

# This is cottons

A Guide To Your Period





## THIS IS COTTONS:

### A Guide to Your Period

Menstruation is a totally natural part of being a woman. It's your choice though how you deal with it, and that's why it's important for you to know your options.

To get you started we've put together this booklet that goes through everything about your period and the changes you can expect as you go through puberty, some interesting facts about growing up and some awesome tips to turn you into a period-pro in no time at all! There is also a little bit of information about ourselves. Obviously!

## BE NATURAL:

It doesn't need to cost the earth

The difference with Cottons is just what the name suggests - cotton. We offer you a natural alternative during your period with our range of products using only first grade 100% natural, chemical free cotton rather than synthetic materials. That's it. Crazy isn't it!



Our cotton is purified using an environmentally friendly medical-grade cleansing process and we don't add anything (like scent) to our tampons. They are also totally free of synthetic materials. Naturally Cottons tampons are chemical free, biodegradable and hypo-allergenic.

Our pads and liners feature a breathable and 100% natural cotton coversheet, which means they are super comfortable and soft, as well as also being hypo-allergenic.

In order to maximise the absorbency, the inner part of our pads are made out of a blend of SAP (Super Absorbent Polymer) and pulp, materials found in most personal hygiene products.

So when you're considering which brand is right for you, remember, unlike most other brands Cottons features 100% natural cotton.

## PERIODS:

Menstruation, Monthlies, Code Red or  
'Riding the cotton pony'



Menstruation is a totally normal part of a woman's life, and while at first it may seem a bit scary to even think about, your period is a natural part of growing up.

Whether you're just starting out or have had your period for years, no matter how many times we get it (around 400 times in a lifetime actually) we all still get affected, so don't worry, you're not alone! Just educate yourself so that you know all about getting your period to make the most informed choice for your body.

That's where we come in.

What's most important is that you listen to your body and the signals it's sending you. Do whatever feels good; if you want to have a night in to just chill out, do it. If you feel like going for a long walk out in the sun, do it! Baby yourself as much as you like, after all your uterus is doing some serious cleaning and it's not easy work!

## PUBERTY:

You're doing it right, we swear!

Puberty, put simply, is 'growing up'- it's when your body transforms from a girl to a woman and there are a lot of changes that happen during this time that can make us feel a bit weird. Usually puberty happens between the ages of 8 and 18, but it's different for everyone, so try your best to focus on yourself while puberty takes over. Even though it may seem like your body is going a little crazy, it's amazing how your body knows exactly what to do and when to do it.



## CHANGES:

The Basics Explained

Here is an outline to explain what happens to you as your body matures.

From the ages of 8 to 11:

- The pituitary gland, a small gland at the base of your brain, begins to produce the hormones that jump-start the oestrogen in your ovaries. Oestrogen, while having a silent '0', is the hormone that is responsible for your menstrual cycle.
- You'll start to grow taller.
- Hair begins to sprout in places it didn't appear before - this is called pubic hair.
- Your body starts to change shape; your nipples get bigger and a little sensitive, your waist becomes more defined and your hips become rounder. You may notice some body odour as well.

### From the ages of 12 to 14:

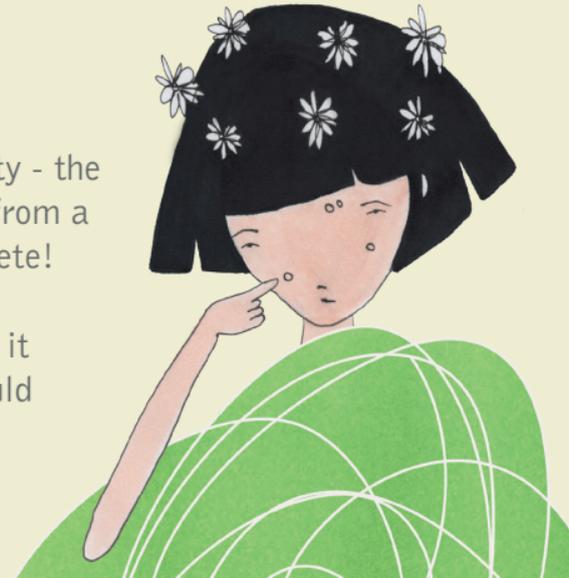
- Oestrogen hormones increase and your ovaries begin to produce eggs.
- Some girls, if they haven't already, will begin to get their periods - but as we mentioned before it's different for everyone, so if you haven't got your period by this stage it's totally normal. Trust us, you will. With the start of your period, it's now possible for you to have a baby.
- Your body will continue to develop into the shape it's meant to be - your breasts will grow and your pubic hair will thicken. Hair will begin to appear under your armpits too.



- You will start to notice some vaginal discharge, which can be yellowish, white or clear. This is a normal function of your body as your vagina keeps itself moist and clean.
- You'll notice your skin changing a little, maybe it will get a bit oily and some pimples may appear.
- With the increase of hormones, you might find yourself experiencing some weird mood swings as well - congratulations you are officially a teenager!

### From the ages of 15-18:

- Most of you would have reached the end of puberty - the physical transformation from a girl to a woman is complete!
- Your period will have established a cycle and if it hasn't started yet, it should begin now.



## YOUR FIRST PERIOD:

What should you expect?

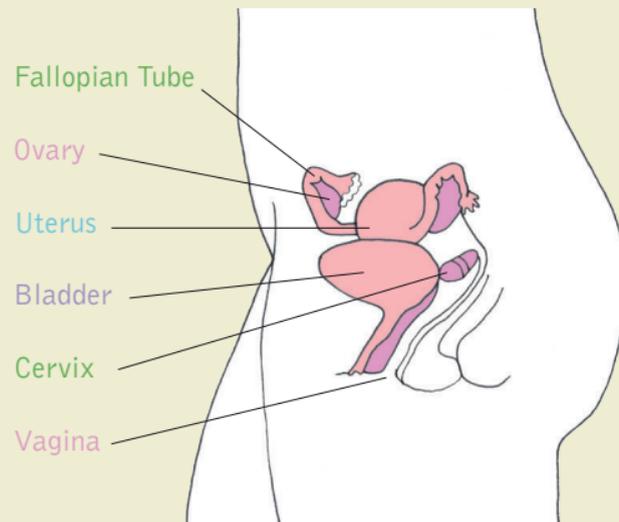


Other than feeling weird and maybe shy or embarrassed about getting your period, your first one is usually very light, only a few spots of red blood or brown discharge. It can start off being a little bit irregular but before too long, your body will settle into its own rhythm and you'll get used to your menstrual cycle in no time!

## MENSTRUAL CYCLE:

Explained!

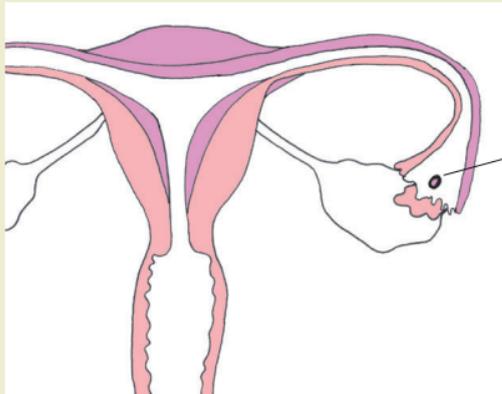
The series of changes that happens to your body in the lead up to your period is all a part of the 'menstrual cycle'. It is through this cycle that human reproduction is made possible.



## THIS IS HOW IT WORKS:

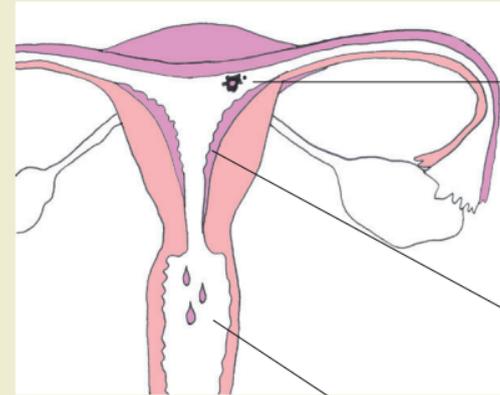
**Stage 1:** During ovulation an egg is released from the ovaries and travels through the fallopian tubes towards the uterus.

**Stage 2:** In preparation for fertilisation, the lining of the uterus thickens and fills with blood.



Egg released from the ovary

**Stage 3:** If the egg is not fertilised and pregnancy doesn't occur, this lining breaks down and leaves the body. This is when you start bleeding and it's the bleeding that's called menstruation, usually lasting between 2 to 7 days.



Egg not fertilized

Uterine lining thickens

Blood leaves through vagina

**Stage 4:** The lining of the uterus then prepares itself for the next cycle.



## PMS:

### What's the deal?

Hormones are raging around the time your period comes and you may experience emotional ups and downs, this is known as Pre Menstrual Syndrome (PMS) and it's totally normal.

Symptoms generally occur 10 to 14 days before your period and can include feeling really tired, mood swings, headaches, cravings, weight gain, irritability, depression, fluid retention, cramps, acne, clumsiness, breast tenderness, constipation, dizziness and backaches. In short - yeah it's not great. You should stop experiencing these symptoms after a few days of your period, but if you're lucky enough you may not get them at all!

## COTTONS GIRL TIPS:

### To ease discomfort!

How to deal with your period and PMS symptoms is ultimately a personal choice - however, we have come up with some tips and tricks (thanks to some Cottons girls) to help you get through your period as comfortably as possible.

### Zoe, 24

“I find that the week leading up to my period is the absolute worst. When I get that feeling in my stomach and I start to get really grumpy I know I’ve got to pull myself together and make sure I’m not a pain for everyone else around me! I’ve found that trying out a few yoga classes a week really helps with my stress levels during busy times and keeps me relatively relaxed.”





## Elyssia, 20

"I love taking hot baths, going for walks or just chilling out listening to music. It keeps me from thinking too much about any period pains I have, and helps me work off the stress. I love doing Barre as well and find that keeping a routine, even when I'm not menstruating, makes me feel at ease."

## Jaymie, 27

"I keep really hydrated. I've got a water bottle that I keep on my bedside table and I make sure that every night before bed I drink the whole thing (around 750ml). That way I can make sure that I am keeping as hydrated as I can throughout the day, and even more so when I go to bed. The more hydrated, the less my period and PMS symptoms irritate me!"

## Alice, 19

“In the first couple of days of my period, I find that putting a hot water bottle on the areas that cramp up the most just before I go to bed really helps. Along with this, peppermint or chamomile tea helps me relax before bed and gets rid of that horrible feeling in my stomach that usually keeps me up.”

## Kahli, 16

“When I’m at school, I make sure I get my friends to check the back of my skirt to make sure nothing leaked during class! I’m still getting used to having my period, especially at school so my friends really help. We have a code word we use as well (“smudge”), so the boys have no idea!”



## OUR TOP 10 TIPS: Period Hacks From Us To You!

1. **Drink more water:** it's really easy to get dehydrated when your body is losing fluid, so drink up to prevent increased bloating and water retention.
2. **Eat dark chocolate:** a 70% cacao treat can help you regain magnesium you lose during your period, relaxing muscles, as well as reducing stress and boosting your mood!
3. **Invest in a hot water bottle:** applying heat to your abdomen will help blood flow and relieve cramps.
4. **Try Vinyasa flow yoga:** while any type of exercise is great for when you're on your period, this particular type of yoga allows you to move the body gently and fluidly without much impact.
5. **Eat less salt:** too much salt can lead to your body retaining too much water and increase uncomfortable bloating.
6. **Track your cycle:** there are so many tracking apps to use that can help you keep up with your body as you go through your cycle. Avoid any surprises and know when it's ok to give yourself some down time.
7. **Stay away from waxing:** you're so much more sensitive when you're on your period and you don't need your body to be put through added pain - ouch!
8. **Resist caffeine:** drinking caffeine has been linked to making your PMS symptoms even worse and increasing oestrogen levels in your body.
9. **Use lavender oil:** the smell of lavender is so soothing and research has suggested that a few drops of oil on your pillow before bed helps put you to sleep like a baby.
10. **Sleep more:** before and during our periods our sleep can definitely get out of whack. Make sure you get the 8 hours you need, it will boost your mood, eliminate stress and help you make healthier choices throughout the day.

## TSS:

### Be Aware, Not Afraid

Toxic Shock Syndrome or TSS, is a very rare but serious condition linked with the use of tampons. The cause of TSS is believed to be toxins produced by the bacteria 'staphylococcus aureus' (a mouth full, we know) which is more commonly known as 'golden staph'. This bacterium is mostly found on the skin, in the nose and in the vagina, and while it is mostly associated with young women using tampons, TSS can actually affect men, women and children.

While tampons don't actually cause TSS, they may provide the perfect environment for the bacteria to produce more toxins than normal and so increase the risk of TSS forming. Don't panic, the chances of actually contracting TSS are extremely slim.

According to [toxicshock.org.au](http://toxicshock.org.au):

"...the UK Public Health Laboratory Service reported that between 1985 and 1990 there was an average of 20 confirmed cases of TSS per year, out of a total population of 58 million. In the US, approximately one in 100,000 menstruating women contract the illness per year. Figures for Australia are not available as TSS is not a notifiable disease, i.e. medical professionals do not have to notify authorities about cases of TSS".



## SAFE USERS GUIDE:

### Keep it Clean, Keep it Fresh

We want you to be as well informed as possible and to understand the dangers associated with TSS, and so there are certain precautionary steps we will highlight for you:

- Change your tampon **at least** 4 times a day, or every 3 to 4 hours.
- Use the **lowest** absorbency tampon that you need. Using a lower absorbency will encourage you to change more frequently, which is key.
- Have a go 'trading down'- if you usually use super tampons for example, try using regular, or try using super only on heavy days and switching to regular when your period is lighter. The same goes if you use regular more often, have a go with mini tampons and see what works best for you.



- As a general rule **never** leave a tampon in for longer than 8 hours, or overnight.
- Change to **pads** for night time use.
- Maintain your **hygiene**, wash your hands before, as well as after, inserting a tampon.
- Finally, and most obviously, keep yourself **clean** with daily showers or baths.

## WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

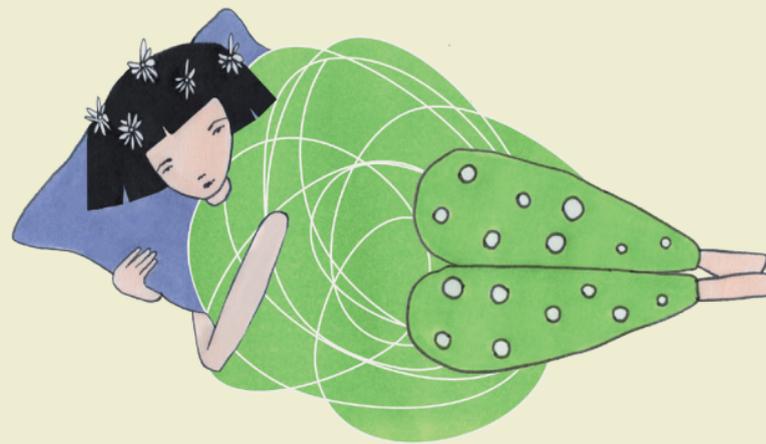
### What does TSS feel like then?

During your period, always be aware of any abnormal or unusual symptoms that occur to your body. TSS symptoms can often appear quickly and can be severe, so keep a look out for:

- Sudden high fever (38.9 degrees or higher)
- Vomiting or diarrhoea
- Fainting and dizziness when standing up
- Rash, often on the hands and feet that looks like sunburn



If you begin to feel any of these symptoms, remove your tampon immediately and seek medical advice. If you would like to find out more about TSS contact your local GP, Community Health Centre or visit [www.toxicshock.org.au](http://www.toxicshock.org.au).

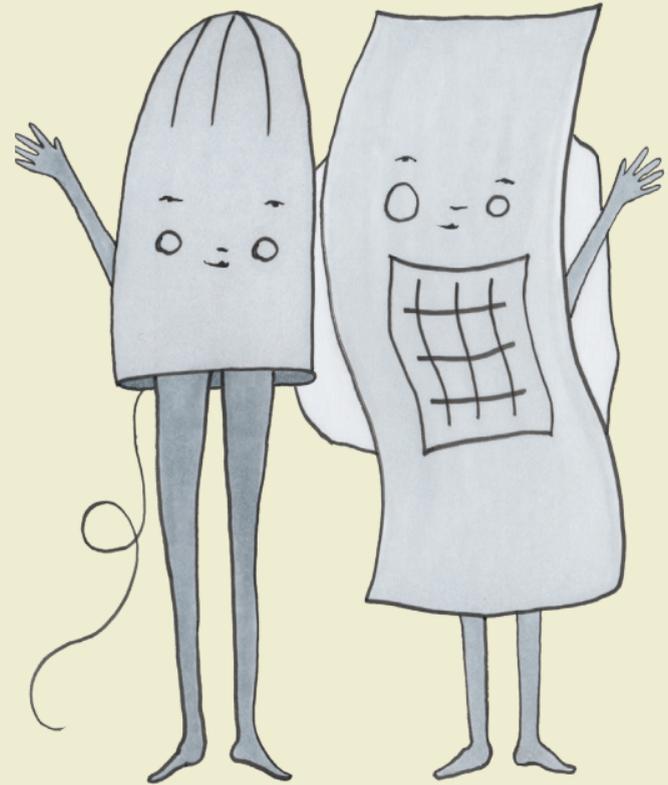


## PADS OR TAMPONS:

### It's Your Choice!

Either/or, it's totally up to you! We would however recommend having both pads and tampons handy during your period. Have a think about your lifestyle and what you would feel the most comfortable with.

Cottons Ultra-Thin Pads are slim, absorbent and easy to wear, with an adhesive strip that sticks to your underwear and wings that wrap around to keep the pad as secure as possible. They come in Regular for everyday use, Super for heavier periods and Overnight, so you have nothing to worry about whilst you sleep. There are also Cottons Pantyliners for very light days at the end of your period, or for use in between periods for light discharge.



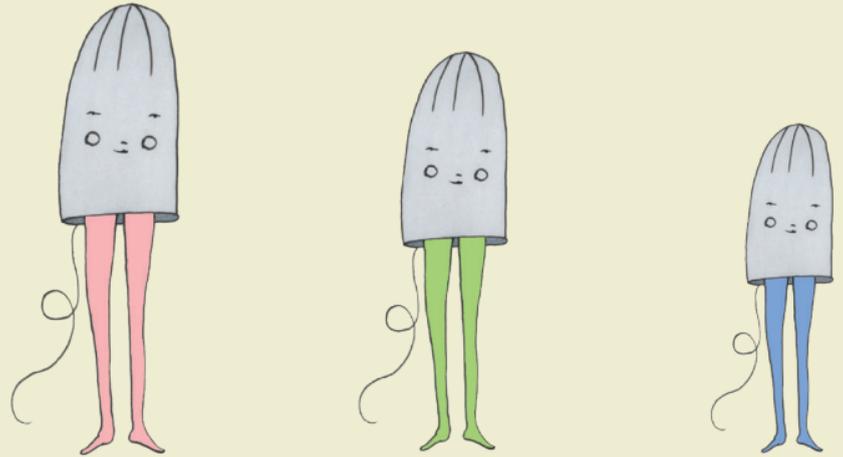
If you're someone who is more physically active, using tampons may suit your needs better than pads. Inserted correctly, you won't even be able to tell a tampon is in, and once you get the hang of it, they are super easy to use. Unsure about how to use them?

Don't worry, you'll find clear instructions in our pack. Oh, and trust us, despite what you may have heard, they can't be pushed up too far, fall out or damage the hymen or cervix!



Removing a tampon is quick and simple too, just pull on the little string that hangs outside of you. Cottons tampons come in Mini, Regular and Super to cater for changing flow during your period.

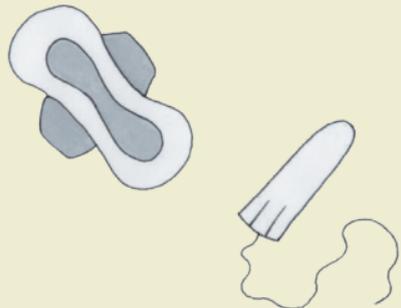
If you need any help or advice on how to use tampons, have a little read of the leaflet inside our tampon boxes.



## WE WANT COTTONS

Tried a Cottons product that you love? To find your nearest stockists, have a look on our website at [www.cottons.com.au](http://www.cottons.com.au)

If you can't find a Cottons product you want at your local supermarket or pharmacy, check out our online store at [www.cottonsshop.com](http://www.cottonsshop.com)



## GLOSSARY: What does it all mean?

**Cervix:** the neck of uterus.

**Cramps:** discomfort caused by the contraction of the uterus, usually beginning before your period then tapering off.

**Fallopian tubes:** the tubes that connect the ovaries to the uterus.

**Hormones:** chemicals in your body that send messages to other parts of your body. The female hormones are oestrogen and progesterone.

**Menstruation:** the monthly shedding of a woman's uterine lining, also called a period.

**Oestrogen:** the female hormone that governs the menstrual cycle, produced by the ovaries.

**Ovulation:** the release of a mature egg from the ovary about 13 to 15 days before the menstrual period begins.

**Period:** the monthly shedding of a woman's uterine lining, also called menstruation.

**Premenstrual syndrome:** symptoms such as fatigue, mood swings, headaches, cravings, weight gain and various aches that appear in some women just before menstruation. Also known as PMS.

**Puberty:** a time of physical and emotional changes that marks the beginning of the sexual reproductive system maturing process.

**Pituitary gland:** located in the brain, it sends hormonal messages to the sex organs to produce oestrogen in women and testosterone in men.

**Pubic hair:** hair that grows around the female and male genitals.

