

Period Session

Notes and Planning

Aims of the session- To have an open conversation about periods to break the stigmas

Learn more about the effects of periods and how best to manage them

Icebreaker- Period True or false

Activities

Do you know what the different period products are?

Research the advantages and disadvantages of different period products. Costs, risks, easy to use etc.

Experiment- How much liquid do they hold? Red liquid poured on to pads, tampons and cups

Split off into groups and sell me your period product. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the product you have chosen?

Tell me why I should be using this product over every other one? Resources needed.

Science bit!

What is a period? Flipchart exercise ask questions to the room support and facilitate answers.

Menstruation a period is the 2 to 7 days that a girl or woman has her menstrual flow, which is when blood and tissue leave the body through the vagina.

Why does this happen? Each month, blood and tissue build up in the uterus to prepare for a fertilized egg in case a woman becomes pregnant. If the egg isn't fertilised that lining leaves the body through the vagina and the person has a period! NHS periods

NHS- a period is the part of a person's menstrual cycle where they bleed from their vagina. For most people this happens every 28 days or so but it is common for periods to be more or less frequent than this ranging from day 21 to day 40 of their menstrual cycle.

A period can last between 3 and 8 days but will usually be about 5 days long. The bleeding tends to be the heaviest in the first 2 days.

When your period is at its heaviest the blood will be red. On lighter days, it may be pink, brown or black.

You'll lose about 5 to 12 teaspoons of blood during your period, although some women bleed more heavily than this.

Periods start around age 12, although some girls will start them earlier or later. A delay in starting periods isn't usually a cause for concern. Most girls will be having their period by age 16 to 18.

PMS (Premenstrual Syndrome)

Changes in your body's hormone levels before your period cause physical and emotional changes.

Who knows what this is called?? ANSWER what do the letters PMS stand for?

PMS

How does PMS feel for you?? Flipchart exercise.

Symptoms:

- Cravings
- Bloating
- Constipation
- Acne- hormonal changes can cause glands in the skin to produce more sebum. This clogs your pores and can trigger a spot outbreak!
- Pain – Back pain, headaches, tender breasts, joint pain.
- Mood swings- unpredictable impacts on mood; irritability, anger, crying spells, depression and anxiety. Some people even have trouble with memory and concentration during this time.
- Reduced self-confidence
- Tiredness
- Difficulty sleeping
- Forgetfulness
- Feeling more hungry than usual
- Feeling sick
- Hot flushes or cold sweats

Facts:

- PMS is more likely in the late 20's to mid-40's
- People who have had at least one pregnancy are more prone to PMS
- Women with a history of depression or other mood disorders may have more PMS symptoms.

PMS can worsen the symptoms of certain chronic conditions, including:

- Asthma and allergies
- Depression and anxiety
- Seizure disorders
- Migraines

The symptoms of PMS can be similar to or overlap with other conditions, including:

- Perimenopause
- Depression or anxiety
- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Thyroid disease
- Irritable bowel disease

The key difference is that PMS symptoms come and go in a distinct pattern, month after month. If you think you have PMS, keep a diary of your symptoms for at least two months before you go and see a GP. This will help you see if your symptoms are related to your periods.

PMS can't be diagnosed with any specific tests so your GP will usually make a diagnosis based on your description of your symptoms and when they occur.

Self-help for PMS

There isn't a cure for PMS but there are certain things you can do yourself that might help your symptoms, especially if they're mild. It may take a while to find something that works for you. If you reduce your stress levels it may help to ease your PMS. Make note of when your next period is due and, wherever possible tackle stressful tasks when you're likely to be free from PMS symptoms. Try relaxation techniques and get plenty of sleep.

Regular exercise may improve your symptoms especially bloating, irritability, anxiety and insomnia.

Wear comfortable clothing if you feel bloated and wear a supportive bra if you have sore breasts.

Getting your period can help make all of these symptoms ease off a little bit and you will probably start to feel better once you begin to bleed.

Facilitate a conversation around PMS lets share experiences and have a good conversation about how we all experience this differently.

PMS happens to most of us and if we don't experience it in the way described here our period can still make us feel rubbish. Design a poster with tips and hints on how to deal with PMS and periods. Resources: paper and pens.

Activity-

What are the different words you've heard for periods?

Periods are often seen as a taboo subject (something people don't want to mention or talk about) When people consider something to be taboo they often use different words to describe it and intentionally avoid mentioning the topic or words directly.

Ask the girls in small groups to think of different words or phrases to talk about periods or if they have any of their own words they use.

An international study was done and showed that there are over 5,000 different slang terms and euphemisms for the word "period" (Independent) The study was conducted by Clue with the International Women's Health coalition.

Examples: The time of the month, on the rag, lady time, moon time, lady business, red wedding, girl flu, shark week, the blob,

Explain how all the different phrases show that there still is a stigma around periods and facilitate a conversation around whether we feel more comfortable using a funny phrase to talk about it rather than saying exactly what is it.