

Menstrual Cramps and Physical Education

What Teenage Girls Need to Know

Is pain with menstrual cramps normal?

- It is normal to have pain for up to 2 – 3 days
- Only half of all women have cramps.
- Pain can be in the pelvic area, lower abdomen, lower back, and down legs.
- Sometimes diarrhea or headache accompany the cramps
- Amount of pain can change over time, so this can improve by itself!

Is sadness with menstrual periods normal?

- This is normal and temporary. More energy and better moods will return!
- Only some women feel irritable, sad or “moody” just before and during their periods.
- A day or two after period begins, you should feel much better.
- If not better within a couple of days, teens should see a doctor.

Are there any changes in my lifestyle that can help reduce the pain?

1. Girls who exercise all month do best.
2. Girls who have diets rich in fish and vegetables may have less pain.

What can I do if I have cramps?

1. Exercise during periods to reduce pain. Walking, for example, can be great.
2. Any pain that often keeps you from doing Phys. Ed. or other normal activities must be discussed with your school nurse or doctor.
3. Even though bleeding may last up to 7 days, pain should last less than 3 days in a teen. Are yours lasting longer? See a doctor.
4. Medications shown to reduce cramps (Motrin, Advil and others) can be given by a nurse in school if your parents gave written consent; If you have a prescription from your doctor, then other staff members can give you medications for your cramps.

Other important information:

- Are you using a tampon, instead of a pad? Never use a tampon longer than 6 – 8 hours. Know the symptoms of Toxic Shock Syndrome: sudden high fever, vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness, fainting, or a rash that looks like a sunburn. See a doctor immediately.