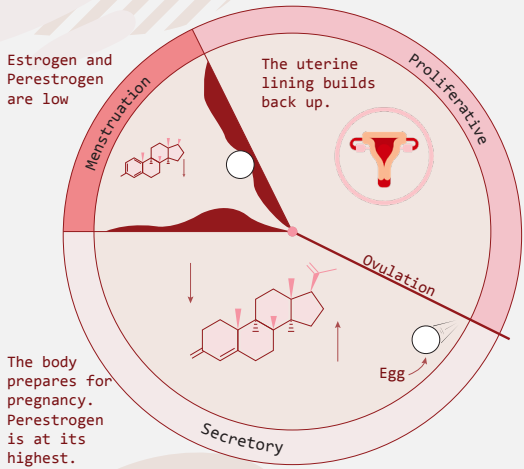


The Period Stain

Menstrual Equity in U.S. Public School Bathrooms



What is a period?

The period or menstruation is a phase in the menstrual cycle where the uterine lining (composed of blood and tissue) is shedding from your uterus.

What is its purpose?

The menstrual cycle prepares your body for pregnancy every month.

When do most people get their period?

Those who menstruate get their first period between the ages of 8 and 15. Periods continue monthly until menopause which occurs around your late 40's and 50's

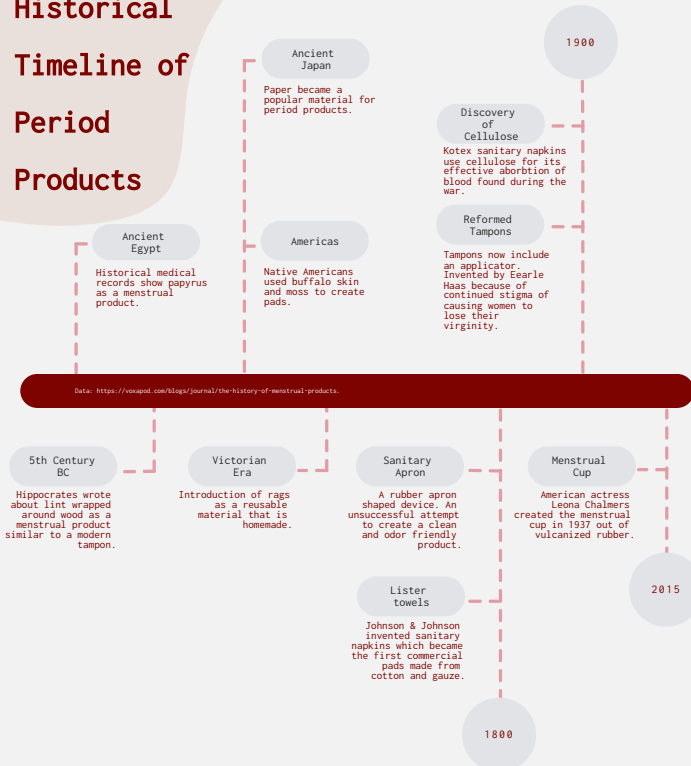
What happens during your period?

2-3 tablespoons of blood are lost on average, but some people lose up to 2 cups of blood.

You may also experience other symptoms such as:

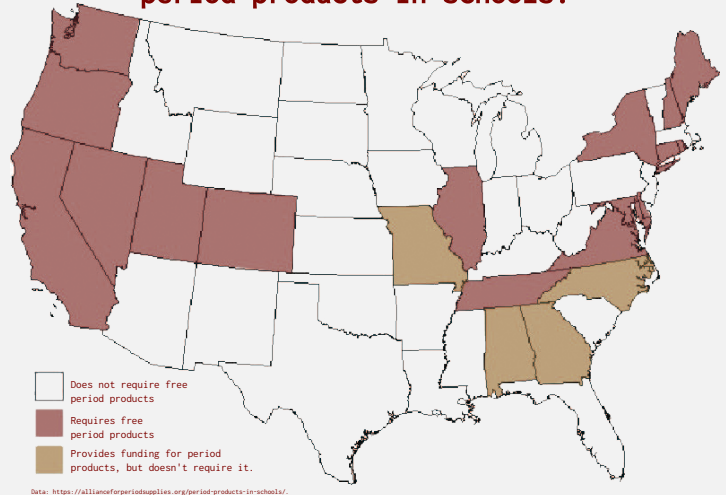
- Bloating
- Joint and lower back pain
- Headaches
- Acne
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Low energy, fatigue
- Abdominal cramps (the pain varies, but sometimes it is comparable to the pain experienced while giving birth)

Historical Timeline of Period Products



Period Poverty - The inadequate access to period products and educational resources on menstruation

Which states passed laws requiring free period products in schools?



Statistics from menstruating students in the U.S.

- 1 in 5 Teens** Struggle to afford period products
- 4 in 5 Teens** Either missed class or know someone who did because they did not have access to period products
- 3 in 5 Students** Rarely find free period products in school bathrooms
- 17 States** Have passed legislation to ensure students have access to free menstrual products
- 51%** Students have worn period products longer than recommended
- 42%** Say their health teacher looks uncomfortable when discussing menstruation
- 23%** Students have struggled to afford period products
- 70%** Say that the school environment makes them self-conscious when on their period
- 76%** Are taught the biology of a frog more than female anatomy
- 57%** Say that the school doesn't care about them because they don't provide free period products in bathrooms
- 58%** Are negatively affected by period stigma
- 76%** Believe that there is a negative association that periods are unsanitary
- 83%** Hide their period products when they walk out of class to go to the bathroom

Data: <https://period.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/State-of-the-Period-2021.pdf>

Destigmatizing and Preserving Dignity

Healthier Social Environments

- Be understanding of the issues people who menstruate face
- Avoid usage of euphemisms that perpetuate the idea that periods are shameful and impure
- Do not berate others because of a natural bodily function

Education

- Updating sex education to include menstruation for everyone
- Normalize open conversations about menstruation at home and school
- Talking to teens about purchasing period products
- Continue to research the issues at hand



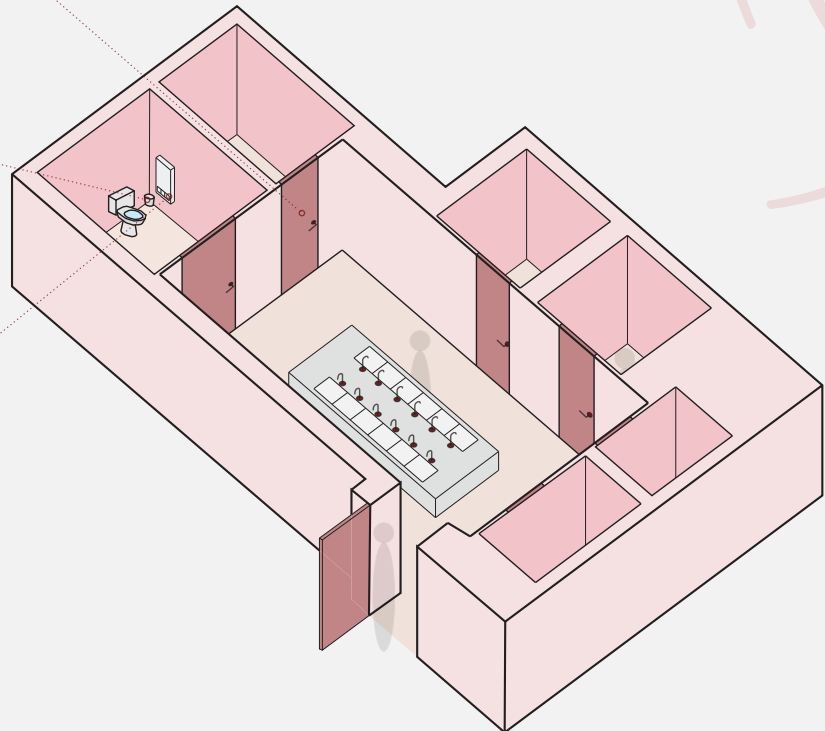
39 States and the District of Columbia mandate some kind of sex education and/or HIV education.

Data: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/for-educators/whats-state-sex-education-us>



Solutions

1. Canceling heavy reverberation can lessen the anxiety many people face when opening pads. This can be done by using full height partitions which will also provide more privacy.
2. Proper ventilation will ease the anxiety of strong odors during menstruation.
3. Having accessible and sanitary trashcans that are able to hold large amounts of period products for efficient disposal.
4. Disposable wipes for students to use in stalls to promote hygienic habits and alleviates the stress of getting blood on yourself.
5. Providing free period products to students alleviates financial burdens and the fear of not having menstrual products.
6. Ideally, placing individual boxes of products within the stalls will be even better in case students have bled through. Period products are just as important as toilet paper, so why are they not in the same spaces?



These design choices alleviates the stress students face during their period, which will lead to an increase in attendance in schools.

Graphics made by Joby Lin

Sources

Aelali, Darya. "How Do Period-Friendly Bathrooms Help Girls Stay in School?" *OnTam*, 26 Feb. 2019. <https://www.onamericas.org/explore/stories/how-do-period-friendly-bathrooms-help-girls-stay-in-school/>.

Ariane Resnick, CNC. "What Is Period Stigma?" *Verywell Mind*, Verywell Mind, 1 July 2021. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-period-stigma-5116231>.

Bobal, Chris, et al. *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstruation Studies*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

ColombiaMallison. "Period Poise Presents: Changing the Norm: Mainstreaming Female Friendly Toilets." YouTube, YouTube, 19 Nov. 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zouyq@e0q>.

Flannery, Mary Ellen. "Growing Awareness of 'Period Poverty' in Schools." *NEA*. <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/growing-awareness-period-poverty-schools>.

Girls, Days For. "Menstrual Health and Mental Health: More Connected than You Might Think." *Days For Girls International*, 27 May 2022. <https://www.daysforgirls.org/blog/menstrual-health-and-mental-health-more-connected-than-you-might-think/>.

Gruber, Caitlin, et al. "Menstrual Equity Initiatives at USA Universities: A Multiple Case Study of Common Obstacles and Enabling Factors." *Frontiers in Reproductive Health*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 8 Dec. 2021. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3958024/>.

"How Schools Can Address Period Poverty." *K-12 Schools*. U.S. News. <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/articles/how-schools-can-address-period-poverty>.

Khawaja, Muneem. "The Case for Free Tampons and Pads in Schools." *WPI, WPI*, 2 Dec. 2021. <https://www.wpi.org/2021/12/02/065839386/free-tampons-public-schools>.

Lindsay Capozzi. "Period Poverty: The Public Health Crisis We Don't Talk About." *Period Poverty: The Public Health Crisis We Don't Talk About*, 6 Apr. 2021. <https://policylab.chop.edu/blog/period-poverty-public-health-crisis-we-dont-talk-about>.

Planned Parenthood. "State of Sex Education in the U.S.: Health Education in Schools." *Planned Parenthood*. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/for-educators/whats-state-sex-education-us>.

Planned Parenthood. "What Is Menstruation? Get Facts About Having Your Period." *Planned Parenthood*. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/health-and-wellness/menstruation>.

"Period-Friendly Toilets." *NDG*. <https://menstrualhygiene.org/projects/infographic-period-friendly-toilets-2-versions/>.

"Period Products in Schools - Alliance for Period Supplies." *Alliance for Period Supplies - It's That Time*. <https://allianceforperiodsupplies.org/period-products-in-schools/>.

"Period Stigma: How It Holds Back Girls and Women." *IPPF*, 1 Apr. 2022. <https://www.ipf.org/blogs/period-stigma-how-it-holds-back-girls-and-women>.

Ruby and Toxic Shock Syndrome: A Technological Health Crisis - ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/31892013_Ruby_and_Toxic_Shock_Syndrome_A_Technological_Health_Crisis.

Shelby H. Davidson, D. *Period Equity*. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Elsevier, 18 Mar. 2022. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1554194322002841>.

Sl., Vostra. "OF Mice and (MO)Men: Tampons, Menstruation, and Testing." *National Center for Biotechnology Information*, U.S. National Library of Medicine. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/3347181/>.

State of the Period 2021. <https://period.org/wp/lands/State-of-the-Period-2021.pdf>.

Vostra, Shara Louise. *Under Wraps: A History of Menstrual Hygiene Technology*. Lexington Books, 2011.

Vox.com. "The History of Menstrual Products." *VOX.com*. <https://www.vox.com/blogs/journal/the-history-of-menstrual-products>.

"Your Menstrual Cycle." *Your Menstrual Cycle | Office on Women's Health*. <https://www.womenshealth.gov/menstrual-cycle/your-menstrual-cycle>.