



## Understanding your period

### LESSON OVERVIEW



We know that puberty can be an overwhelming topic area – for both teachers and students. Our lesson plans and supporting resources aim to help teachers deliver key learning outcomes and content in a positive and comfortable way.

Understanding what is happening to your body is the first step in being able to manage the changes. This lesson is specially designed to support girls in understanding menstruation. Students will explore coping skills and content through engaging activities to help them become more comfortable about their periods. The lesson will work best with an all-female audience.

Note: Teaching students about puberty can be a sensitive issue, the topics explored are connected to personal values, family backgrounds and spiritual beliefs. Teachers are encouraged to investigate the following lesson content thoroughly prior to teaching. Depending on your school's policy, we recommend all students are given a letter

communicating the content being explored with accompanying permission slip for their parents or guardians to sign prior to participation in this lesson.

### LEARNING INTENTION



Students will:

- Define and learn about the process of menstruation
- Understand that although there is an average age when it comes to getting your first period, everyone is different
- Identify and sequence the four phases of the menstrual cycle
- Learn about premenstrual stress and explore a range of coping strategies
- Explore features and functions of a variety of female hygiene products
- Learn about toxic shock syndrome and how to prevent it
- Explore a range of strategies designed to support girls in managing their periods

## RESOURCES



- Libra Girl website – [www.lovelibra.com/libra-girl](http://www.lovelibra.com/libra-girl)
- Parent or guardian permission slips
- Girl Talk activity booklet – [www.lovelibra.com/libra-girl](http://www.lovelibra.com/libra-girl)
- Free School Resource Kit
- Roll. Press. Go. Video – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U89TY2Ywlrq>

## ASSESSMENT

There are a number of formative assessment opportunities throughout this lesson including:

- Class discussion
- Student questioning
- Student activities
- Workbook samples

## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM LINKS

Key Learning Area:

Health and Physical Education

Investigate resources and strategies to manage changes and transitions associated with puberty (ACPPS052)

## PRIOR TO THE LESSON



### SEEK PERMISSION

- Ensure the lesson content and activities fall within your school's policy. We suggest you discuss this with the relevant coordinator or head of department.
- Collect signed permission slips from each student's parent or guardian prior to teaching this lesson.

### CREATE A CONFIDENTIAL QUESTION BOX

It's common for students to be embarrassed to ask questions around puberty, we encourage the use of a question box throughout the program. Place the question box in an accessible place in your classroom so that students can submit questions that they may not feel comfortable asking in front of their peers. Use your judgement, determine if the answer can be provided by yourself or is more appropriate to be answered by a parent or guardian.

### SET THE TONE

Before commencing any lessons, ensure students understand that this is a sensitive topic. Take time to establish rules and expectations that make your classroom a safe and respectful environment. You know your students best, we encourage classes to create rules around:

- Everyone's rights to beliefs and opinions
- A respectful and safe environment
- Personal questions – what is appropriate to share in a group setting versus what should be raised in a confidential environment with a trusted adult.

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**LESSON INTRODUCTION****10 MINS****SETTING THE TONE**

1. Explain to students that they will be learning about 'periods' this lesson. Discuss how some people may feel embarrassed when it comes to this topic area and that it is important to establish a sense of trust and maturity while exploring the content. Explain that periods happen to all girls and is completely natural. Reinforce your established rules of respect and explain that if anyone has any questions they don't feel comfortable asking in front of the class, they can submit it into the question box.
2. Show students the activity booklet and explain that you will be using this resource throughout the lesson, it contains everything students need to know in order to feel confident and comfortable about their periods. Hand out one activity booklet to each student and explain that at the end of the lesson they are welcome to take it home and look at it with a trusted adult.

**GIRL TALK**

1. Give students time to read the first half of the page to introduce them to the topic and make them feel more comfortable. Explain that getting your first period can be stressful for some and exciting for others. The most important thing is to be able to talk about what is happening with a trusted adult. Having questions and concerns is completely normal.
2. Introduce the three personas of Zoe (11), Mia (13) and Livy (14). Explain that they all have different experiences when it comes to their periods.

3. Read each quote and discuss it as a class. Explain that you are going to explore the content featured in each quote in more detail throughout the lesson.

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**MAIN BODY OF TEACHING****35 MINS****YOUR PERIOD, WHAT IS IT?**

1. Turn to the next page in the activity booklet.
2. Discuss the fact that there are over 5,000 slang terms for 'period' worldwide. Identify some that students are familiar with and ask students why they think it's so hard for people to just use the word 'period'.
3. Explain that periods happen on a monthly cycle. It's when your body is getting prepared to carry a child. Tissue, blood and other biological matter forms a lining on your uterus. When the lining is not needed it breaks down and is released through the vagina.
4. Direct students to the bottom of the activity page, ask students to quietly think of some thoughts they would like to discuss or questions they would like to have answered about periods.
5. Explain that at the end of the lesson you will review this page again and see if there is anything further you need to explore.

#### WHEN WILL IT HAPPEN?

1. Explain that just like Livy, lots of girls feel anxiety about when they will get their first period. Discuss some common concerns girls might have including:
  - Getting their period at a late age
  - Getting their period at an early age
  - Getting it at an inconvenient time (at school or in class)
2. Typically, girls will experience their first period between the ages of 9 and 15, with most girls experiencing it between ages 11 and 14. Reinforce that this is different for everyone, some may experience it a little earlier, some a little later. If students have any concerns regarding this, it's best to talk to their parents or doctor.
3. Explain that there are lots of warning signs and clues before getting your period. Understanding these signs can help so you won't be caught out unprepared.
4. Have the following warning signs displayed on the IWB, covered at this stage so students can't see them.
  - It's genetic
  - On average a year after you first pubic hair and had discharge
  - Discharge changes colour and becomes more reddish brown (Vaginal discharge is very normal and can change in appearance throughout your cycle. Discharge is a great lubricant and protective shield and keeps infections away as well as a way for your body to get rid of dead cells and bacteria. Normal discharge is usually clear or creamy, or perhaps with a slight yellow tint to it. It does not have an offensive smell or cause irritation. If you notice a change in your discharge, let a trusted adult know or visit the doctor.)

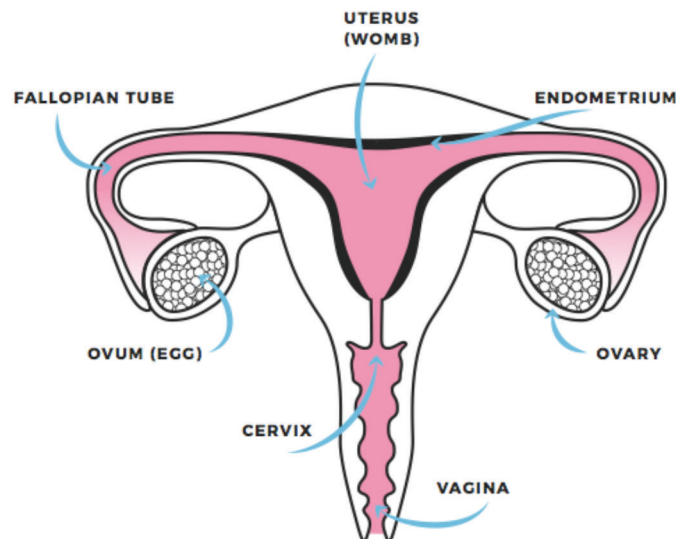
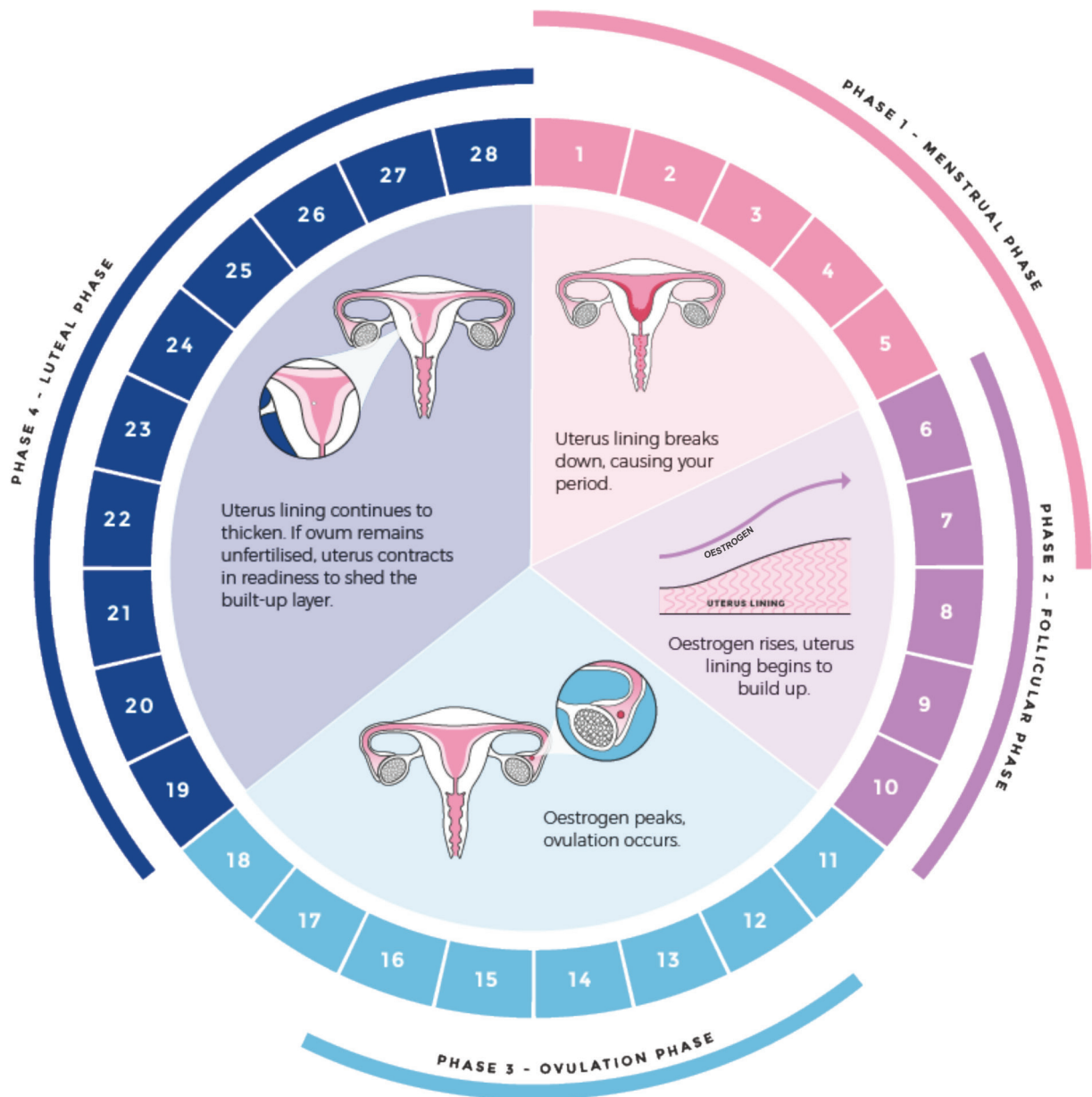
Click and reveal each clue one-by-one and discuss in more detail, you will find more information in the activity booklet.

5. Give students opportunity to share their thoughts.
6. Break them up into pairs to discuss who they would go to for help when experiencing their first period. Encourage them to consider if it happens at home or at school.
7. Bring students back together and ask them to share their thoughts with the whole class.
8. Reinforce that it's important to be supportive during this time. If you notice someone who needs help at school or it happens to you, the best thing to do is approach a teacher or staff member you feel comfortable around – they will be happy to help, remember they have experienced it as well.

#### THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

1. Explain that getting your period is just part of the menstrual cycle. A menstrual cycle usually takes about 21 to 32 days (Vaginal discharge is very normal and can change in appearance throughout your cycle. Discharge is a great lubricant and protective shield and keeps infections away as well as a way for your body to get rid of dead cells and bacteria. Normal discharge is usually clear or creamy, or perhaps with a slight yellow tint to it. It does not have an offensive smell or cause irritation. If you notice a change in your discharge, let a trusted adult know or visit the doctor.). It starts on the first day of the menstrual period and ends the day before the next period begins.





2. Explain that there are four phases that occur throughout the menstrual cycle. These are the ovulation phase, the follicular phase, the menstrual phase and the luteal phase. Direct students to look at the activity sheet, explain that the four diagrams they see represent each stage. Ask students to test their existing knowledge and have a go at labelling each diagram with the corresponding phase. Ask students to then number the diagrams in the order they think each occurs.
3. Give students time to complete the activity.
4. Turn to the next page in the activity book to check their answers.
5. Explore the diagrams and discuss what is involved in each stage.

#### PHASE 1 – MENSTRUAL PHASE

The first day of the cycle. This starts on the first day of your period. Most girls will experience their periods for 2-7 days.

#### PHASE 2 – FOLLICULAR PHASE

This phase begins when your period is finished. An ovum (egg) is developing on an ovary and the lining of your uterus slowly begins to build up. The follicular phase can last from 11 - 27 days although the average length is 16 days.

#### PHASE 3 – OVULATION PHASE

Oestrogen level peaks causing the egg to be released into the fallopian tube, this is called ovulation. Ovulation only lasts for 24 hours and usually happens around day 14 of your cycle.

#### PHASE 4 – LUTEAL PHASE

If the ovum has been fertilised it takes 5-7 days to travel to the uterus and embed itself into the lining to start growing. In most cases the ovum won't be fertilised, so it disintegrates within 48 hours. It is common to experience PMS due to changes in hormone levels. Cramps are also

common as the uterus contracts in readiness to shed the built-up layer (period). The luteal phase can last for 11-17 days, although the average length is 14 days.

#### PREMENSTRUAL STRESS (PMS)

1. Explain that nearly all girls will experience one or more symptoms of premenstrual stress. It occurs during the luteal phase as a result of fluctuating hormones.
2. Discuss the symptoms found in the activity booklet, ask students to have a go at identifying the 10 symptoms of premenstrual stress (depression, bloating, tiredness, sore breasts, food cravings, cramps, weight gain, diarrhoea, constipation and irritability).
3. Explain that although some of the symptoms might make you feel uncomfortable, there are lots of strategies that you can use in order to cope with premenstrual stress. Brainstorm some strategies that students may know of. Identify the strategies that each icon in the workbook represents and label it accordingly (exercise, healthy foods, relaxing).



#### PICKING YOUR PRODUCTS

1. Direct students to sit in a circle. Place the Libra School Resource Kit box in front of you. Explain that there are lots of ways to help you keep comfortable and confident during your period.
2. Ask students if they can identify any existing products that can be used to manage periods.
3. Discuss what students may already know about pads, liners and tampons.

## PADS

1. Explain that there are different pad options to suit different needs. Show students the LibraGirl Regular Pads, open up the packet and explain that these pads are specially designed to fit smaller bodies, so they are perfect for when you start your first period.
2. Direct students attention to the top layer, explain that pads are made of absorbent materials to draw in fluid and keep you dry and comfortable throughout your period.
3. Turn the pad over, explain that it has a sticky back which is applied to the crotch of your underwear, this will help it stay in place.
4. Point to the wings. You can choose pads to come with or without wings, wings wrap around and stick to the underside of your underwear to hold it in place.
5. Show students the LibraGirl Goodnights Pads. Open up a packet and hold up the pad next to the LibraGirl Regular Pad. Ask students to point out some differences.
6. Explain that different pad options have different functions. Pads come in different lengths, the longer they are the more they absorb. Regular pads are good for a normal flow, if your period is heavier you might like to try super pads. Hold up LibraGirl Goodnights Pad, explain that this pad is even longer than super pads and is specially designed to keep you protected and comfortable while you sleep.
7. Explain that pads should be changed every 3-4 hours, no matter how heavy or light your flow is. This will prevent a yucky odour developing from bacteria. Pads should be disposed of in the bin, most public female bathrooms even have a special sanitary bin available in each cubicle for you to use. Make sure to wrap your used pad up before you dispose of it. The Libra range has a special Roll. Press. Go. Wrapper with self-

sealing edges so you can get rid of your used pads discreetly.

Demonstrate the Roll. Press. Go wrapper using the products in the School Resource kit or direct students to view the Libra Roll. Press. Go. Video.



8. As a class read the comic strip in the workbook. Reinforce that it's best to talk with their mum or a trusted adult about finding the right pad that suits their needs. It's best to give a couple of options a try (Extra, Ultra Thin and Invisible) so they can find the right thickness that suits their needs.

## LINERS

1. Show students the Libra 2 in 1 Liners from the School Resource Kit. Open up the packaging and ask students to identify how liners are different from pads (they are much thinner and lighter).
2. Explain that liners are designed for when you're expecting your period, at the end of your period when your flow is light, as a backup while wearing a tampon, during sport to absorb sweat or daily to keep you feeling nice and fresh.
3. Liners can be applied just like pads, they have a sticky back that secured to the crotch of your underwear – you'll hardly notice it's there.

4. There are a range of liners that you can choose from to fit your body and your life. Direct students to look at the Libra 2 in 1 Liners again, point out that these liners are especially designed with two liner layers, so that when you need a quick freshen up you simply peel off the top player to reveal the clean, second liner. There are also single layer liners available.
5. When you are ready to replace or remove used liners, they should be disposed of exactly like pads.



#### TAMPONS

1. Discuss tampons with students, explain that many girls are a bit anxious about using them at first, but they are very handy especially for activities such as swimming.
2. Just like pads, tampons come in different sizes for different absorbency. Regular tampons for a normal period and super tampons for a heavy period. Libra has developed Libra Girl tampons made for smaller bodies and are perfect for first time users. Check Libra Girl website for more details.
3. Show students the Libra Regular Tampons. Open the packet and explain that tampons are inserted into the vagina to absorb your period. Every tampon packet comes with instructions that you should read carefully before you begin. It may take a few tries before you start to feel comfortable using them.
4. Show students the Libra Applicator Regular Tampons, explain that they are a great way to ensure you get used to positioning your tampon correctly.
5. It's important to change your tampon at least every 4 hours and NEVER leave it in for more than eight hours.
6. Provide opportunity for students to ask questions about the products

#### TOXIC SHOCK SYNDROME

1. Move students to sit in front of the IWB with their activity booklets.
2. Explain to students that if they decide to start using tampons it's extremely important to understand how to use them properly in order to keep your body healthy.
3. Ask students if anyone has heard of toxic shock syndrome. Explain that tampons are associated with this very serious illness that, although extremely rare, can cause death. It's important to have a good understanding of what causes it, how you can recognise the symptoms and how to reduce the risk.
4. Explain that toxic shock syndrome is caused by a build-up of bacteria called staphylococcus aureus and has been connected with leaving tampons in for too long connected with leaving tampons in for too long or forgetting to remove them.
5. Read through the symptom list located in the activity booklet and discuss that if students identify any of these symptoms while using tampons they should remove the tampon and head straight to the doctor or emergency room. It may not be TSS, but if it is early treatment can save your life.
6. Explain that there are lots of things you can do in order to reduce the risk. Explore the strategies listed on the checklist in the workbook and discuss with students.



## TAKING CARE OF YOU

1. Explain to students that although periods can sometimes be a pain, there are lots of strategies they can put in place to make sure their periods don't get in the way of normal activities.
2. Show students the chatterbox template located in the activity booklet. Instruct students to cut out and create their chatterboxes, they can decorate it however they like.
3. Break students up into groups of three, ask them to use the chatterboxes to discover and discuss different strategies they could use when they have their period. Ask them to think about the following questions:
  - Is this strategy easy to implement?
  - What could this strategy look like to you?
  - What do you think is the most useful strategy?
  - Is there anything else you can think of that might help you cope during your period?

## PLENARY

### 5 MINS



### REVIEW AND DISCUSS

1. Review the thoughts and questions that students recorded in the beginning of the lesson. Remind students that the confidential question box is available for students to post any questions they may still have that they don't feel comfortable asking in front of others. If they still have more questions they can also talk to a trusted adult or visit [www.libragirl.com](http://www.libragirl.com).
2. Explain that it's a good idea to take this activity booklet home and discuss the contents with their parents or trusted adult. At the back of the activity booklet is information about ordering your product sample you wish to try, which is handy to keep at the bottom of your schoolbag. There is a list of all products in the Libra range, so you can discuss with your parents which product is the right fit for you.
3. Ensure you revisit the question box regularly. and answer any questions that may have been posted by the students.