

Go With the Flow

A Pack About How Periods Effect
Mental Wellbeing



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Free Period
Products Included

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Amika George, Period Activist

Period Poverty

• Resources

Introduction

Around 800 million people around the world are menstruating at any given time, so I have created this zine to explore periods. I noticed that a lot of resources seemed to focus on the biological effects of periods, for example the changes that different hormones make to a uterus. Many completely ignored the impacts that the hormones our body release have on our mental wellbeing at different points in our cycles.

I became really interested in the growing movement of feminists, people like Maisie Hill and Lucy Peach who are talking about how our hormones ebb and flow over their cycle. Before this, I had no idea that our cycle had so much influence over our mental health. Although everyone's body is different, there are noticeable patterns, which you can work with each month to achieve greater wellbeing.

This pack is for people with periods. Many people who are not cis gendered women menstruate. This includes trans men, non-binary people and intersex people. This pack is also for anyone who's interested to learn more about the human body. Around half the world menstruates, but there is a lot of miseducation and misunderstanding around periods.

The taboo around periods still exists. Many people feel a sense of shame about something that's a completely normal and natural biological phenomenon. It is even potentially something to be celebrated as a healthy period is a sign of a healthy body. I try my best to talk openly about periods, especially when I'm bleeding, but still sometimes find it really hard. We're a long way off people being able to discuss them like they would many other bodily functions, but I hope this will be a step toward demystifying and contribution to a deeper understanding of periods.

Test Your Period Knowledge

This page includes load of random facts about periods, some are true and some are false. You are welcome to have a guess. The answers are on the next page.

There is a link between stressful times and shorter mesntrual cycles

It is normal for your body weight to fluctuatate at different points in your cycle

In the Middle Ages it was believed children with brown hair were conceived during mensuration

Menopause only lasts two days, the symptoms around this is called peri-menopause

There are more than 4,5000 euphemisms for periods

When Sally Ride went on a space mission in 1985, NASA asked her if 50 tampons was enough for one period

The average mesnstrual cycle is between 24 & 38 days

Although painful periods are normalised, they are often not normal

Test Your Period Knowledge

Here are the answers:

There is a link
between stressful
times and shorter
menstrual cycles

True

In the Middle Ages it
was believed children
with brown hair were
conceived during
menstruation

False

In the Middle Ages, they actually believed people with ginger hair were conceived while a woman menstruates

Menopause only
lasts two days, the
symptoms around
this is called peri-
menopause

False

Menopause actually only lasts one day

When Sally
Ride went on a
space mission in 1985,
NASA asked her if 50
tampons was enough
for one period

False

NASA offered Sally 100 tampons for one period

It is normal for your
body weight to
fluctuate at different
points in
your cycle

True

There are
more than
4,500
euphemisms
for periods

False

There are over 5,000 euphemisms for periods

The average
menstrual
cycle is between
24
& 38 days

True

Although
painful periods
are normalised,
they are often not
normal

True



Menstrual cycles are the reason we're all here –
an essential component to life

A healthy period shows the body is functioning well.
It's a sign of mental and physical wellbeing

Periods can be a self-care and stress management
tool. You can work with your cycle and cooperate with
your monthly pattern of highs and lows, to get a better
understanding of your self and how to manage your
mental wellbeing. This is one step towards kindness
towards yourself

Many period activists say that understanding your
cycle transforms your life, as understanding ur
hormonal fluctuations can be the blueprint for a better
and happier life



Refuse to submit to the idea that periods are anything to be ashamed about, and carry these conversations in your daily life - Adowa Aboah





The four seasons provide a rough guide to how different phases of your cycle affect your wellbeing. This isn't an exact science, just a guide. Some of this advice may relate to you, some may not. It factors in how your hormones effect your mental health, not the impact of any extra factors.

In each section, there is a few tips on how to work with your hormones

This model gives advice based on your period being in a 28 day cycle. This is only a rough guide of what might happen but everyone's body works differently. It is normal for a period to last between 24-38 days, so feel free to adapt this model to your needs

Downloading a period tracker is a good way to do this, as well as track the mental and physical effects you feel throughout the months. Your body may change and your hormones may fluctuate differently month to month, so a tracker is a really good way to get a deeper understanding of who you are and connect with your body and needs. It will give you helpful data to share with your GP



Spring

Day 5-14 of your period is your Spring season. Your body is warming up to release an egg from your ovaries, so is signalling your brain to nest and attract a mate. During your pre-ovulation phase, oestrogen dominates as your ovarian follicles grows. Oestrogen levels will peak on the day you ovulate.

High oestrogen levels mean you may have an increase of positive emotions such as emotional resilience and curiosity

BIOLOGICAL:

- Your progesterone and testosterone will also be rising so you may start to have more physical energy and mental wellbeing

EMOTIONAL: As you your body is preparing for conception as you near ovulation, your body intuitively wants to seek a partner. You may naturally want to do any of these:

- Nesting, which is the urge to clean or organise your self or space
- As your oestrogen peaks you may be more horny and experience more intense orgasms and orgasm more easily
- Feel more optimistic and quick on your feet
- Have improved imagination, perception, memory and social abilities
- Reduced appetite the 10 days before ovulation compared to the 10 days after

Spring

During Spring, oestrogen, the 'Beyoncé hormone' peaks meaning your energy levels increase and you can have higher self esteem and feel more energetic. Know your potential: you may have more energy to achieve your goals during Spring and Summer, keep a journal of ideas and dreams and focus on them during spring and summer

Experiencing this surge of feel good hormones can feel overwhelming

This is a good time to:

- Organise, plans and do things you've wanted to for a while or you've been putting off
- Wake up earlier as a symptom of experience rising progesterone and testosterone your body
- Get creative and get all your emotions out onto paper
- Start a new or continue on a project, use your motivation to work on something that's important to you
- As you are nesting, its a good time to clean or reorganise your house
- Do self care things like face masks
- To meet friends
- Join a new group or start doing some new volunteering

Go easy on yourself be careful not to overdo this period, just follow your body and go easy on yourself

☀️ Summer ☀️

The beginning of the summer season is around the day of ovulation, roughly day 14 of your cycle. Ovulation is when the egg is released from the ovaries. This will most likely be the point during your cycle where you feel the best because estrogen reaches its ultimate peak, and progesterone continues to rise

PHYSICAL:

- Warmer body temperature
- More energy
- Glowing skin

EMOTIONAL: the sudden hormonal changes can cause intense emotions such as feeling:

- More motivated and productive
- Heightened verbal and social skills
- Calm, less anxious than during Autumn and Winter
- More confident
- Finding it harder to sleep
- Increased sexual energy
 - But remember don't let anyone pressure you into something you're not comfortable with and if you feel you have please reach out

As you come toward the end of your Summer period, you may experience PMS, meaning it is normal to start to feel low

☀️ Summer ☀️

During Summer, oestrogen and progesterone are high, you may feel more naturally productive

GOOD TIME TO:

- Say yes, get decisive and assert yourself
- Experience pleasure. This can be sexual pleasure, or doing activities and hobbies you enjoy
- Exercise
- Journal of your successes for you to look at when your mood is lower during colder seasons
- Connect, as you may feel more confident and affectionate towards those your friends and family. It may be an opportunity to meet new people

Be careful not to over do it during these phases and come into autumn feeling burnt out

Autumn

During the Autumn phase, your hormones will start to decrease, but progesterone dominates as the main hormone being produced. There will be a lower level of all your hormones being produced

PHYSICAL:

- Less physical energy - feel sluggish and tired
- Temporary weight gain and bloating

EMOTIONAL:

- You may feel more emotionally vulnerable, for example vulnerable to criticism. This is okay and completely normal, your feelings are valid, sit with your emotions and work through them through activities like journaling, creativity or reaching out
- You may feel more low, for example feel emotions like detached, withdrawn, grumpy or insecure
- More assertive, so take advantage of this
- Strong intuition
- Impulsive due to low levels of serotonin

Autumn

As your hormone levels begin to decrease, autumn is a good time to:

- Make time for yourself and do what you enjoy. For example, creativity may boost your mood
- Use your energy wisely, as energy levels may be lower than during other months
- Be open to the idea of accepting help or advice offered by loved ones
- Celebrate your successes and progress you've made over your cycle - maybe by journaling
- Pay attention to what your thoughts and feelings are trying to tell you as you may feel more introspective and have a stronger sense of clarity and perspective
- Your feelings are valid and important but remember emotions are just emotions and thoughts are just thoughts, they may be telling you something but they can also come and go

❄️ Winter ❄️

Day 1-5 of your period is your winter season. Your body is working hard to release the blood lining of the uterus, so it will send your brain signals to slow down and if possible, take it easy

PHYSICAL:

- Progesterone can lead bloating, sore boobs and sebaceous build up which can cause clogged pores and spots

EMOTIONAL: During this time in your cycle, hormones oestrogen and progesterone are in sharp decline. It is normal to feel any of the following:

- Emotionally vulnerable
- Lacking motivation and interest
- Stressed, overwhelmed and fatigued both physically and emotionally
- Increased appetite and cravings for foods

The body may release pain-releasing hormones endorphins and the happy hormone, oxytocin to counteract pain

During the end of Winter, oestrogen levels rising will start rising again as your egg is preparing to be released, meaning things will hopefully look up as you move towards spring again



Winter


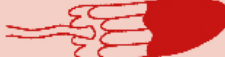
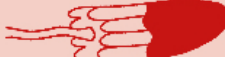
• During winter, downtime will prevent you from running on empty to set you up for the rest of your cycle. You may feel more easily overwhelmed during this period, so it is important to:

- Recharge – rest, restore and nurture yourself
- Take a step back
- Exercise gently, during your period intense cardio can be tough on your system, but a little bit of exercise can get blood and endorphins pumping through the body (causing what?)
- Indulge in some of your cravings
- Take time for yourself
- Practice whatever form of self care works for you, or even try something new
- Set and stick to your boundaries

Let it go: release any tension or negative emotions that have built up over the month.

If you take time out around your period, you can experience the hormone oxytocin, which is the 'love and bliss' hormone


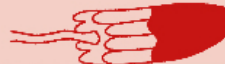
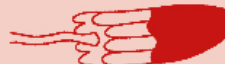
- Adopting slowness and stillness craved by body to allows you to build up for the rest of the month
- Make time for yourself to do something just for you



With 42nd Street and the Horsfall we will be creating a competition for you to submit your ideas on the concept:



If Everyone Had Periods



It's an opportunity to explore the concept of how the world would be different if everyone had periods. There's no doubt that sexism exists within medicine. People are discouraged from a young age to be open or discuss menstruation, which can lead to shame and miseducation. It wasn't until 2016 that the word 'vagina' was first used in Parliament; at that time Parliament was made up of 71% men.

We would like you to submit your ideas of what it would look like in a world where everyone has periods. For example, some people believe if everyone had periods, period products would be freely available for everyone and they would be widely and publicly celebrated.

It is an open submission.

You can submit anything you have created a picture, painting, poem or sentence - anything you like!

Your work can involve positive or negative interpretations.
You may use any influences you wish.





The deadline for this will be:

29th November 2021

Please submit to: create@42ndstreet.org.uk

With the word 'Period' in the subject.

The best three will win and submission will have an opportunity to be displayed in the Horsfall Gallery.



Sexism Within Medicine

- In 2016, Emma Barnett was the first person to share that she was menstruating live on TV. She was on Sky News to discuss 'menstrual leave' which has now been adopted giving women flexible working options or giving time off work in parts of Asia.
- Historically, researchers, doctors and scientists have been predominantly men, and so focus on issues that anyone can get and only studying these in relation to the male-experience. Often ignoring women's issues such as endometriosis. Medicine often sees women as first and foremost reproductive bodies. 1985 a report by the US Public Health Service Task Force on Women's Health warned 'the historical lack of research focus on women's health concerns has compromised the quality of health information available to women as well as the health care they receive.'
- The endocrine system, which produces hormones, was discovered in 1889. It was seen to represent a difference between men and women and came to be viewed as the main cause of all women's illness (which is now known to be untrue.) When researching on rodents, researchers saw the menstrual cycle and all the varied hormones released throughout a female rat's cycle. They decided it introduced too many variables into a study. Thus, at this time in history they decided they could not reasearch women's illnesses.
- Women are underrepresented in clinical trials even though biological differences between males and females can affect how medication works. The general assumption is that women do not differ from men except where their reproductive organs are concerned, and data obtained from clinical research involving men is dangerous for women's health.
- This has had a long term impact. In the UK, women with endometriosis have usually been to their GP 10 times before they get a proper investigation, diagnosis and treatment – Members of Parliament said this is just one example of where women's pain is not taken seriously.
- We know that with gynaecological conditions it often takes seven to eight years to receive a diagnosis of endometriosis, with 40% of women needing 10 or more GP appointments before being referred to a specialist.
- There are many people working towards more equality in the health care system. People like Masie Hill, who was one of the inspirations for this zine.