




## STUDENT HANDOUT I: MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT PERIODS



The table below lists some common beliefs about periods. You have already seen these in Activity Sheet: Periods—Myth or Fact? You may also hear some of them from friends or family members.



S. No.	What you may hear about periods	Myth/ Fact	Why?
1.	Periods are a sign of illness.	Myth	Girls may feel unwell during periods. But this does not make menstruation an illness. It is a <b>normal</b> part of growing up. This biological process shows that the body is <b>healthy</b> and the reproductive system is working as it should.
2.	Using pads/cloth causes illness.	Myth	<b>Illness is mostly caused by lack of hygiene</b> , not the type of menstrual product that girls use. Maintaining good hygiene during periods is important for comfort and health. Pads and cloth are generally safe to use if clean and changed regularly. Cloth needs to be washed well and properly dried in the sun. If menstrual products cause itching, redness, or rashes, then shifting to ones made from unscented and unbleached cotton may be helpful.
3.	Period pain means something is seriously wrong.	Myth	Not usually. <b>Mild to moderate pain is common, especially in the early years.</b> However, it is important to consult a doctor if the pain is severe, interferes with everyday activities (like going to school), lasts for longer than two days, or is accompanied by other symptoms (like heavy bleeding).
4.	Period pains must be silently tolerated.	Myth	Many girls may be led to believe that menstrual pain and/or discomfort needs to be quietly tolerated. But <b>girls should feel comfortable asking for time to rest and for support.</b> When the pain or discomfort is severe, they should also feel comfortable seeking medical help.
5.	All girls start menstruating at the same age.	Myth	Most girls begin menstruating between 9 and 15 years. Typically, girls start menstruating ~ two years after their breasts start developing. But <b>each person's body develops at its own pace.</b> Starting earlier or later is usually normal. A doctor's advice is helpful if a girl: (a) Starts menstruating before age 8 or has not started menstruating by age 15–16, or (b) Has not shown other signs of puberty (such as breast development or the appearance of underarm and pubic hair) by age 13–14. This does <b>not</b> always mean something is 'wrong'—doctors can help understand what is happening, and offer reassurance and guidance.

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6.	Periods should always come on the same date each month. 	Myth	Menstrual cycles are tracked in terms of days, not calendar dates. A typical cycle is 28 days. But this length can <b>vary between 21-35 days</b> . It is not uncommon for periods to be early, late, or irregular, especially in the first few years after a girl begins menstruating.
7.	Stress, illness, or travel can affect the timing of periods.	Fact	<b>Stress, sickness, exams, travel, and changes in diet, sleep, or routine can affect</b> hormone levels in the body. This can cause changes in flow (heavier or lighter) and/or the length of the cycle (periods may be delayed, come earlier, or be skipped).
8.	All girls have the same menstrual experience.	Myth	Every girl's menstrual experience is unique. For example, the length of the cycle (21-35 days), duration of bleeding (2-7 days), the amount of flow, the severity of pain, and the intensity of mood swings can differ from person to person. There is <b>no single 'normal'</b> experience.
9.	All forms of physical activity should be avoided during periods. 	Myth	As long as a girl feels physically comfortable, she need not stop playing, exercising, or attending school during periods. Light activity might, sometimes, reduce cramps and discomfort. Activity that requires <b>pushing through severe pain or discomfort is to be avoided</b> . It is also important for girls to know that it is okay to rest when they feel tired or unwell.
10.	A girl should hide her periods from everyone.	Myth	Talking about periods should always be a choice. No one should be forced to share personal information about it with others. At the same time, it is <b>important that girls feel safe and supported to talk to a trusted adult</b> (such as a parent, teacher, or health worker) whenever they have questions, worries, or need help.
11.	Talking about periods is shameful. 	Myth	Talking about <b>periods is neither inappropriate nor shameful</b> . Girls do not feel shame because of menstruation itself, but because of the silence and misinformation around it. When periods are not discussed openly at home or school, girls may feel it is wrong or embarrassing to talk about them. Restrictions placed on them during periods can also make this healthy body process seem like a problem. It is important for girls to have spaces where they can be sure that they will not be shamed for speaking about periods.
12.	Talking about periods encourages 'bad behaviour'.	Myth	Silence and misinformation around periods can cause problems. <b>Open discussion and correct information can reduce shame, fear, and confusion</b> . It can also build respect and empathy.
13.	Period blood is 'dirty' or 'impure'.	Myth	These ideas of impurity come from cultural beliefs, not from science. Menstrual blood is a mix of blood, tissue, mucus, and some secretions from the body. It is <b>not dirty, spoiled, or toxic</b> .



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14.	Girls should sleep in a separate room from others during periods.	Myth	Periods is a normal body process; not an infection. It is <b>not contagious</b> . Staying or sleeping in the same room as other people during periods causes no harm to anyone.
15.	Girls should not touch food or cook during periods.	Myth 	This view comes from cultural beliefs, not science. Food does not spoil because the person handling or cooking it is menstruating. It <b>becomes spoiled or unsafe to eat due to poor hygiene</b> (like contact with unclean hands, utensils, or surroundings).
16.	Girls should not pray or enter sacred spaces (like temples) during periods.	Myth	This is a social custom, not science. Today, many communities are also beginning to recognise that these are cultural beliefs, not religious instructions. Periods are a natural body process. They <b>do not make a girl impure or unclean</b> .
17.	Plants die if girls having their periods touch or go near them.	Myth	Many girls and women across the world work with plants in fields and gardens every day. <b>Periods do not cause girls or women to release substances that are toxic to plants</b> . Plants wilt or die due to factors like disease, or the lack of water, sunlight, and soil nutrients.
18.	Boys do not need to learn about menstruation.	Myth 	Menstruation is part of how the human body works. Learning about it is as important as learning about digestion or breathing. When boys do not understand this process, they may feel confused or repeat myths they hear. Sharing correct information with boys can help prevent the spread of false ideas such as periods being 'dirty' or 'shameful'. Boys who understand this process and the difficulties menstruating girls and women experience, are more likely to avoid teasing or making hurtful comments. They are also <b>more likely to be supportive and considerate toward menstruating classmates and family members</b> .
19.	Buying menstrual products is shameful.	Myth	Buying menstrual products is like buying any other product (like soap or toothpaste) for maintaining personal hygiene.

