Your private parts
What is that in my pants?
Can you see something in your pants?

You may see something white and sticky. This is called discharge or mucus.

It is okay to have some discharge. It may be clear, white or pale yellow. It may smell a bit.

Discharge can change before and after your period.

Between your periods you may have a lot of discharge like egg white.

Just before your period you could have less discharge. This may be sticky or chalky.

All of these are okay.

Some discharge is healthy

Is it stretchy, like egg white? This is okay.

Is it white or pale yellow? Does it smell a bit? This could be okay for you.

Some discharge could mean you have a problem

Is it white and lumpy? Is it itchy? Tell your doctor.

Is it grey, white or yellow? Does it smell fishy? Tell your doctor.
Do I need to talk to my doctor?

If you have any of these things around your private parts you should go to see your doctor:

- pain
- itching
- soreness
- burning
- a strong smell
- bleeding between periods

My doctor said I should not use soap or shower gel or sprays inside my vagina.
And I should never use disinfectant to clean my private parts.

It is important to wash your private parts every day, especially when you have your period. This can stop you feeling sore and itchy.
Help!
I've started my periods
Most women have periods. Periods can start between the ages of 9 and 16. A period comes about once a month.

A period shows that you are not pregnant.

But having periods means that you could get pregnant one day.

Every week of the month there are changes in your body. The same things happen every month.

**Week 1**

The lining of your womb comes out of your vagina as blood. This is your period.

This is when I get backache.

I get cramps in my stomach.

**Week 2**

An egg grows in your ovary. Your womb gets ready to grow a baby.

At this time I feel really happy and confident.

**Week 3**

An egg comes out of your ovary. The egg goes into your womb. This is called ovulation.

I get discharge in my pants. It is like egg white.

**Week 4**

If there is no sperm the egg will not grow into a baby. The egg comes out of your body. It is too small to see.

This is when I get spotty and bloated.

I start to feel down and moody.

Your period starts after week 4.
Your periods may not be the same as your friends’ or sisters’. Everyone is different.

My periods are very heavy. They can last for a week.

My bleeding lasts for 2 or 3 days it is very light.

When you start your periods they may be irregular for a year or more.

I had one period and then nothing for months.

Some things can affect your periods.

I haven’t had a period since I started depo provera injections and I’m worried.

My periods stopped when I put on lots of weight. I went to talk to my doctor about it.

You can talk to your doctor if you have any worries about your health. You can ask to see a woman doctor or the practice nurse.

If you have questions about your body or periods you can telephone Women’s Health and talk to a woman in private.

Helpline: 0845 125 5254
Monday-Friday 9.30am-1.30pm
Minicom 020 7490 5489
Private parts
This leaflet is about the private parts of your body. Everyone is different. It is good to get to know your body so that you will know what is normal for you.

People have different ideas about their private parts. What do you think?

Some people think it is rude to touch your private parts.

I say my private parts feel good when I touch them in a sexy way.

Sometimes I like to ask my partner to touch my private parts.

My mum says your private parts are part of being a woman.

My sister says they are to do with periods and going to the toilet.

My teacher says they are to do with sex and having a baby.

Clitoris
You may see this just below your pubic hair. It is not easy to see. It looks like a small bump. It feels very sensitive. If it is touched the right way it can feel good but if it is touched the wrong way it can hurt. If you want to you can touch it yourself and find out what feels good.

Your inner and outer lips protect your private parts. They may be big or small. Everyone looks different.

Vagina
This is the larger hole of your private parts. It is where your period comes out. This is where your baby will come out if you are pregnant.

The name for the outside of your private parts is vulva.

It is not easy to see all the bits of your private parts. You could use a mirror. You may want to get to know them by the way they feel.
Feeling good
It is okay to touch your private parts when you feel sexy.
It is okay to ask your boyfriend or girlfriend to touch your private parts.
It is important to do sexy things in a private place where you feel safe.

Feeling safe
You can say no if you do not want someone to touch your private parts even if it is your boyfriend or girlfriend.
If anyone touches you in a way that hurts you can tell them to stop.
If anyone touches you in a way that feels wrong you can tell them to stop.
If someone touches you in this way and you need help to stop it you should tell someone you trust.

If you have questions about your body or periods you can telephone Women’s Health and talk to a woman in private.

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What about tampons?
Some women are worried about using tampons.

I'm not sure how to put a tampon in.

You put a tampon into your vagina. You can feel your vagina with one hand and use the other hand to push the tampon in.

The tampon will be inside you and the string should hang outside.

A tampon goes inside your vagina.

A tampon will soak up the blood from your period. Always take the tampon out before you put a new one in. It is very important to take the last tampon out at the end of your period.

It is important to change your tampon about every 4 hours. Never keep a tampon in for more than 8 hours.
What if I put the tampon in the wrong hole?

The hole you wee out of is tiny, like a dot. A tampon will not fit into it. So you cannot put a tampon in the wrong hole.

Do tampons hurt?

It may be sore the first time you try, but it should not hurt if you have put the tampon in the right way. Your vagina is the right size for a tampon to fit comfortably.
We all have different ideas about what is best for us.

Towels are better at night because there is lots of blood.

Towels are better for me because someone helps me to change them.

Maybe you will try tampons one day, but some women never use tampons. You need to work out what is best for you.

My sister started using tampons after she had a baby.

Tampons mean I can swim when I have my period.

You can talk to your doctor if you have any worries about your health. You can ask to see a woman doctor or the practice nurse.

If you have questions about your body or periods you can telephone Women's Health and talk to a woman in private.

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Your private parts

This pack is about the parts of your body that make you a woman. The leaflets have information about your body, your private parts and periods.

We have tried to make a pack that will answer some questions you may have.
We have used questions and ideas from young women around the country to make the leaflets.
You may not agree with everything in here.

Some things in this pack may make you feel embarrassed.
There are pictures of a woman’s body and private parts in some of the leaflets.

The leaflets may make you think of more questions. If you have questions about your body you should talk to someone you can trust.

If you have any worries about your health you should go to see your doctor. You can ask to see a woman doctor or the practice nurse.

If you have any questions about your body, your private parts or periods you could ring the Women’s Health Helpline and talk to a woman in private.

Women’s Health Helpline
0845 125 5254
Monday-Friday 9.30am-1.30pm
Minicom 020 7490 5489

Your call will be confidential.

Thanks

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Ruth Curson and Marilyn Glenville.

If you have any questions about your body, private parts or periods you can ring the Women’s Health Helpline
Telephone 0845 125 5254 Minicom 020 7490 5489
Monday-Friday 9.30am-1.30pm

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The leaflets in this pack are intended to provide information, stimulate discussion and point to sources of help. While we would like women to be given these leaflets to take away and look at in private, we hope workers will support women towards a greater understanding of their bodies.

Ideas from groupwork with the Elfida Society

The leaflets work best when they are used with a small group, lots of discussion and whatever props you can find or make. While developing the pack we found the following worked especially well to make the discussions clearer, more meaningful and entertaining.

The rubber glove
We cut the finger off a rubber glove and pierced a tiny hole in the end of it. This was used to give a rough idea of the size of the vagina and the size of the entrance to the womb. We used it to reassure women about tampons fitting in the vagina and how it would not be possible for them to go into the womb from the vagina.

Tampon exploration
Some of the women we worked with had never seen or touched a tampon. It was good to have a selection of towels and tampons available to compare, touch and wet.

We tried the following experiments:
How big can a tampon get?
Can you pull the string off a tampon?
Does a dry tampon fit easily into the rubber glove ‘vagina’?
Does a wet tampon come out easily?

Some other sources of support and information:

fpa
Services include a helpline and a range of sex education and contraception publications. Some of these are aimed at people with learning difficulties.
fpa, 2-12 Pentonville Road, London N1 9FP
Tel: 020 7837 5432 Fax: 020 7837 3042 www.fpa.org.uk
Helpline: 0845 310 1334 (Monday to Friday 9am - 6pm)

CHANGE
Accessible booklets include: “Depo-provera” and “Planning a baby”. CHANGE, Unity Business Centre, Units 19 & 20, 26 Roundhay Road, Leeds, LS7 1AB
Telephone: 0113 243 0202
Fax: 0113 243 0220 Minicom: 0113 243 2225 Email: changepeople@btconnect.com

Norah Fry Research Centre
Accessible publications include “Secret Loves, Hidden Lives?” photostories exploring same sex relationships for people with learning difficulties.
Norah Fry Research Centre, 3 Priory Road, Bristol BS8 1TX
Tel: 0117 331 0987 Fax: 0117 331 0978
Minicom: 0117 331 0979
www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/NorahFry

Books Beyond Words
Accessible books include: “Keeping Healthy Down Below” and “Looking After My Breasts”.
www.rcpsych.ac.uk/publications/bbw/bbwinfo.htm