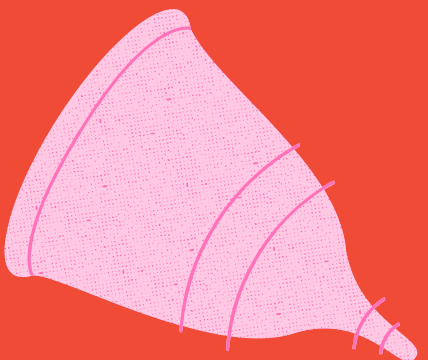
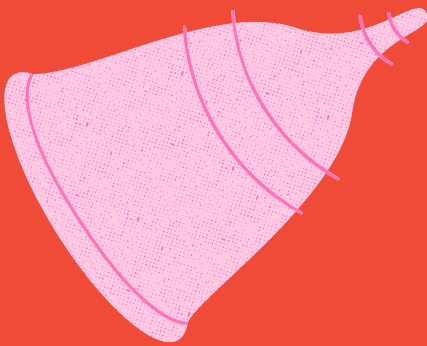




NICM
HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE

MENSTRUAL MYTHS

common misconceptions about periods,
and what the research actually says



MYTH #1

PAIN IS A NORMAL PART OF YOUR PERIOD

PERIOD PAIN (DYSMENORRHEA) IS VERY COMMON: AROUND 9 IN 10 YOUNG WOMEN AND PEOPLE WHO MENSTRUATE REPORT IT REGULARLY BEFORE AGE 25.

BUT COMMON DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN NORMAL.

It is worth speaking to a GP or gynaecologist if your pain:

- ✦ Stops you from doing your usual daily activities, such as attending university, work, or social commitments
- ✦ Cannot be well managed with over-the-counter painkillers like ibuprofen, or with other therapies like heat

The PIPPA screening tool is a short five-question assessment that can help you gauge whether your period pain is having more impact on your life than expected. A score of 4 or 5 suggests there may be an underlying cause worth investigating, such as endometriosis or adenomyosis.

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MYTH #2

NOTHING CAN HELP WITH PERIOD PAIN. YOU JUST HAVE TO PUT UP WITH IT

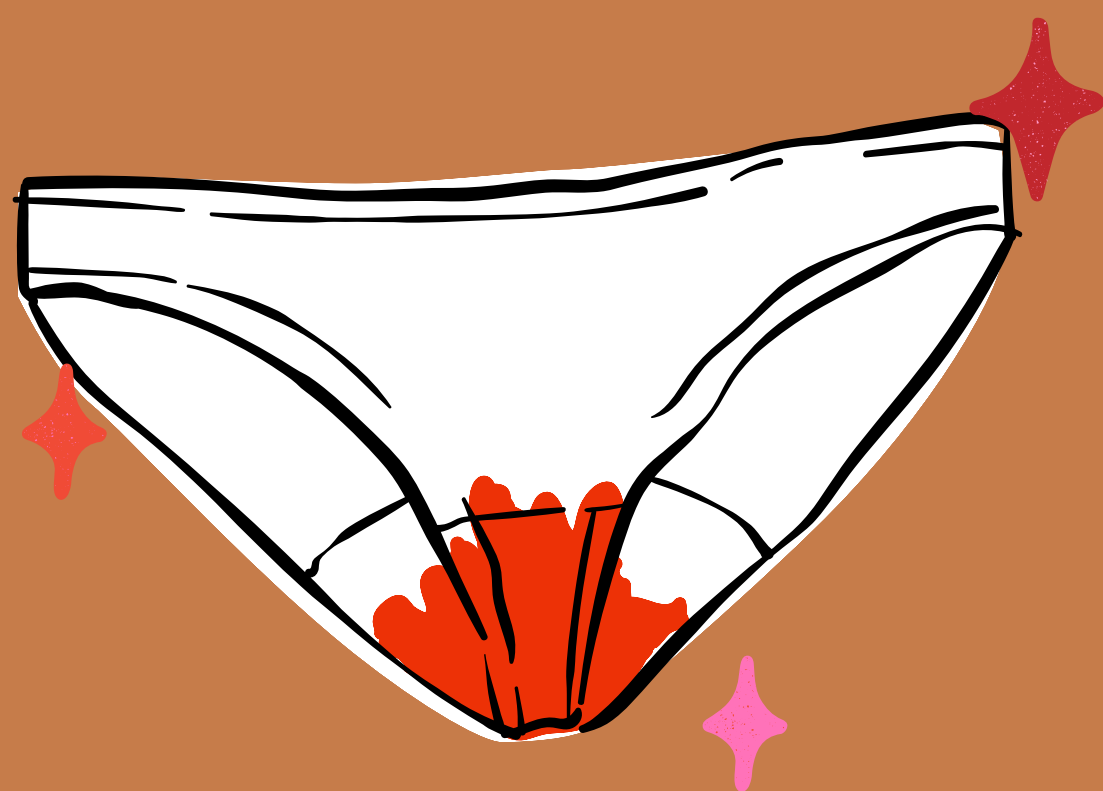
MOST PEOPLE WITH PRIMARY DYSMENORRHEA (THE MOST COMMON FORM OF PERIOD PAIN) CAN ACHIEVE MEANINGFUL RELIEF THROUGH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- ✦ Anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) including ibuprofen (e.g. Nurofen) or mefenamic acid (e.g. Ponstan). Take the recommended dose **BEFORE** pain peaks; these work best when taken early, before inflammation is fully established.
- ✦ Heat Therapy: a wheat pack, hot water bottle, or heat patch applied to the lower abdomen. Make sure to take care to avoid burns.
- ✦ Hormonal Medications: the combined oral contraceptive pill can reduce both pain and bleeding intensity for many people, though it is not suitable for everyone and may cause side effects.
- ✦ Regular Exercise: at least 90 mins per week over at least eight weeks. It doesn't matter what type you choose - gentle movement based choices like yoga seem to work as well as more aerobic exercise like jogging. The most effective option is whatever you will keep doing. If exercise triggers pelvic pain, speak to your doctor or another health professional like an exercise physiologist.



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MYTH #3 BLEEDING THROUGH PERIOD PRODUCTS IS NORMAL

HEAVY MENSTRUAL BLEEDING AFFECTS APPROXIMATELY 1 IN 5 WOMEN AND PEOPLE WHO MENSTRUATE, AND IT CAN SERIOUSLY DISRUPT DAILY LIFE, STUDY, AND WORK. BUT IS NOT SOMETHING YOU HAVE TO ACCEPT; EFFECTIVE TREATMENTS EXIST.

Signs you may have heavy menstrual bleeding include:

- ✦ BLOOD CLOTS LARGER THAN A 50-CENT PIECE
- ✦ WAKING AT NIGHT TO CHANGE PERIOD PRODUCTS
- ✦ BLEEDING THROUGH CLOTHING
- ✦ BLEEDING ADVERSELY AFFECTS YOUR QUALITY OF LIFE
- ✦ PERIODS LAST LONGER THAN 7 DAYS
- ✦ USING 2 OR MORE TYPES OF PERIOD PRODUCTS SIMULTANEOUSLY
- ✦ CHANGING PERIOD PRODUCTS EVERY 2 HOURS OR MORE FREQUENTLY
- ✦ PERSISTENT EXHAUSTION DURING YOUR PERIOD

IF YOU RECOGNISE ANY OF THESE SIGNS, SPEAK TO YOUR DOCTOR. HEAVY BLEEDING CAN OFTEN BE EFFECTIVELY MANAGED ONCE THE UNDERLYING CAUSE IS IDENTIFIED. YOU DO NOT NEED TO MANAGE IT ALONE.

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