



Health professionals
committed to the
reproductive needs of
children and adolescents

Your Period ■

What is a normal period?

It is common for girls to have irregular cycles when they first begin. This irregularity usually works itself out within 3 years. Cycles that are regular from the very beginning should stay regular. Whenever cycles start, it is helpful to write things down on a calendar to determine how often they are taking place and how long they last. For most girls, periods occur every 21-45 days from the first day of the period in the first year, every 21-34 days by the third year and last less than 7 days in length.

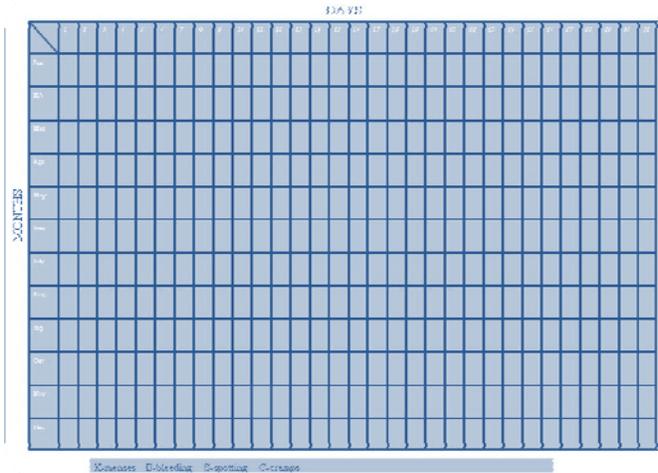
What is an abnormal period?

If cycles are persistently irregular, have been regular in the past and now are irregular or cycles are lasting longer than 7 days, an evaluation is recommended. If you only have cycles every 3 months or even less frequently, your doctor may recommend an evaluation.

What is important to know about the menstrual period?

The time of the first period can be a time of excitement and anxiety. The average age of the first period is 12 ½ years. Before periods occur, there are other signs of puberty to indicate that a girl's body is changing. Usually breast development happens 2 years before the first period. Other signs include underarm hair, pubic hair and body odor.

Menstrual Calendars are helpful to see what type of regular cycle pattern you have. It is important to write this information down and review with your doctor. (mobile apps are also useful)



What will the healthcare provider do if my periods are not normal?

Usually your doctor can determine your cycles are abnormal if they are not becoming more regular, if they are occurring too often or may be too heavy. An exam in the clinic may be needed, but an exam on the inside of the vagina is frequently not necessary. Blood tests may be ordered to check hormones and blood counts. In addition, sometimes a pelvic ultrasound can help make sure the uterus looks normal.

How are abnormal periods treated?

Sometimes your periods will become regular naturally. If your period is not becoming regular over time, is too often or too heavy, there are medications that can help control your cycles. There are hormonal and non-hormonal medications available and these can be discussed with your doctor.