

A booklet about growing up for girls with Down's syndrome.

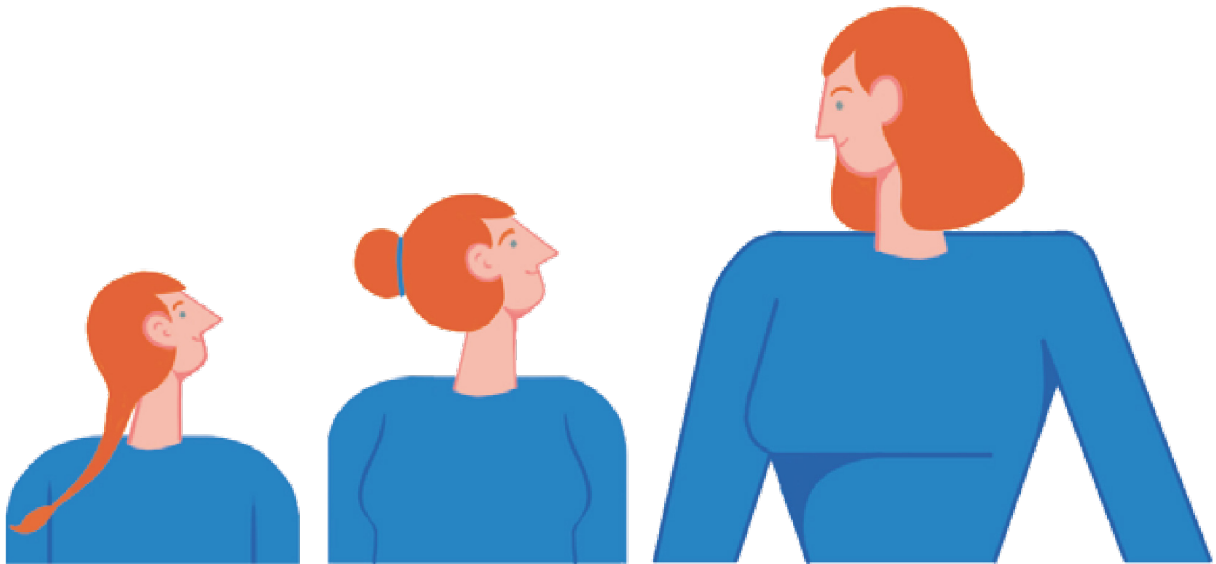
Let's talk about periods



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When will my periods start?

As we grow up our bodies start to change. For girls, one of the biggest changes is that you will start your periods. Your periods will normally start between the ages of 11 and 14, but it can be earlier or later. Having your period is normal. It is a sign that your body is healthy.



Becoming a woman

Starting your periods can be a bit scary but it is also an exciting time. It is a sign that you are growing up and becoming a woman.

If you are worried about having a period talk to your mum, a female relative or support worker. All women have periods so they will understand how you feel and will be able to help you.

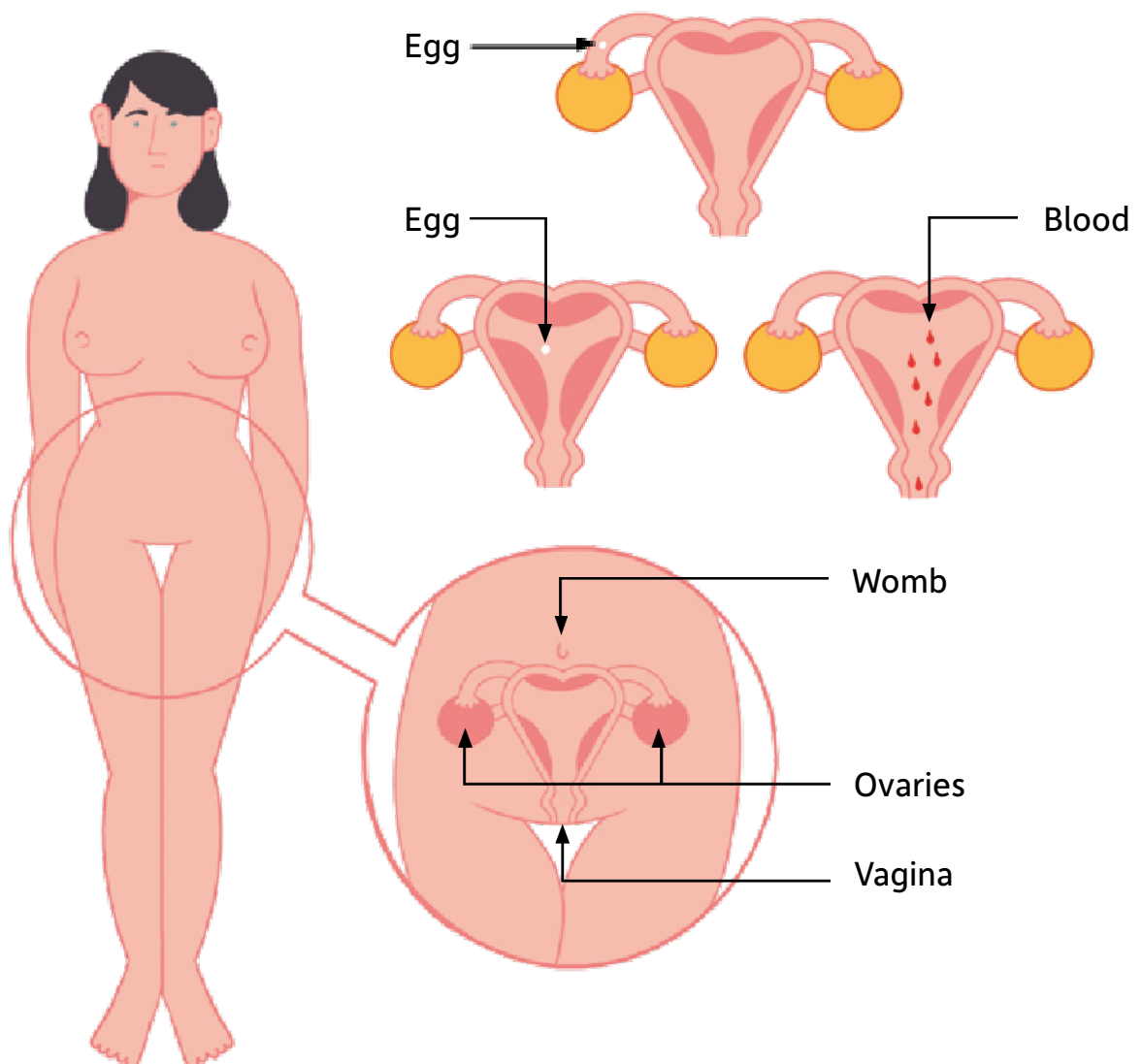
Periods happen every month for many years of your life. When women get older their bodies go through another change called the menopause. This happens when women are in their 40's and 50's When women have finished the menopause, their periods stop forever.



Why do you have periods?

Inside your body are your womb and ovaries. Each month an egg is released from your ovaries. If the egg is fertilised by male sperm it will become a baby. If the egg is not fertilised it will dissolve into the blood that lines your womb. The blood lining builds up during the month.

When the egg dissolves the blood lining is not needed. Your body has to get rid of it. The blood comes out of your body through your vagina, which is between your legs. This is called your period. Your period lasts between 4 to 7 days.

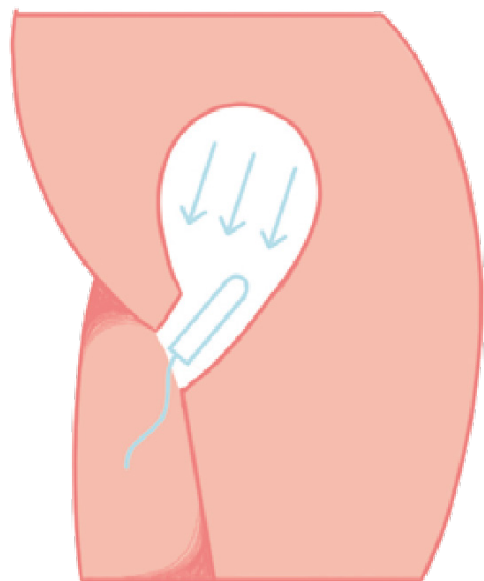
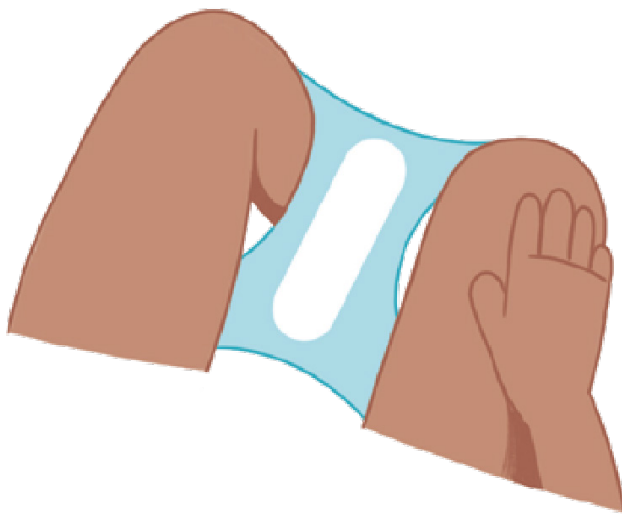


Hygiene

You need to stop the blood getting onto your pants and clothes. You need to use a sanitary towel or tampon. A sanitary towel sticks to your pants and catches the blood as it leaves your vagina.

A tampon fits inside your vagina and soaks up the blood. You need to change your sanitary towel or tampon every 4 to 6 hours. You might need to do this more often when your period is heavy. Wrap the used sanitary towel or tampon in toilet paper, put it in a sanitary bag then put it in the bin.

It is a good idea to carry some sanitary towels or tampons with you all the time. This is in case your period starts when you don't expect it or if you forget when it's due.



How often do you have a period?

At first you may only have a period every once in a while but in time you should have a period every month. Some women find it useful to write in their diary when their period has started. This can help you to work out when your next period is due in 28 days time.



How do you feel?

Before your period you may feel more upset about things. You might get more angry about things. Parts of your body might hurt. Your breasts can get sore before your period starts. Your tummy might feel sore and it could become swollen. Your back might hurt. This is normal and usually goes away once your period has started.

What can you do to feel better? You can have a hot bath, put a hot water bottle on your tummy or take painkillers. Sometimes gentle exercise such as walking can make you feel better.



This booklet is in an easy read format. It is advisable that family/carers/friends read the book and discuss the content with the person.

Down's Syndrome Scotland provides support to families, carers and professionals who care for people with Down's syndrome.

If you would like to access further support please call us on 0300 030 2121.

For further information visit: www.dsscotland.org.uk




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