



What is Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)?

PMS is a combination of **physical** and **emotional symptoms before a period**. The symptoms are different for everyone, but physical symptoms can include **bloating, tender breasts**, fatigue, appetite changes, or **headaches**. Emotional symptoms can include sadness, anxiety, and mood swings.



How can I manage PMS?

Certain habits can help with symptoms related to PMS such as **regular physical activity** throughout the month, eating **healthy foods**, getting enough **sleep**, **abstaining from smoking**, and finding healthy ways to cope with stress. **Hormonal birth control** may also help with the physical symptoms of PMS. Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) is a **severe form of PMS**. Symptoms include **extreme sadness, irritability, or anger**. There are options to treat PMDD, including hormonal birth control. Speak with your provider to learn more.



What menstrual products are available at boot camp?

Recruits are encouraged to **arrive at boot camp with a week's worth of menstrual management supplies**, such as tampons, pads, or a menstrual cup. Additional pads and/or tampons are issued upon arrival to boot camp and available for purchase. Upon arrival to boot camp, female recruits are offered **hormonal contraception for menstrual suppression** and **pain medication for menstrual cramping**, if desired. Recruits taking hormonal contraception to manage periods are encouraged to bring their medication and continue taking it during training.

PERIOD COMPLICATIONS

Talk to your provider if you experience the following:

ABNORMAL CYCLE: Periods that are less than 21 days apart or more than 35 days apart

MISSING PERIODS: Missing 3 or more periods in one year

PROLONGED BLEEDING: Bleeding that lasts more than 7 days

CHANGE IN FLOW: Much lighter or heavier period than normal

HEAVY PERIODS: Such as soaking through a pad or tampon every 1-2 hours each period

SEVERE SYMPTOMS: Severe pain, cramping, nausea, vomiting, or mood changes that interfere with daily activities

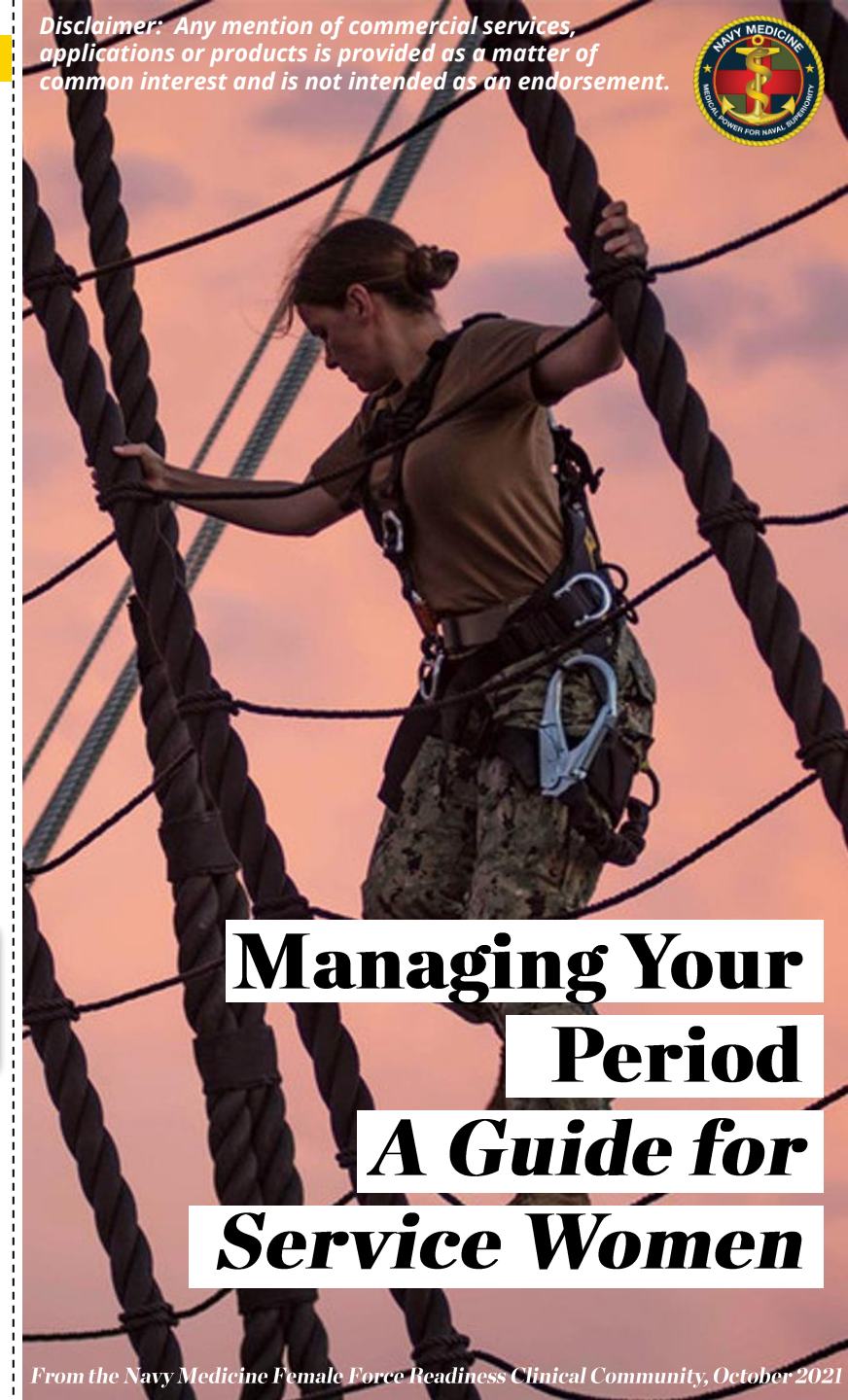
BLEEDING OR SPOTTING: Bleeding between periods, after sex, or after menopause

Here are some helpful ways to start the conversation with your provider if you experience any of the above:

"I was reading that there are options to decrease the severity of my period. Can we discuss the options?"

"I was thinking about all the stressors of deployment, and was hoping to discuss options for dealing with the stress associated with my periods."

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Managing Your Period A Guide for Service Women

Menstrual Management for Service Women

Active duty females encounter **conditions** which make **managing your period difficult**, including field conditions that can make carrying and managing menstrual products (pads, tampons, etc.) challenging. In addition, service members may have concerns related to disposing menstrual products on ships. **Consider the options in this pamphlet to make managing your period easier.**



What is menstruation?

Menstruation, more commonly referred to as a **period**, is **vaginal bleeding that occurs each month** due to shedding of uterine lining in response to a lack of pregnancy. Period flow varies depending on the person and **typically lasts 2 – 7 days**. Periods are likely to begin between 12 – 14 years of age and will likely stop between 45 – 55 years of age.



Is my menstrual cycle normal?

The menstrual cycle begins on the first day of a period (vaginal bleeding) and ends at the start of the next period. There are **typically 28 days** between cycles, but it can range from 21 – 35 days. Contact your primary care provider if you have concerns about your menstrual cycle; they can refer you to specialist if needed.



How do I manage bleeding?

Pads, tampons, menstrual cups or discs, and **period underwear** can all be used to manage bleeding. Pads stick to your underwear and tampons fit inside your vagina and have a string attached for easy removal. **Menstrual cups or discs** (such as DivaCup® and Flex®) are folded and inserted in the vagina for **up to 12 hours**. **Period underwear** (such as THINX®) can hold up to 2 tampons' worth of blood or **provide back-up** protection for tampons and pads. Menstrual cups and underwear are **reusable after washing** and menstrual discs are disposable after approximately 8 uses.

Ibuprofen, Aspirin®, or Naproxen can also help lessen heavy bleeding. To use Ibuprofen to manage heavy and/or painful periods, take 600-800mg Ibuprofen every 8 hours starting 2 days PRIOR to the onset of bleeding (beginning of your period) and until bleeding stops for best results. Do not continue the scheduled Ibuprofen in between periods.



How do I manage cramps?

Menstrual cramps are caused by the uterus squeezing to help the blood flow. If experiencing painful cramps, consider using a **heating pad**, or trying **moderate-intensity aerobic exercises like walking or light jogging** to relieve pain. If these options do not suffice, consider taking **Ibuprofen** or **Acetaminophen**. Additionally, **hormonal birth control** can help **suppress periods** and **related symptoms**.



How can I properly dispose of menstrual products on a ship?

Specific trash receptacles are available in bathrooms for disposing menstrual products. Menstrual products should **never be flushed down the toilet, especially while on ships**.



Will I have breaks during duty hours to change menstrual products?

Yes, you will be afforded the necessary time to **use the restroom and change menstrual products**.



Are there safe options to avoid having my period altogether?

Yes! This process is called **menstrual suppression** and it involves methods of hormonal birth control to alter the menstrual cycle for **lighter bleeding, fewer side effects, or no period at all**. Reference resources under the Menstrual Management Tab of the [Women's Health Webpage](#) or talk to your provider to learn more.

Try it out! Period Tracker Apps

There are free, **customizable apps**, such as Period Tracker Flo, Clue, Eve, Glow, and Natural Cycles for **tracking and monitoring menstrual cycles** and symptoms. These apps will **offer predictions** for upcoming menstrual cycle timing and symptoms. *Some apps will offer information about fertility during certain days in your menstrual cycle. However, an app cannot perfectly predict ovulation and therefore should not be used instead of contraception to prevent pregnancy.*