

Introduction to menstruation video

Watch this short video on menstruation to help prepare the students for the upcoming content/topic: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emUq6SsRIwg> (2:38 minutes)

Classroom activity 2:

Period names

This is a quick and fun class activity where students can share any funny names that they have heard instead of 'period'. Get students to discuss with the person next to them (or in small groups) what names they have heard, and then ask students to raise their hand and share with the class any names they came up with. Tell students to get creative!

Teacher's note:

Classroom activities 3 and 4 are created by the authors on Canva. Below you will find the printout copy for both activities, as well as a large copy of the female reproductive system diagram which you can use as a resource. This diagram was sourced from Queensland Health [19].

Classroom activity 3:

'True or False' period facts

This is a 'true or false' fact sheet. Students are to circle T (true) or F (false) for each statement. Below is the task sheet, and an answers sheet for teachers. The students' responses can be a useful opening for further classroom discussion of the topics.

Classroom activity 4:

Learning about the female reproductive system

Ask students to label the diagram of the female reproductive system. Some may not have heard the term reproductive system before; the reproductive system is defined as the tissues, glands, and organs involved in producing offspring [20]. Then ask them to the listed role of the female reproductive system to its correct name/part. Below is the activity sheet.

At the start of this activity, or at any point throughout, a great way to get the students thinking about the reproductive system is to let them understand and visualise the size of the uterus. For this, ask students to stand, make a fist with their hand, then put their hand where their uterus is. Let them know, that the size of their fist is the size of their uterus. Students find this really fascinating to understand what is inside a female's body.

Period Quiz

True or False

Circle T (True) or F (False)

1. Periods happen once a month. **T / F**
2. 15 tablespoons of blood is lost during a period **T / F**
3. Girls and boys have a period **T / F**
4. Periods are normal and healthy **T / F**
5. Period blood are from the lining in the uterus breaking down **T / F**
6. Periods can be irregular for the first 2 years **T / F**
7. Period blood is dirty blood that the body is trying to get rid of **T / F**
8. Period blood varies in consistency and colour **T / F**
9. Periods always last 1 week **T / F**
10. Periods are caused by hormone changes in the body **T / F**

Answers

Period Quiz True or False

1 = T

This is generally true, however menstrual cycle frequency can vary from person to person. Typically, menstrual cycles last 28 days, but they can be slightly longer or shorter too. Factors such as stress, hormone changes, and health conditions can always affect how regular your period may be.

2 = F

You only lose around 2-3 tablespoons of blood per each period!

3 = F

Only people who are born as biologically female have a period. Only girls and women experience periods, boys do not.

4 = T

Periods are totally normal! Most people assigned as female at birth will have their period.

5 = T

This is true, period blood does come from your uterus lining. During the menstrual cycle, the ovaries release hormones which cause a lining to

build up in the uterus. This lining takes about a month to develop. If this lining is not fertilised by an egg (pregnancy), it breaks down and causes bleeding. This is your period!

6 = T

It is common for your period to be irregular in the first 2 years of starting your period. Hormone changes during this adolescent time can cause changes in the length and flow of your period.

7 = F

Period blood is not dirty. It is totally normal, and consists of blood, tissue and fluids.

8 = T

The colour and consistency may change and can be different for everyone! Blood can be bright red to dark brown. The consistency can be light to heavy. You may even get some lumps. These are called 'clots' and are normal too!

9 = F

The duration of periods can change and be different for everyone. It may be anywhere from 3 days to 7 days.

10 = T

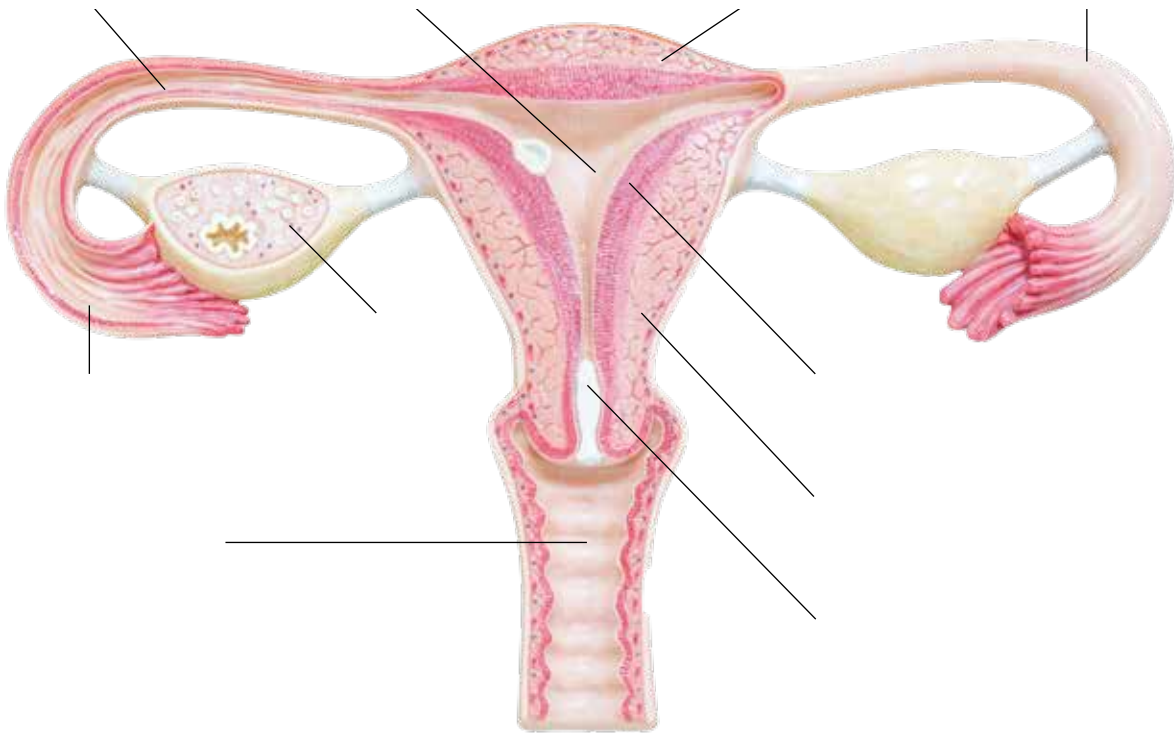
Periods are caused by hormone changes in the body. These hormones are estrogen and progesterone. Their role is important in the development and shedding of the uterus lining.

Answers from: Healthdirect. Menstruation (periods): Healthdirect Australia; 2022 [Available from: healthdirect.gov.au/menstruation#doctor]. Nemours KidsHealth. All about Periods 2018 [Available from: kidshealth.org/en/teens/menstruation.html]. The Women's. About periods Victoria, Australia: The Royal Women's Hospital; n.d. [Available from thewomens.org.au/health-information/periods-overview/about-periods].



Female reproductive system activity

Label the parts of the female reproductive system



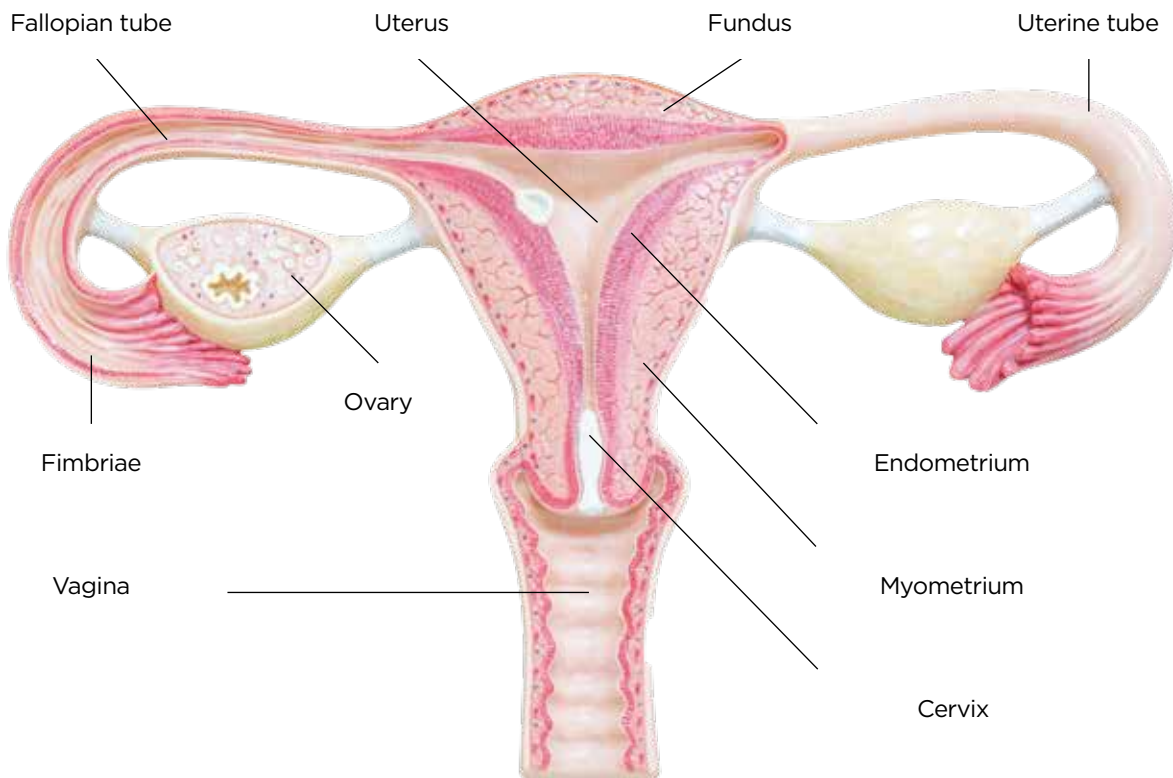
Connect the name to the role of parts of the female reproductive system.

Fallopian tube	Passage way for period blood to leave
Ovary	Transports eggs to uterus
Uterus	Muscular middle layer of uterus
Vagina	Produce and store eggs, and make hormones that control periods and pregnancy
Cervix	Dome shaped. Helps to balance hormones during pregnancy, and protect the fetus.
Myometrium	Inner layer of uterus. Thickens during menstrual cycle, then sheds if an egg is not fertilised, causing bleeding.
Endometrium	Finger like projections, catches the egg released by the ovaries each month and sweeps it into the fallopian tube.
Fundus	Where eggs can be fertilised and implanted in the uterus lining. If not fertilised, uterus lining breaks down and causes your period.
Uterine tube	Another word for fallopian tube. Connects ovary to uterus, allowing for the egg to be transported to uterus.
Fimbriae	Allows blood to travel from uterus into vagina during period.

Answers from: Cleveland Clinic. Health Library Cleveland, USA: Cleveland Clinic; n.d. [Available from: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health>.

Female reproductive system activity

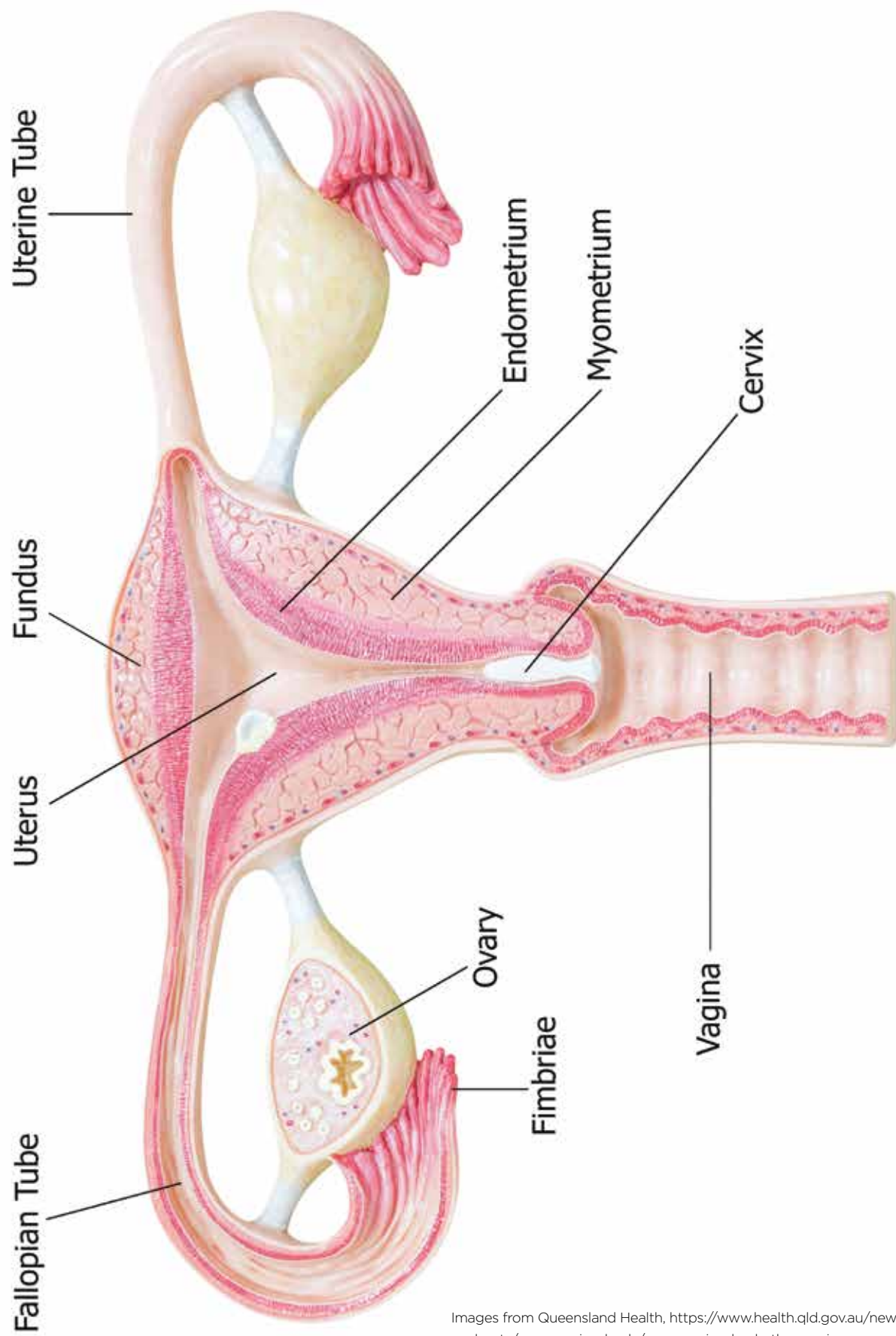
Answers - Label the parts of the female reproductive system



Connect the name to the role of parts of the female reproductive system.

Fallopian tube	Passage way for period blood to leave
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Answers from: Cleveland Clinic. Health Library Cleveland, USA: Cleveland Clinic; n.d. [Available from: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health>.



Images from Queensland Health, <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/newsroom/podcasts/my-amazing-body/my-amazing-body-the-ovaries>

Chapter 3

Changes during periods

(emotional and physical)



Chapter aim/s: For students to understand a range of changes menstruators face when on their period, both emotional and physical changes. To help students understand what might happen when they get their period. If they are already menstruating, make students feel and understand what they experience is normal and lots of people also experience these changes.

Estimated teaching time: Classroom activity 1 (10 minutes), Classroom activity 2 (15-20 minutes).

Resources required:

Classroom activity 1:

- Print out of the crossword (one copy per student)

Classroom activity 2:

- One sheet of paper (A4/A3) per group
- Pens
- Markers
- Colouring pencils

Chapter structure:

1. Teacher preparation (5 Minutes)
2. Classroom activity 1: Crossword activity
3. Classroom activity 2: Period infographic/posters

Teacher preparation:

To prepare for teaching this chapter, ensure a copy of Activity 1 is printed for each student. For Activity 2, ensure that the paper (is preferably in A3 size, although any available size is fine), markers/pens/pencils etc are available and ready for use. Reading over the activity descriptions is also helpful to do before class.

Teacher's note:

You can choose to do both activities with your class, or if short on time, choosing whichever activity is best suited to the class is also fine!

Classroom activity 1:

Crossword Activity

This activity is a crossword activity, so please ensure that one copy per student is printed out. See below for the printout and the answers.

The crosswords answers cover physical or emotional changes that menstruators may encounter around the time of their period.

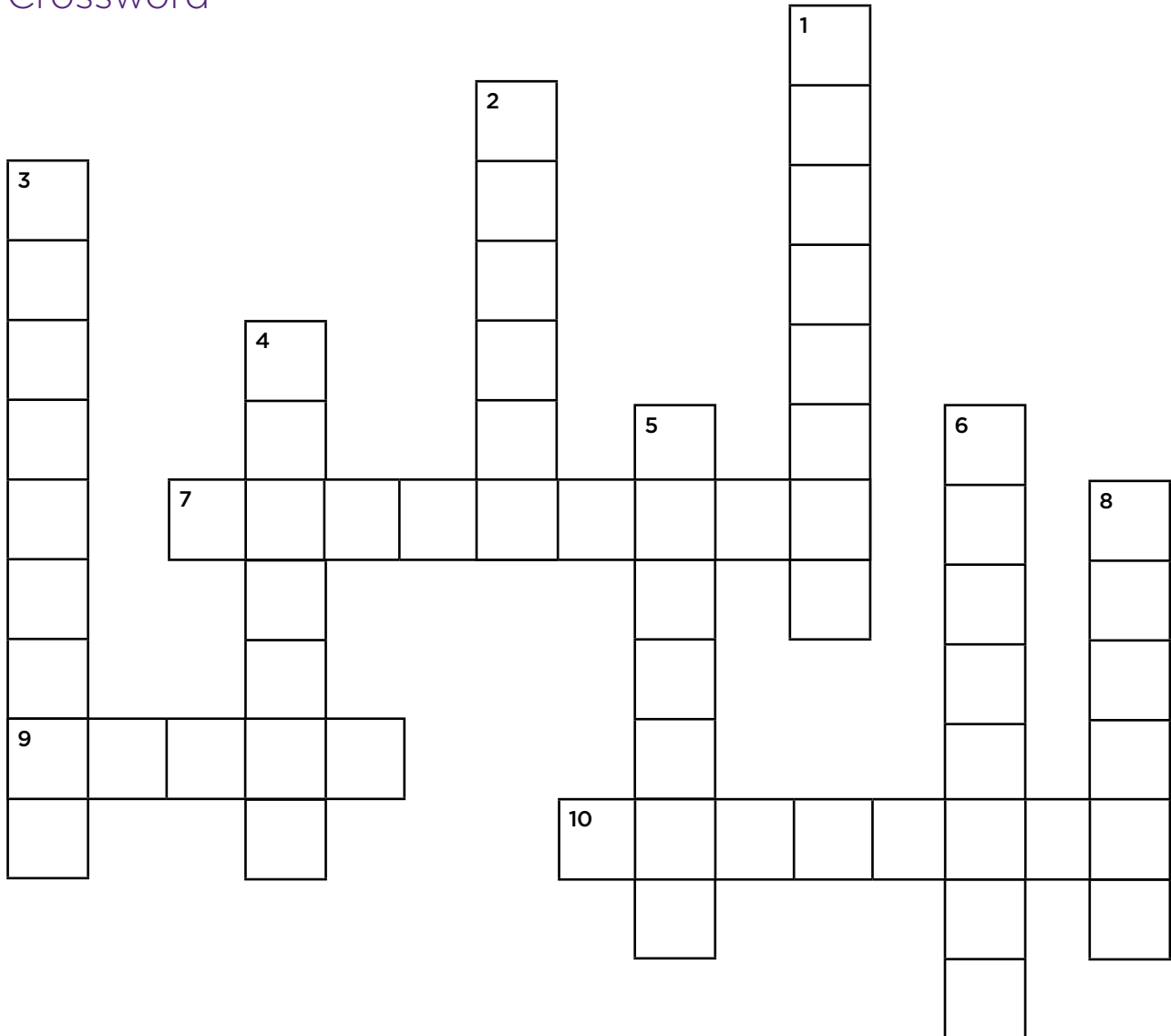
Whilst students are doing their crossword, encourage discussion between students. See if students understand what each answer means, if they, or someone they know has experienced it? Help guide students towards the correct answers if they are unsure.



Olivia Milsom presenting to students at Western Cape College, Mapoon campus (2024)

Changes during menstruation

Crossword



Across

7. Changes in emotions during your period.
9. A feeling you may experience when on your period, where you feel fatigued and may want to sleep or nap.
10. Pain in your head which can be from hormonal changes during menstruation.

Down

1. Wanting to eat certain foods on your period.
2. Pain that menstruators feel during their periods, typically around the stomach area.
3. A popular food many menstruators want to eat during menstruation.
4. Stomach can feel fuller during menstruation.
5. Change to skin that may occur around the time of menstruation due to hormonal changes.
6. Pain in lower back that some may experience during menstruation.
8. Breasts may feel.....during menstruation, and for some they may even get larger in size.

Changes during menstruation

Crossword



Classroom activity 2:

Period infographic/posters

For this activity you will need A4/A3 paper, and markers/pencils/pens for each group. Split the class into pairs or small groups. Allocate the groups into either the 'physical changes' or 'emotional changes' category; try to evenly split groups into each category.

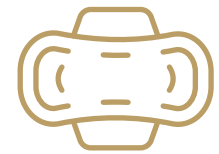
Each group is to design an infographic/poster about some physical or emotional changes menstruators may face. Encourage students to think about changes they may experience in different scenarios: work, in academic performance, school attendance,

extracurricular activities, playing sports etc. Get students to also think about 3 people in their life who may be able to help them with the changes identified.

Give students around 15-20 minutes to complete their infographic/poster, then buddy groups up (trying to put an emotional changes group with a physical changes group), to share their posters with the other group.

Chapter 4

Period care products



Chapter aim/s: For students to become familiar with a range of period products and how to use them. Informing students on the range of period products available to them allows them to make an informed choice on what products they would like to use and that suit their lifestyle best.

Estimated teaching time: Classroom activity 1 (15-20 minutes), Classroom activity 2 (15-20 minutes), Classroom activity 3 (10-15 minutes).

Resources required:

Classroom activity 1:

- Table/area to set up display.
- Period care products. See below table for an approximate cost list (based on Woolworths Weipa as of January 2024[21]). We suggest schools have their own 'Period Care Bag' that can be reused for this activity. You can source a 'Period Care Bag' by either the teacher or school purchasing one, or you can register to receive a pack that includes some of these items from U By Kotex at <https://www.ubykotex.com.au/teachers>

Liner pads	~ \$4.40
Regular pads	~ \$5.40
Super pads	~ \$5.20
Overnight pads	~ \$6.20
Reusable pads	~ \$27.00
Regular tampons	~ \$6.90
Super tampons	~ \$6.90
Menstrual cup	~ \$45.00
Regular period pants	~ \$25.00
Super period pants	~ \$31.00
Total	= \$163.00

Chapter structure:

1. Teacher preparation
 2. Classroom activity 1: Touch and Feel Table - What are the different products?
- OR
3. Classroom activity 2: Online display - What are the different products?
 4. Classroom activity 3: Where to get period care products and how to dispose of them



Period care products for sale at the supermarket, Weipa (2024).

Teacher preparation:

To prepare for this chapter, please ensure you are familiar with the range of available period products (pads, tampons, menstrual cups, period pants, reusable pads), and how they are used by menstruators. For any product with which you are unfamiliar, please refer to the pamphlet for Classroom activity 2 (found in the resource section for this chapter) or conduct your own research to find out more information.

Please note that activity 1 and activity 2 cover the same content but offer an online and in-person option.

To prepare for Classroom activity 1: You may need to purchase or gain access (from home, friends, family, school nurse etc) to a range of new and unused period products for this activity. Try to find as many as possible to display as this will really help the students become familiar with the products available to them.

To prepare for Classroom activity 3: Please set aside 10 minutes to make the quiz on the online Kahoots platform or in another form that best suits you. See the Activity for more information.

Classroom activity 1:

Touch table

The aim is to enable students to become familiar with a range of period products and knowledge on how to use each one. This allows menstruators to make an informed choice on products they would like to use, and products which suit their lifestyle most.

Below is an example of a touch table and some of the products that should be included on the table. Try to include as many products as possible. If you are unable to source all the products, ensure you describe and explain the products you are missing; including a picture may be really helpful too!

This activity has 3 components:

1. Setting up the touch table for the students.
2. Describing each of the products and how to use them (see the resources section of this chapter for the 'Period Product Pamphlet'. This contains information about each period product).
3. Letting the students touch and discuss each of the products. This may stimulate conversation amongst students and allow you to answer any questions they may have.

Classroom activity 2:

Online display – What are the different products?

For this activity, either provide your students with a physical copy (found below. 3 per sheet to cut out for students.) of the 'Period Product Pamphlet'. This pamphlet was created by the authors on Canva.

Talk your students through each product on the pamphlet. To supplement the information on the pamphlet, below are some additional teaching resources.

- How to use pads and menstrual cups: [youtube.com/watch?v=kmWbOC8Fbb0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmWbOC8Fbb0) (2:09 minutes)
- How to use a tampon: [youtube.com/watch?v=SxpmxDUFLd8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxpmxDUFLd8) (1:16 minutes)
- Information about re-usable products: cityservices.act.gov.au/recyclopaedia/factsheets/menstrual-products



Period products

REUSABLES

Reusable pads

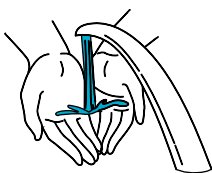
Reusable pads are made from cloth and operate like a conventional pad. It is attached to the underwear through a button, and a removable cloth is inserted into the pad, which can be washed and reused. The pad can be changed as often as deemed necessary, typically every 3-6 hours.

Period pants

Regular underwear with extra padding to absorb period blood. Wear like normal underwear, wash to clean and then you can reuse. Change as often as needed, usually one pair per day.

Menstrual cup

Silicone/rubber funnel shaped cup that gets inserted into the vagina and collects blood. Cups can be changed once a day and can be washed out and reused.



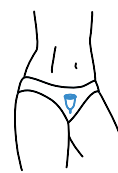
Wash hands



Fold cup up small



Twist cup to make sure it is now opened and sealed



Done



Wash and reuse

DISPOSABLES

Pads

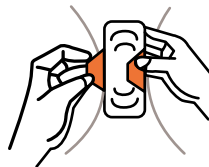
An absorbent material designed to absorb blood can be attached to the inside of underwear using adhesive stickers. These disposable pads must be replaced every 3-6 hours or as required. Pads are available in various sizes, such as regular, super, liners, and long (for overnight use), and also come in different thickness.



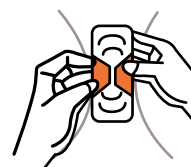
Unwrap pad



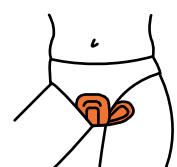
Remove back sticker



Attach to pants and remove wing stickers



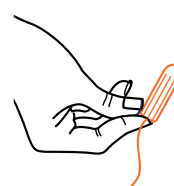
Attach wings underneath pants



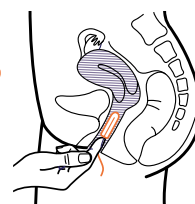
Done

Tampons

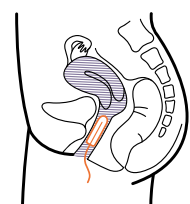
Inserted into the vagina and expands as it absorbs blood. A string hangs out of the vagina, which is used to remove the tampon. Tampons are inserted correctly when you cannot feel it inside you. There are several types; regular, super, sport, applicator etc. Change as often as needed, often every 3-6 hours, and dispose of when changing.



Hold tampon at an angle



Push the tampon in



Tampon is in place

Classroom activity 3:

Where to get period care products, how to dispose of them, and FAQs.

This activity consists of 14 multiple choice questions and 6 facts/tips scattered in between. We suggest you create your own free Kahoot quiz using these questions and answers for a fun and interactive quiz for students.

Note: correct answers are in the highlighted box. Some questions have multiple answers. Some answers in the Kahoot/Quiz are cited – please see the final reference list to find the corresponding reference for that answer.

Question 1: Where can you buy period care products?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| A: Pharmacy | B: Bakery |
| C: Supermarket (e.g. Woolies) | D: Furniture Store |

Question 2: Who are some people you could ask for period care products from?

- | | |
|------------------------|------------|
| A: School nurse | B: Friends |
| C: School office staff | D: Teacher |

Question 3: How long does it take for a pad to break down (decompose)?

- | | |
|------------|-------------------|
| A: 1 year | B: 500 years [22] |
| C: 30 days | D: 50 years |

Question 4: What are some environmentally friendly period care products?

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| A: Organic products | B: Reusable products |
| C: There are NO environmentally friendly products | D: Disposable products |

Fun fact!

Unlike non-organic and disposable products which can take over 500 years to break down, organic products are much more environmentally friendly and take a lot less time to break down! [22]

Question 5: Which of these is NOT a reusable period care product?

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| A: Fabric pads | B: Menstrual cup |
| C: Period pants | D: Tampon |

Question 6: How often should a menstrual cup be changed?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| A: Every 6-12 hours [23] | B: Every 4-6 hours |
| C: Once during your period cycle | D: Every 24 hours |

You should know...Although menstrual cups should be changed every 12 hours, on heavier flow days it may need to be changed more often.

Question 7: How do you clean a menstrual cup?

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| A: You can't, it must be thrown away | B: You don't need to clean it |
| C: Remove, empty blood, wash with water. Also boil between cycles [23] | D: Put it in the washing machine |

Question 8: How often should you change period pants?

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| A: Every 3 days | B: Every 8-12 hours, depending on flow [24] |
| C: Once a week | D: Every hour |

Question 9: How do you clean period pants?

A: Put them in the washing machine

B: Use cleaning wipes to wipe them clean

C: Soak in soapy water and then rinse [24]

D: Every hour

Top tip:

If you don't feel comfortable or don't have somewhere private to clean or leave your period pants, you could wash them when you shower and dry them in your bedroom.

Also, depending on the brand of pants you buy, they can have different washing instructions. It is best to check the cleaning instructions before use.

If you get blood on your clothes, soak clothes in cold water before you scrub! This will help to remove the blood and not stain anything.

Question 10: How often should you change pads or tampons?

A: Every hour

B: Every 4-8 hours, depending on flow [23]

C: Once a day

D: Only when they feel uncomfortable

Question 11: How should period care products like pads and tampons be disposed of properly?

A: Flushed down the toilet

B: Throw in the regular bin

C: Composted in the garden

D: Put in sanitary bins which are found next to the toilet in female bathrooms

Question 12: Can a tampon get stuck?

A: No, it is impossible to get stuck

B: Yes, it always gets stuck

C: Yes, but it is uncommon

D: Yes, but only once a week

You should know...

Although tampons can get stuck, it is uncommon, and doesn't happen for everyone. There is no need to freak out or worry, because it won't get lost, and can be removed. Tampons can get stuck if they are not inserted properly, you are not bleeding much (might be dry, the blood acts as a lubricant to help insert and remove the tampon!), the string breaks, or if you forget you have one inserted and insert another (this makes it harder to find the first tampon). If this happens to yourself or someone you know, stay calm and relax. Insert a clean finger or find the string to gently remove the tampon. Try sitting in a squat position to help push the tampon down. If you can't remove it, don't stress, get medical advice and a medical professional can help. Remember, this is uncommon!

Question 13: Can the tampon string break?

A: No, the string is super strong

B: Only if the tampon is old

C: Only if it is not inserted properly

D: Yes, but it is rare

You should know...

Although it is possible for the tampon string to break, the string is designed to be very strong, and only very rarely does the string break. Many girls will never have a tampon string break! If the string does break, no need to worry, because with either one or two clean fingers, you can insert your fingers and can pull out the tampon.

Question 14: How does a tampon help with swimming?

A: Tampons don't help, you will bleed in the water

B: Tampons absorb the menstrual blood, meaning there will be no leakage or blood while you swim

C: Tampons make you float

D: Tampons should not be used in water

You should know...

Tampons are great to use if you are going swimming! They prevent leakage, are designed to be comfortable so that you swim as normal, and they are great because you can't see them in swimmers. Tampons work the exact same both inside and outside the pool, and a great product to use if you like to swim! Another alternative that is only recently in the shops is period swimwear. These are made by the same companies that make period underwear.

Chapter 5

Supporting menstruators



Chapter aim/s: The aim of this chapter is for students to discover some ways in which they can help and support themselves, friends, family or others when menstruating. The activities can help students build confidence making decisions about their bodies.

Estimated teaching time: Classroom activity 1 (20-30 minutes), Classroom activity 2 (20-30 minutes)

Resources required:

Classroom activity 1:

- Scenario cards (1 per group)

Classroom activity 2:

- A2 sheets of paper (1 per group)
- Pens (at least 1 per group)

Chapter structure:

1. Teacher preparation (5-10 Minutes)
2. Classroom activity 1: Role Playing Scenarios
3. Classroom activity 2: Brainstorming ways to help

Teacher preparation:

To prepare for teaching this chapter, it is best to spend a few minutes reading over the classroom activities and choosing what one is best suited for your class. Some preparation is required such as sourcing paper and pens, or printing/writing out the scenarios provided. A cut-out template for the activities is provided, however if you wish to handwrite rather than print, that works too!

Teacher's note:

Both activities are similar, so only one needs to be used! It is up to you to choose which activity is best suited to your class. When trialling the guide, we found that the role-playing activity works really well in small groups, boys and girls, and with a teacher/adult facilitator.

Classroom activity 1:

Role playing scenarios

For this classroom activity, students are to role play scenarios in pairs or small groups. Print out the below table and cut each square out.



Minnie King presenting to students at Western Cape College, Weipa campus (2018).

This activity covers topics/scenarios and solutions that were raised by students in Weipa [9].

How the activity will work:

- Assign or allow one volunteer student to role-play as a menstruator. It is ok if they do not/do not yet menstruate. They will have a scenario card describing a situation that a menstruator may experience. They can describe and/or act out the scenario to their group.
- Remaining group members will be the friends/peers providing support, suggestions, and tips to the menstruator.
- After the group members have provided support and suggestions, the student playing the menstruator will give feedback to the group. Key points to provide feedback on include: did the menstruator feel supported? Was there anything else the group could have done or said to help?
- The whole class shares feedback on each scenario. Get a student/s from each group to say something they suggested to the menstruator. For each scenario, there is a suggested answers card the teacher can use as a guide during this task. If the suggestions are not made during the students' role playing, go over some examples with the class.
- Repeat this activity with different scenarios, rotating the role of the menstruator in the group.

Classroom activity 2:

Brainstorming ways to help

This activity is a teaching alternative to Activity 1. Assign the class into small groups, and throughout the class, have these groups rotate through a series of stations.

How the activity will work:

- Set up each station with an A3/A2 sheet of paper and pens. On each paper, have either a scenario card (below) printed, or write the scenario on each sheet of paper. There are 4 scenarios below; if you have more groups, you could double up on scenarios, or feel free to be creative and come up with your own!
- Give each group 5 minutes to brainstorm ways in which they could best support someone in the given scenario.
- Rotate groups when time is up, or you think they are ready to move on.
- Once all stations are complete, if you have time, get each group to share something they learnt, or some ideas written down from their brainstorming activity.
- If you are short on time, groups can complete one station and then have each group report their ideas back to the class so that all students get to hear some ideas of what they could do in that scenario.



Nina Lansbury and students with reusable pad kits donated to Western Cape College, Weipa campus (2018).

Scenario cards

Answer cards (for teachers)

DEALING WITH CRAMPS

You are on lunch break at school and suddenly get bad cramps. You need to sit down and are not sure what you can do to feel better.

‘CRAMPS’ ANSWER SUGGESTIONS

- Ask if they are okay
- Tell the school nurse or teacher
- If you have pain medication like Panadol, you could take that
- A hot water bottle may help
- Rest, just sit down
- Have some water

PERIOD STARTS UNEXPECTEDLY

You go to the toilet and your period has started unexpectedly. You did not think it was going to start so you are unprepared and do not have any products with you.

‘UNEXPECTED PERIOD’ ANSWER SUGGESTIONS

- Reassure them that it is okay and not to be embarrassed
- Offer to go with the friend to the school nurse or teacher to get some products

EMOTIONAL CHANGES

You are experiencing a mix of emotions and do not feel like your normal self today. You are feeling overwhelmed, sad, annoyed and it is making it difficult to stay focused in class.

‘CHANGES’ ANSWER SUGGESTIONS

- Check they are okay
- Reassure them that it happens, and it is normal
- Offer support/see if there is anything you can do to help them feel better

TOO SHY TO TELL A FAMILY MEMBER YOU NEED PERIOD PRODUCTS

You have started your period but need period products. You are nervous to ask someone at home to get period products.

‘SHYNESS’ ANSWER SUGGESTIONS

- Suggest talking to a female relative or friend who might be able to relate or have products you can use
- Reassure them that it is okay and that chances are someone else in their family might also need or be buying period products too

Chapter 6

Empowering choices:

navigating consent and contraception



Chapter aim/s: Introduces students to the topics of sexual and reproductive health. This chapter aims to help students understand a range of different contraception methods available to them. Understand what consent is, and the importance of consent in both physical relationships (including sexual relationships) and everyday life.

Estimated teaching time: Classroom activity 1 (15-20 minutes), Classroom activity 2 (5-10 minutes).

Resources required:

Classroom activity 1:

- Printer to print out activity.

Classroom activity 2:

- Laptop/Device with internet access
- Somewhere to stream/project video to class

Chapter structure:

1. Teacher preparation (5-10 Minutes)
2. Classroom activity 1: Contraception method sorting
3. Classroom activity 2: Discussions around consent

Teacher preparation

To prepare for Chapter 6's classroom activities, it is best to first read over the activity and the answers to ensure you are ready to answer any questions that may come up, or correct students' answers. If there is anything you are unclear about or want to learn more about before teaching the class, feel free to do your own research too.

Preparation for this chapter should take 5-10 minutes of reading, as well as printing and cutting up copies of classroom activity 1 (as many copies as small groups you will have, depending on the size of your class).

If students have questions about the morning after pill, the weblink below has useful information you can share with them.

- <https://kinfertility.com.au/blog/how-to-get-the-morning-after-pill-australia>

Teacher's note:

We recommend using the terms contraception and birth control. Some students may have only heard one of the names, so explaining there are two names may help! It is up to you whether you use one or both terms, but we strongly encourage you to tell your students both names. When trialling this guide, we found that most students did not know what contraception was until prompted with the term birth control. Young pregnancy can be scary to navigate. Support students and let them know that if they think they may be pregnant, they should talk to a helpful adult. Encourage them to not navigate this alone, as they will likely need support.

Classroom activity 1:

Contraception/ birth control method

Before this classroom activity, ensure preparation is completed: printing out one copy per group of the contraception method sorting cards and cutting out each card.

Start this activity by introducing one of the chapters aims; to understand a range of different contraception/birth control methods available.

Some students may not know what contraception is, so beginning the activity with open discussion/dialogue in the classroom to introduce the topic of contraception is a great start. Below is a suggested question to ask students to start the class, as well as answers below.

- What is contraception/birth control and why should you use it?
 - Contraception is used to help prevent unintended pregnancies [25].
 - Contraception also helps to reduce maternal ill-health, and pregnancy related deaths from unintended pregnancies [26].
 - There is one contraception method can also help prevent sexually transmitted diseases/ infections (STIs) [26]. It is important to emphasise that condoms are the only contraception method that protects from STIs.

- You can have sex during your period, however this does not prevent conception/ becoming pregnant, so contraception should still be used.

Use the answers as guiding points if students are unsure, and to clarify and fill in any key points missed by students' responses.

Now assign the students into small groups (~3-4 students) and give each group one set of the prepared contraception method cards. Instructions for the students are as follows:

- There are two types of contraception: hormonal and barrier. Use the 2 cards that say, 'hormonal contraception' and 'barrier contraception' as headings/groups.

- After looking at all the contraception methods, decide whether that method is a type of hormonal contraception, or barrier contraception and place under that heading/group card.

- There are also cards that have a description of a contraception method on them. Try to place that description with the contraception method you think it belongs to.

- Once you are done, let the teacher know and they will check your answers (answers are found at the end of the activity cut out).

All contraception methods and explanations come from Queensland Health [26].

HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION/ BIRTH CONTROL	BARRIER CONTRACEPTION/ BIRTH CONTROL
CONDOM	CONTRACEPTIVE IMPLANT
IUD (INTERUTERINE CONTRACEPTIVE DEVICE)	ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE PILL
PROGESTERONE ONLY PILL (POP)	CONTRACEPTIVE RING
DIAPHRAGM	EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION PILL

<p>Worn on the penis. You can also get ones that are worn in the vagina.</p> <p>They prevent bodily fluids passing between people during sex and protect against pregnancies and STIs.</p> <p>They can break and are not always reliable; if this happens, they won't protect you from becoming pregnant or STIs. If this happens, it is recommended to take emergency contraception if you do not wish to become pregnant, as well as get tested for STIs.</p> <p>Available at supermarkets and pharmacies.</p>	<p>Small, flexible rod that gets inserted into the upper arm.</p> <p>Does not protect against STIs but prevents against pregnancies.</p> <p>Continuously releases small amounts of progesterone. Progesterone stops ovulation and thickens mucus at the uterus entrance which makes it difficult for sperm to enter.</p> <p>Lasts 3 years.</p> <p>Prescription required and is inserted by a doctor or nurse.</p>
<p>Small device that is inserted into the uterus. It comes in two forms: hormonal and copper.</p> <p>Hormonal type: made of plastic, slowly releases levonorgestrel which thickens the mucus layer at the entrance of uterus, preventing sperm from entering. It also reduces the thickness of the uterine lining, making it hard for fertilised eggs to implant. Can last up to 5 years.</p> <p>Copper type: made of plastic and copper. Affects the way sperm move and survive by releasing copper. It also affects the uterus lining, preventing fertilised eggs from being able to attach and develop. Can last up to 10 years.</p>	<p>Is used to reduce the chance of pregnancy after unprotected sex. This includes if a condom breaks, if the pill has been missed, non-consensual sex, or if you are worried about the possibility of pregnancy after the withdrawal method (which is unreliable, as sperm can still enter outside of the body if close to the vagina).</p> <p>Must be used as soon as possible after unprotected sex (within 3 days after).</p> <p>Does not protect against STIs.</p> <p>Does not cause abortion.</p> <p>Delays or stops the ovaries from releasing an egg and can also prevent sperm from reaching an egg.</p> <p>Can get from pharmacies or doctors without prescription.</p>
<p>Contains hormone progesterone. Works by thickening mucus to prevent sperm from entering uterus, and therefore preventing pregnancy. It may not affect ovulation.</p> <p>Must be taken every day at the same time.</p> <p>Prescription required from the doctor.</p>	<p>Contains hormones oestrogen and progesterone.</p> <p>Protects against pregnancy but not STIs.</p> <p>Stops eggs from being released from ovaries and thickens the mucus layer at uterus entrance so it is harder for sperm to enter.</p> <p>Effective at suppressing ovulation</p> <p>Must be taken every day, around the same time to ensure it works.</p> <p>Prescription required from the doctor.</p>
<p>Made from plastic and is inserted into the vagina.</p> <p>It is placed in for 3 weeks, then removed for 1 week before a new one can be put back in.</p> <p>Protects against pregnancy but not STIs.</p> <p>Slowly releases small amounts of oestrogen and progesterone.</p>	<p>Made from silicon and is a small, soft dome shape which is inserted inside the vagina before sex. It cannot be removed until at least 6 hours after sex.</p> <p>Can be reused by cleaning after removing.</p> <p>Prevents sperm from entering the uterus.</p> <p>Prevents pregnancy but not STIs.</p>

HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION/ BIRTH CONTROL

IUD (INTERUTERINE CONTRACEPTIVE DEVICE)

Small device that is inserted into the uterus. It comes in two forms: hormonal and copper.

Hormonal type: made of plastic, slowly releases levonorgestrel (which thickens the mucus layer at the entrance of uterus, preventing sperm from entering. It also reduces the thickness of the uterine lining, making it hard for fertilised eggs to implant. Can last up to 5 years.

Copper type: made of plastic and copper. Affects the way sperm move and survive by releasing copper. It also affects the uterus lining, preventing fertilised eggs from being able to attach and develop. Can last up to 10 years.

PROGESTERONE ONLY PILL (POP)

Contains hormone progesterone. Works by thickening mucus to prevent sperm from entering uterus, and therefore preventing pregnancy. It may not affect ovulation. Must be taken every day at the same time. Prescription required from the doctor.

CONTRACEPTIVE IMPLANT

Small, flexible rod that gets inserted into the upper arm. Does not protect against STIs but prevents against pregnancies. Continuously releases small amounts of progesterone. Progesterone stops ovulation and thickens mucus at the uterus entrance which makes it difficult for sperm to enter. Lasts 3 years. Prescription required and is inserted by a doctor or nurse.

CONTRACEPTIVE RING

Made from plastic and is inserted into the vagina. It is placed in for 3 weeks, then removed for 1 week before a new one can be put back in. Protects against pregnancy but not STIs. Slowly releases small amounts of oestrogen and progesterone.

ORAL CONTRACEPTIVE PILL

Contains hormones oestrogen and progesterone. protects against pregnancy but not STIs. Stops eggs from being released from ovaries and thickens the mucus layer at uterus entrance so it is harder for sperm to enter. Effective at suppressing ovulation. Must be taken every day, around the same time to ensure it works. Prescription required from the doctor.

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE PILL

Is used to reduce the chance of pregnancy after unprotected sex. This includes if a condom breaks, if the pill has been missed, non-consensual sex, or if you are worried about possibility of pregnancy after the withdrawal method (which is unreliable, as sperm can still enter outside of the body if close to the vagina). Must be used as soon as possible after unprotected sex., but within 3 days after. Does not protect against STIs. Does not cause abortion. Delays or stops the ovaries from releasing an egg and can also prevent sperm from reaching an egg. Can get from pharmacies or doctors without prescription.

BARRIER CONTRACEPTION/ BIRTH CONTROL

CONDOM

Worn on penis. They prevent bodily fluids passing between people during sex and protect against pregnancies and STIs. They can break and are not always reliable; if this happens, they won't protect you from becoming pregnant or STIs. If this happens, it is recommended to take emergency contraception if you do not wish to become pregnant, as well as get tested for STIs. Available at supermarkets and pharmacies. Can also buy a female version that is inserted into the vagina.

DIAPHRAGM

Made from silicon and is a small, soft dome shape which is inserted inside the vagina before sex. It cannot be removed until at least 6 hours after sex. Can be reused by cleaning after removing. Prevents sperm from entering the uterus. Prevents pregnancy but not STIs.



Classroom activity 2:

Group discussion - Introduction to 'Consent'

This activity involves a short video around consent, a teaching element, as well as group discussions.

To begin this activity, you may first like to open the classroom for discussion by asking students if they have heard of and know what consent is. Can anyone give an explanation of consent?

Watch this video titled 'Tea and Consent' as a classroom or in small groups: sexualrespect.columbia.edu/tea-and-consent-video. The video is 2 minutes 50 seconds long and explains what consent is using the example of offering a cup of tea.

After the video, it is great to expand on the elements of consent further to discuss why the metaphor if a cup of tea is used and how this applies to relationships. Below is key information to cover [27]:

- Consent is agreeing to something. This can be in everyday life and should always be given when engaging in sexual activity.
- Consent should only be given if:
 1. You AGREE ENTHUSIASTICALLY. You need to be both excited and willing to agree to the activity.
 2. You are INFORMED. You need to feel comfortable and clearly understand what you are agreeing to.
 3. It is MUTUAL. Everyone involved has given consent.
 4. It is FREELY GIVEN. You do not feel forced or uncomfortable in any way, through peer pressure, threats, or manipulation into giving consent. You need to give consent by choice.
 5. You know that you have the capacity to CHANGE YOUR MIND. If you gave consent already, you can take it back if you change your mind. It is okay to later say no even if you previously said yes [28].

After the elements of consent have been explained to the class, in tables or small groups, ask each group to come up with 2 examples where they may want to use consent. Get each group to share back to the class an example they came up with.

Students viewing period care products during an information session at after school care, Napranum (2022).

Chapter 7

Keeping clean to be healthy



Chapter aim/s: To ensure that students understand and can perform body hygiene to protect their health.

Estimated teaching time: Classroom activity 1 (10 minutes), Classroom activity 2 (10-15 minutes).

Resources required:

Classroom activity 1:

- Laptop/Device with internet access
- Somewhere to stream/project video to class

Classroom activity 2:

- Laptop/Device with internet access

Chapter structure:

1. Teacher preparation (5-10 Minutes)
2. Classroom activity 1: Milpa's six steps to stop germs videos
3. Classroom activity 2: How to hand wash

Teacher preparation

To prepare for the content in Chapter 7, it is recommended that you become familiar with the Milpa's six steps to stopping germs through watching the videos in activity 1, or reading the below website:

- mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/centres-institutes/onemda/research-group/ieh/HP/trachoma/six-steps

Classroom activity 1:

Milpa's six steps to stop germs videos

For this activity, you will need a laptop to share six short videos/audio clips with the class. Each clip covers one of the six steps and is 1:45 minutes long. The video (see link below) is located at the end of the page in the 'Radio Ads' section. There are also a range of other videos and teaching activities on the website that you may find useful:

- mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/centres-institutes/onemda/research-group/ieh/HP/trachoma/six-steps#resources

Once you have gone through the videos with the class, watch the following video to consolidate the 6 steps learnt. For younger students, you could come up with dance moves/movements for each step and recite/dance while watching the final video:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oq1K9UsN6qI> (30 seconds)



Classroom activity 2:

How to hand wash

Expanding on Classroom activity 1, it is important to know how to properly wash hands. For this activity, begin with a quiz, consisting of 5 multiple choice and true or false questions. We suggest you create your own free Kahoot quiz using these questions and answers for a fun and interactive quiz for students.

Note: correct answers are in the highlighted box. Some questions have multiple answers. Some answers in the Kahoot/Quiz are cited – please see the final reference list to find the corresponding reference for that answer.

Question 1: How long should you wash your hands for?

A: 5 seconds

B: 40-60 seconds [29]

C: 30 seconds

D: 15 seconds

Question 2: When should you wash your hands? [30]

A: After the toilet

B: After coughing or sneezing

C: Before eating

D: All of the above

You should know...

There are many examples of times when you should wash your hands. Other examples include after touching raw meat, after patting an animal, after touching rubbish, before you start cooking/preparing food, before touching medicine, and after touching blood. If you have your period, make sure you wash your hands before touching/opening/using menstrual health products. However, if you think your hands feel dirty or not clean, it is best to just give them a wash to prevent sickness! [31].

Question 3: When washing your hands, you should use soap and warm water

A: True

B: False

Question 4: Washing your hands with soap and water is more effective than using hand sanitiser if your hands are dirty

A: True

B: False

Question 5: Why should we wash our hands?

A: We don't need to

B: I don't know!

C: Helps to prevent germs spreading [31]

D: To make our hands smell nice

Following the quiz, share the following hand out (via the weblink below) with the class and talk through each of the steps. You could also get the class to do each hand washing action as you talk through them. If possible, go to a sink and demonstrate how to correctly wash your hands too! To assist, view this poster from the World Health Organisation: [who.int/docs/default-source/patient-safety/how-to-handwash-poster.pdf?sfvrsn=7004a09d_](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/patient-safety/how-to-handwash-poster.pdf?sfvrsn=7004a09d_)

Supplementary activity:

What does, “**Mind Your Body**,” mean to you?

This is a supplementary which you can do with the class as a concluding and reflective activity for reaching the end of the teaching guide.

This activity can be a simple in-class activity that can be used to display student creations in the classroom. Alternatively, this activity can be used as a creative / art competition for students, which is how the wonderful artwork included in this teaching guide came about.

For this activity, ask the students to think about what **Mind Your Body** means to them, to draw or create something that shows what they have learnt from the teaching guide. This can be based on one chapter, all chapters, or just something that resonated or interested them.

The purpose for this activity see if the concepts of **Mind Your Body** have been retained and have meaning for the students. It allows students to express themselves, especially for those who may find the content challenging, or may be shy to engage in class.

Student questionnaire

on menstrual health knowledge



Well done! You have completed this teaching guide on Menstrual Health. We hope you have gained some valuable information and tools to help yourself, friends, family and others who may menstruate. This questionnaire is designed to see what you have learnt from this teaching guide.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Try to write down as much as you can, but if you don't know the answers, just leave the answer box blank.

1. How many parts of the female reproductive system can you name? If you know the role of any parts, write this down too.

2. What are some changes girls and boys might see/feel during puberty?

3. What is contraception?

4. Can you name any contraception methods?

5. What does 'consent' mean to you?

6. How many period care products can you name?

7. Can you name any places where you may be able to find or buy period care products?

8. Name as many physical or emotional changes menstruators may face when they are on their period

9. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident are you in your ability to provide support to any menstruators in your life? 1 = not confident, 5 = very confident.

12345

10. On a scale of 1 to 5, how embarrassed or ashamed are you about talking about periods or getting a period? 1 = very embarrassed/ashamed, 5 = not embarrassed/ashamed at all.

12345

Teacher feedback form

Thank you for using this menstrual health teaching guide. The authors of this guide are keen for your feedback so that we can ensure this guide is as useful as possible for teachers.

This form will ask questions around the guide's content, how well you as the teacher thought the students engaged with the content, and any other feedback, suggestions or improvements you may have to better this teaching guide.

- 1. On a scale of 1 to 5, how easy were the chapters to navigate, prepare for and use?**
1 = not easy at all ... 5 = very easy/ had no issues.

Chapter 1: Growing up - what is puberty?

1 2 3 4 5

Chapter 2: Empowering choices - navigating consent and contraception

1 2 3 4 5

Chapter 3: Empowering choices - navigating consent and contraception

1 2 3 4 5

Chapter 4: Period care products

1 2 3 4 5

Chapter 5: Changes during periods (emotional and physical)

1 2 3 4 5

Chapter 6: Supporting menstruators

1 2 3 4 5

Chapter 7: Keeping clean to be healthy

1 2 3 4 5

2. Can you explain why the chapters were easy to use or why they were not? Did you face any challenges?

**3. Reflecting on each chapter, were there any aspects that worked well, or did not work well for your class?
Can you explain why?**

Chapter 1:

Chapter 2:

Chapter 3:

Chapter 4:

Chapter 5:

Chapter 6:

Chapter 7:

4. Do you have any suggestions for improvement of the teaching guide? Is there anything else you would like to see included in a menstrual health teaching guide?

5. Do you have any other comments/feedback?

Teacher contact details (optional):

Please fill out this section if you agree to be contacted by the authors for follow up questions.

Name: _____

School: _____

Year/Age of students taught: _____

Preferred contact method: _____

Phone number: _____

And/Or

Email address: _____

Thank you for completing this feedback form! Please either email the completed form to (n.lansbury@uq.edu.au) or send a physical copy to: Associate Professor Nina Lansbury, School of Public Health, The University of Queensland, 288 Herston Rd, Herston, QLD 4006.

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Notes

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Original art by Zahlee Kemmerling (2024), student, Western Cape College

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