

Ask the Expert: What Is a “Normal” Period?

with experts Dr. Anne Hussain, ND – women’s health and
Dr. Fiona Mattatall, MD – obstetrics & gynaecology

Q Live Community Q&A – Key Takeaways

Q: Is there such a thing as a “normal” period?

A: There is a wide range of what can be considered normal. A typical period lasts **3–8 days**, occurs within **24–38 days cycles**, and involves about **2–3 tablespoons (30–60 ml)** of blood loss. Small clots, abdominal discomfort, bloating, pressure, and loose stool can also be part of a normal menstrual cycle.

Q: What are common misconceptions about periods?

A: A common misconception is that periods should be painless, perfectly regular, or the same for everyone. In reality, periods can look and feel different from person to person, and they often change over time, especially in the first few years after they start, or during hormonal changes later in life.

Q: How common are irregular periods in adolescence, and when should youth be concerned?

A: Irregular periods are very common in the first few years after someone starts menstruating, because the body is still learning its rhythm. It may be a reason to check in with a health-care provider if a young person goes three or more months without a period, or has fewer than eight periods in a year.

Q: How should youth-serving providers talk about period health with trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit menstruators?

A: Gender-affirming, trauma-informed care means respecting privacy, using inclusive language, and focusing on practical support. Conversations about periods should centre facts, safety, and choice, recognizing that menstruation can be distressing for some gender-diverse people.

Q: How can periods change during perimenopause, and when should changes be shared with a provider?

A: During perimenopause periods may become irregular, with missed cycles, more frequent bleeding, or heavier flow. Consult your healthcare provider for disruptive changes, especially heavy or prolonged bleeding.

Q: What are safe ways to manage period pain?

A: Managing period pain may include medication, physical activity, like walking, or stretching, or other supportive strategies (like a cozy blanket, or comfortable clothing).



Q: When is heavy flow or pain a “red flag”?

A: Heavy flow that requires changing a pad or tampon every hour, or pain that stops someone from going to school, work, or daily activities, is not considered normal. Pain that doesn't improve with medication, or symptoms like feeling lightheaded or having a racing heartbeat, may be signs to seek medical care.

Q: What role does discharge play in the menstrual cycle, and what's concerning?

A: Discharge helps keep the vagina clean and healthy and often changes during the menstrual cycle. Changes in colour, texture, or amount are normal, but sudden changes, a strong or unusual smell, pain, itching, or irritation are signs that someone should check in with a health care provider.

Q: What's the difference between PMS and PMDD, and when should someone seek help?

A: PMS causes physical and mood changes before a period.

PMDD is more severe and can strongly affect mood, thinking, and daily life and should be checked by a health-care provider.

Q: What about using birth control to manage heavy or “abnormal” periods in young people?

A: Birth control is sometimes used to manage heavy bleeding, but it is important to weigh benefits and risks.

Meet the Experts:



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specializing in
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Dr. Fiona Mattatall

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Watch the full conversation

Watch the complete Ask the Expert: What is a Normal Period session [HERE](#)