

Riding The Red Wave



The monthly bill. The curse. The visitor. Riding the red wave. Where did these names come from? On top of that, what do they suggest about getting your period? Unfortunately, for many girls, menstruation has been viewed as a negative experience to endure each month for a significant part of life. But does it really have to be that way? Naaahhh.

The first thing I want to put out there is this: having your period is not a bad thing. It's actually quite amazing, not to mention healthy. Girls today are getting their periods earlier and earlier. Anywhere between the ages of nine and 17 is typical, but everyone has her own time. Don't worry if everyone around you is getting it, or if you have no period pals to share the experience with — everyone develops at a different rate, and that is normal.

In a nutshell, it's all about hormones, which are chemicals that tell certain parts of the body to grow. The menstrual cycle is the name given to the process of change that are caused by the fluctuations of these hormones. The menstrual cycle is usually from 21 to 35 days long.

So, girls, don't compare your cycle with your pals. You're a unique person, right? So, if you get your period every three and a half weeks and your friend gets hers every five weeks, don't freak out. That's just part of puberty! When it comes to menstruation, being different is very normal.

It is very likely that your cycles will be quite irregular the first few years or so. Your body is still adjusting to all these new changes. That's why it's important to understand that because your cycle might be irregular, it's hard to tell when you'll ovulate. If you don't know when you ovulate, it makes it that much easier to become pregnant. So, if you are sexually active, you need to use protection each and every time you have sex. Got it? Good.

Now that we got the logistics down, do you want to know why we get a period? No, not to annoy us. We get a period because our uterus prepares for a possible pregnancy each and every month. Yep, it's true. It does this by building up a soft, thick lining — like a nest — called an "endometrium." If the egg we release (ovulation) each month doesn't get fertilized, the lining is not needed and is shed. This shedding of the lining is known as menstruation, or having a period. When you get your period, that's day one of the menstrual cycle, and it starts all over again at the beginning of your next period. Amazing, huh?

Now that you better understand the menstrual cycle, it may be easier to deal with each month. Look at it this way — if periods didn't exist, you wouldn't be here today. And there are much better sanitary products than back in the day. In ancient times, women actually used mats of grass as feminine protection. And you thought pads were a pain?!