# Reproduction and Menstruation

**1. Female external reproductive organs (vulva)**

**Vagina** is the canal that extends from the vaginal opening to the uterus. The vagina serves three purposes:

1. it’s where the penis is inserted during sexual intercourse;
2. it’s the pathway (birth canal) through which a baby leaves a woman’s body during childbirth;
3. it’s the route through which menstrual blood leaves the body during periods.

**Minor lips** are the inner lips that protect the vagina.

**Major lips** are the outer lips that cover and protect the vaginal opening.

**Clitoris** is a small organ shaped like a bud. The function of the clitoris is to give girls or women sexual pleasure.

A close up of a logo

Description automatically generated

Clitoris

Minor lips

Major lips

Vagina

**2. Female internal reproductive organs**

**A picture containing clothing, shirt

Description automatically generated**

Fallopian tubes

Ovaries

Uterus

Cervix

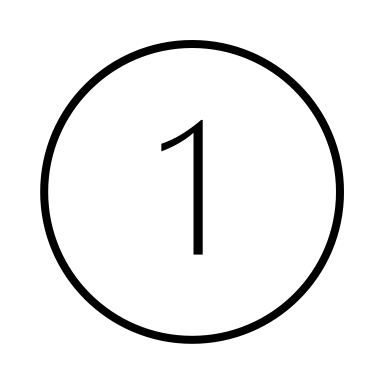
Vagina

**Uterus**:The vagina connects with the uterus (or womb) at the cervix (which means “neck”). When a girl or woman is pregnant, the baby develops in the uterus.

**Cervix**: The cervix is very narrow but during childbirth, the cervix can expand to allow a baby to pass.

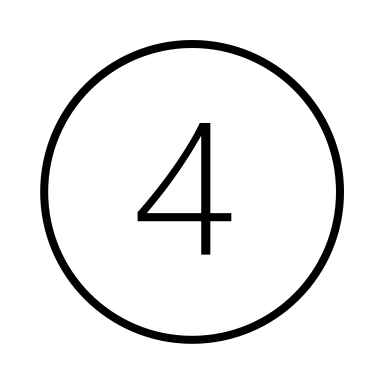
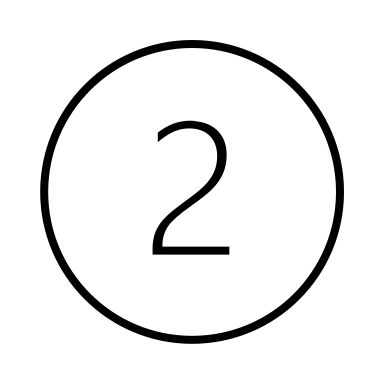
**Fallopian tubes**: At the upper corners of the uterus, the fallopian tubes connect the uterus to the ovaries.

**Ovaries**: The ovaries are two oval-shaped organs that lie to the upper right and left of the uterus. They produce, store and release eggs into the fallopian tubes in the process called “ovulation”.

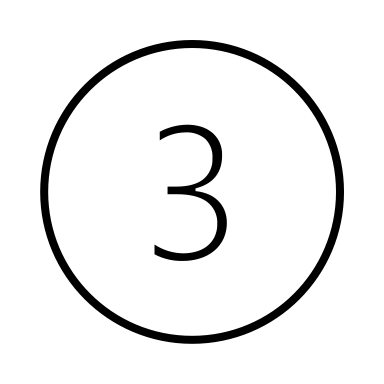
**3. Menstruation cycle**

Shape, arrow

Description automatically generated

****

Egg

****

Egg and wall of womb being shed in blood.

Egg moves into uterus.

It has not been fertilised.

**1.** Girls are born with thousands of tiny **eggs** in their two ovaries. The first egg does not mature until a girl is around 12 years old (when she gets her first period).

**2. Ovulation.** Each month, one egg becomes ready and leaves the ovary. This is called “ovulation”.

**3.** The **egg** goes down the **fallopian tube** to the **uterus** (**womb**). The womb makes its inside wall thick, like a nest ready to host a baby. During this time a girl or a woman is most likely to get pregnant. If during this time, the girl or woman has sex and the egg meets a sperm from a boy or man, it can be fertilised. The fertilised egg beds into the soft and thick wall of the womb where it grows into a baby.

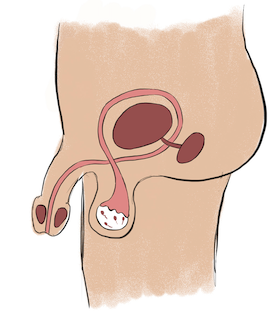
**4.** **Menstruation.** If the egg does not meet a sperm and there is no fertilisation, the inside lining of the womb is no longer necessary and so leaves the body through the vagina as menstrual blood. This happens about 14 days after ovulation. This is called the monthly period or menstruation.

|  |
| --- |
| Key ideas about menstruation |
| * Menstruation is a normal, healthy part of a girl’s or a woman’s life. It is not an illness, dirty or shameful. It means that her body is able to have babies. However, it does not mean that she is ready to have children. * Periods usually last around four to six days. * Most women will lose around six to eight spoons of blood during their period, but with heavy bleeding this can be up to 16 spoons. * It is normal for a period to be heavy at first and then get lighter. If periods go on for longer than eight days or are very heavy with thick blood, a girl should see a doctor. * It is common for periods to be irregular in the beginning. For example, you might get your period once and then wait several months until you get your next period. It is good to track your period so you can find your own rhythm. It can take years to find your pattern so don’t worry if it is erratic for a while – your body is also getting used to it just as you are! * Most girls get their first period between the ages of 10 and 14 years old. * Menstruation continues every month from puberty to menopause, when periods stop permanently. This happens when women are between 40 and 55 years old. * If a young woman has not started her periods by the age of 19 she should see a doctor. * Menstruation stops when a woman is pregnant. It starts again sometime afterwards. * Menstruation is a normal part of life. There is no need to keep menstruation a secret, although it is a private matter. * Women can do everything during menstruation that they normally do. * Menstruation shows that a girl can become pregnant if she has sex. Going near a boy or man cannot cause pregnancy. Pregnancy occurs through sexual intercourse. * Worry, sickness, weight loss or pregnancy can cause periods not to come. A young woman who is sexually active and does not have her period at the usual time should have a pregnancy test. * Some girls have pain during menstruation as the muscles of the womb push out the blood. This is normal. Exercise, resting and painkillers can help to stop the pain. |

|  |
| --- |
| Types of menstrual hygiene products |
| Girls can keep themselves clean during menstruation by using something to catch the blood.  Most commonly used items include (*adapt as applicable in context*):   * **Clean pieces of cloth**: any clean materials that easily soak up liquid can be used, such as a clean t-shirt or towel. Girls should change these frequently, wash them with unperfumed soap, and dry them as much as possible. If possible, iron them to kill germs. * **Sanitary pads or towels**: these are special towels made out of cotton wool on sale in shops. These may be single-use (disposable) or reusable. Girls may also use cotton wool wrapped in thin cloth, or a reusable menstrual cup. Change pads or towels every four to six hours, depending on the flow. * **Tampons:** these are tubes of cotton wool which can be inserted into the vagina during menstruation to absorb the blood. Use a tampon only once and change regularly to avoid infection. Attached to a tampon is a strong, soft cotton string which is used to pull out the tampon after use. |

|  |
| --- |
| Tips for menstrual hygiene |
| * Wash your body with soap and water every day. Do not wash inside the vagina; the vagina cleans itself and does not need to be washed out. For the vaginal area, use water instead of soap to avoid harming the sensitive vaginal tissue. * Wash panties/underpants with soap and water to avoid stains. * Change the pad, tampon or cloth regularly to avoid soiling clothes and causing a bad odour (every four to six hours or more often, depending on the flow). * Wash hands after changing sanitary pads, tampons or cloth. |

**5. Male reproductive organs**

****

Penis

Sperm glandsTestes

ForeskinScrotum

**Penis**: The penis has several functions:

1. to pass urine out of the man’s body
2. to pass semen into the vagina of a woman during sexual intercourse
3. for sexual feeling: in this function it corresponds to the clitoris in the woman.

The tip of the penis is very sensitive. It is covered by a layer of skin called **foreskin**. In many cultures the foreskin is removed through a procedure called **male circumcision**.

**Testes** or **testicles**: There are two testes that produce sperm. The scrotum and testes are sensitive to touch and can be a source of sexual pleasure.

**Sperm ducts and glands:** Sperm pass through the sperm ducts and mix with fluids produced by the glands. The mixture of sperm and fluids is called semen.

**Urethra**:The urethra is a tube that carries semen or urine out of the penis. A muscle makes sure that there is no chance of urine and semen getting mixed up.

|  |
| --- |
| Key ideas about the male body |
| * When a boy reaches the age of about 12 years, the male sex hormone testosterone is produced and tells the testes to start producing sperm. Every day millions of cells are produced in the testicles. * At some point, often during the night, a boy can get his first “ejaculation”, which means that these cells, also called sperm, come out of the penis. This is also called a “wet dream”. * Some boys have regular wet dreams and others do not have them. Both are normal. * Wet dreams normal and not a disease. A boy should not feel shy or worried about wet dreams. They are a sign that he has reached puberty and his reproductive organs are working well. * Wet dreams do not mean that a boy should start to have sex with other people. * Boys may start masturbating. Masturbation is not harmful; rather it is safe and a good way to learn about your own body. However, it is a personal choice. Most people masturbate, but some people choose not to, and some are not comfortable with the idea. * Ejaculation means that a boy is capable of making a girl pregnant. However, it does not mean that he is ready to have children. * A boy’s or a man’s fertility does not change throughout the month. Sperm can live for up to seven days in a woman’s body. * Boys and men should wash their penis with water every day and after ejaculation. If they have a foreskin, they can pull it back gently, wash underneath and dry gently. |