

Understanding Your Cycle



Wondering if your menstrual cycle is typical?

There is no “typical” menstrual cycle as they differ from person-to-person. The length of the cycle, symptoms, and heaviness of bleeding depends on the individual. Keep track of your cycle to know what is typical for you. A cycle can range from 21 to 35 days, with many people having a 28-day cycle. Periods, the time that you are bleeding, usually last between 3-7 days. The average female starts getting their period by the age of 12, while some can start as early as 8-years old, and as late as 16-years old.

The menstrual cycle is the female body preparing for pregnancy and there are four phases the body goes through every cycle. The phases are: Menstrual (Days 1-7), Follicular (Days 8-14), Ovulation (Days 14-21), and Luteal (Days 22-28). The menstrual phase is the beginning of a period, when bleeding starts. The Follicular and Ovulation are phases where hormones are released to help with pregnancy. The Luteal phase is the last phase before the cycle (and blood flow) starts again, which is when symptoms like mood changes, sleep issues, headaches, food cravings, chest tenderness, and bloating can occur.

Signs of an Irregular Cycle

- Less than 21 days or more than 35 days between period flow.
- Missing three or more periods in a row.
- When bleeding is lighter or heavier than usual.
- Flow lasts more than 7 days.
- Having severe pain, cramping, nausea, or vomiting.
- Bleeding or spotting between cycles.
- Not getting your cycle by 16 years old.
- Needing to use more than one tampon or pad in an hour.

Irregular cycles can be caused by many factors like pregnancy, breastfeeding, eating disorders, extreme weight loss, exercising too much, high levels of stress, hormonal conditions and/or illness. Lifestyle factors that can change your cycle could be stress, use of birth control pills, or new medication.

If you are experiencing any of the signs listed above, please talk to a healthcare professional for advice on how to get your cycle back to what is typical for you.

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