

Every Period Counts Survey Findings

As part of the Every Period Counts campaign Irise International commissioned a nationally representative survey of girls across the UK, with support from campaign allies Bloody Good Period, In Kind Direct, Freedom4Girls and Cysters.

The research was carried out online by Research Without Barriers between 4th and 15th May 2023. The sample comprised 1,007 girls aged 13-18.

Key findings include:

- A third of girls (344 out of 1,007) are missing school due to a lack of care or access to period products - that's over 3 million days missed every year.
- Nearly half of all school girls (434 out of 1,007) are struggling to access period products at school.
- 61% of girls (610 out of 1,007) have had issues accessing toilets in lessons when on their period.
- Further 44% of girls (446 out of 1,007) feel too embarrassed to ask for period products at school.
- A quarter (24% 240 out of 1,007) have been too embarrassed to notify a teacher when they have started their period.
- A further 25% (251 out of 1,007) have had to justify exactly why they needed to go to the toilet.
- One in four girls (24% 245 out of 1,007) have to hide their period products when accessing a toilet at school.
- More than 1 in 10 schools still don't provide free period products, with 13% of girls (128 out of 1,007) stating that their school/college doesn't offer free period products at all.
- A huge 52% of girls (527 out of 1,007) say they have never been taught how to use period products at school or college.



Experiences of managing periods in UK Schools

As part of the Every Periods Counts Campaign, we have collected hundreds of stories of young people's experiences managing their periods in schools and colleges across the UK. Common concerns shared reflect the findings of our nationally representative survey and include:

- Difficulties accessing products in school when needed
- Challenges accessing practical support or accessing toilets during class
- Requests for more education in schools at a younger age to improve preparedness before reaching menarche
- Challenges accessing medical help when needed, with a knock-on impact on ability to engage in school

We've shared a selection of the stories we've received below. Stories have mostly been shared with us anonymously, but where the respondent has shared information about their age or location we've included this. We have shared stories unaltered, including using the grammar and spelling as used by the person sharing the story.

Stories have been collected by Irise International, the Love Your Period Campaign, and Sex Ed Matters and submitted by many other young people and youth groups.

1. "I was once told in a lesson when asking to go to the toilet on my period that she'd understand if I was younger but at my age I should be able to hold it. I also used to have a teacher, who, when someone asked to go to the toilet it would go to a class vote. My ability to go to the toilet based off my popularity!? I always made sure I went before his lesson."
Sheffield, 15
2. "My daughter was shamed in front of the class when she asked to use the toilet and was asked in front of the class how many times she needs to go in one lesson. My daughter was mortified. Like me she gets extremely heavy periods on day 1 and 2."
Mother of 11 year old girl, Buckinghamshire
3. "In Year 7, my history teacher (male) used to ask if we were on our period if we wanted to go to the toilet during lessons. Boys always got to go but girls had to 'be on their period.' In our school toilet stalls, there are pad and tampon machines and we have to pay £1 for 1 pad and 1 tampon and apart from these machines there is no other reason for any student to carry cash so most times we have nothing to save us during an emergency."
Sheffield, 15



4. "One time I was having a super heavy period and had to sit on a stool in a biology lab for 3 hours whilst bathroom breaks were discouraged meaning I ended up leaking through my underwear, tights and skirt onto the stool. I was mortified when I realised but I was so embarrassed that instead of asking for some tissue to clean it up or asking to go to the toilet to sort myself out I decided to use my jumper to wipe it up and had to spend the next 4 hours of school hiding the fact that I had leaked and that it was on the majority of my clothes at that point."

Anonymous, currently in school

5. "At my school if you want to go to the toilet you have to be escorted and will receive a behaviour point and detention. This makes me not want to go to the toilet and leaves me uncomfortable."

Sheffield, 18

6. "No access to any toilets they are all locked during class lessons so unable to go out during these, if you do try they refuse to let you go.

Only one block of toilets are reopened at breaks, now due to new rules there's a descriptive sheet that has to have your name, time entered/excused and if you take too long they shout, hurry up continuously to get you out. These are very busy as most need the toilet so none are free to use.

I have to wait until the end of breaks to try and go to change, which sometimes doesn't happen before they lock them which can make me have to wait for the next break which can cause me anxiety, especially on my heavy days, as I may leak which would be very embarrassing and feel unhygienic."

Chichester, 16

7. "I could afford products until the cost of living crisis. I started accessing products from the Love Your Period Campaign in Wales because I didn't know schools had them. I met with Molly who always gave me products who told me they'd had them since 2019 but I didn't know and there's never any posters or advertisement anywhere. Anyways so Molly asked me what I'd do until then and I explained that when I got home from school I'd use one of my socks from that day over night and then go to school the next day using the second sock from the day before. I didn't really have a choice because I couldn't get pads and toilet paper wouldn't hold but my socks absorbed and I wasn't creating any more washing. The scheme was out 4 years and I'd never heard of it so there's bound to be loads more."

Anonymous – in school in Cardiff



8. "It pisses me off soooo much how it's easier to get a condom than a tampon. Even in schools with the C Card scheme. Like come on. It's because men are affected that's why it's easier. If men had periods then products would be available and free and there would be no shame. Nothing annoys me more. I can walk in and get a condom in a minute if I wanted, but to get a tampon I need to go into reception, ask the receptionist to radio the caretaker, who takes ages to come and take me to a locked cupboard hidden away. The whole process can take up to half an hour and I am missing education. And to the people who say I should've been prepared, our hormones are so strange as teens that we don't have regular periods at all."

Anonymous – currently in school, Cardiff

9. "One time when I was in my English class, I started my period and I had to wait until the my class had ended, not only did i have to wait but when I finally got the toilet i also had to wait to get some products which weren't in the toilet and I had to make my way to the library to get some pads. And I think that it is not helpful that we have to wait ti get cleaned up just because they don't have products in toilets. Which is were they really should be.

Another thing that happened in school, an my friend had leaked and we have always been told to go the the staff room or PE department to get a change of clothes, I looked in both places multiple times but failed to find any this is a issue. Since she then had to walk around like that which happen on a daily basis. Making girls not wanna come to school, it's something they should look into more."

Sheffield, 14

10. "My teacher told me to stop talking about my period because it's disgusting when I asked someone quietly if they had a spare tampon."

Anonymous – currently in school

11. "At school, I asked a male teacher to go to the toilet as I thought, I was starting my period. He denied me the right to go to the toilet unless I explained why I should go during a lesson. I refused as I shouldn't have had to explain myself as to why in front of everybody. I told my teacher aside why I needed to go to the toilet and he replied with, "You should know when your period is coming."

Barnsley, 16

12. "At my school you can get free period products which are in reception or the toilets but people mess around with them and waste them so they've taken them out of the toilets"

Sheffield, 18



13. "The toilets are locked sometimes and you're only meant to go at break when its busy with everyone else"
Sheffield, 15
14. "I think girls should be able to go to the toilet when on periods people in schools should be able to access free pads"
Sheffield, 11
15. "My periods hurt. I get bad cramp and it puts me off my food and in PSHE it's embarrassing"
Sheffield, 15
16. "Yeah, it's easy to get stuff (pads) sometimes girls are bitchy because they can use periods as an excuse. Teacher don't let you go to toilet even when you ask several times. Don't give you painkillers when you ask."
Sheffield, 15
17. "If you start your period early and the teachers won't let you go to the toilet unless you have a pass."
Sheffield, 11
18. "When you're in class teachers make the toilets inaccessible to you even when you desperately need to go because of your period. And once my teacher told me off for taking a tampon from my friend."
Hope Valley, 13
19. "When I first started my period, I was eating less and less because I was experiencing agonising period pains and I have a toilet pass to change my pads. I hid my period bag because I am embarrassed, all the boys made fun of me."
Sheffield, 16
20. "My story is that when I got my period, I told my male teacher I had my period and he refused to let me go to the toilet, I repeatedly asked. He gave me a lunch detention and I had to sit in my blood."
Sheffield, 13
21. "I was in school and I came on and I had to sit in class for a whole hour with no pad so I walked out."
Sheffield, 13



22. "I had my period in my maths class full of rowdy, mean kids. I leaked through my tampon and pad and blood was dripping off my chair. Girls started whispering, and boys jeered and laughed. I felt so embarrassed and started on the contraceptive pill."
Sheffield, 15
23. "#periodsrock getting my period in front of my dad"
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
24. "I got my period when I was 11 and it was traumatic. I was the 1st in my year to get it so I felt so ashamed. Ever since, I have suffered with paralysing cramps but still go to school as it feels like a superficial reason to stay off. I also feel embarrassed to go to the GP."
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
25. "Can't talk to dad or mum about period cramps because it's not "British". Instead of spending money on things I enjoy, I spend them on luxury pads"
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
26. "Having to ask people for products when I don't have any"
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
27. "teachers not letting us go to the toilette when on our period and having to tell the whole class"
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
28. "the stigma around periods mean that I feel embarrassed walking through a shop buying pads. I am constantly worried that I have bled all over my light jeans and feel awkward constantly asking my friends to check me. I struggle to focus in many classes and feel bad for leaving lessons to change my pad."
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
29. "embarrassed about not having pads / tampons with you in the bathroom :) Please have pads free in bathroom"
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
30. "My teacher made me feel anxious when she said that I couldn't go to the loo when I was on my peeriod - I know so many people who have been scared to ask to go to the toilet. Teachers need to change, its making the period stigma increase."
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student



31. "feeling embarrassed when buying the products and feeling judged, it's not a pleasant experience"
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
32. "Free period products and products should be supplied to school to stop us feeling anxious"
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
33. "I leaked on the chair in a lesson because I was scared that my teacher would say no to me asking just to go to the loo. The shame I felt trying to hide the little pool of blood I left on the chair and the stain on my skirt. Teachers need to be educated. Change the school policy."
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
34. "Not being allowed to go to the toilet in lessons, the shame in saying you need to change your pad/tampon. Leaking or being caught out in public. Having to pay for products in the emergency tampon / pad box that are only in some toilets. Educate teachers on how much they impact feelings and make us feel embarrassed. I am embarrassed of leaking. The embarrassment of telling a boy / male (even when someone doesn't have a bin in there bathroom). Change the school's policy."
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
35. "The stress when you don't have any products and your period starts, especially if it is difficult to accss them. I've also experienced fear especially on days when your period is heavy, many people including myself worry about leaking because of others reactions or thinking it is gross."
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
36. "Once at school I leaked on the chair and I was so embarrassed because it isn't considered as a normal thing to happen as we don't talk about it enough. I think at schools it needs to be discussed earlier and from a younger age, so it becomes normal and everyone is more comfortable with their period."
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
37. "Period sympoms often get overlooked and often get belittled. More conversations need to be had. It is normal!"
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student



38. "There needs to be bins and free period products in each toilet stall. Especially in schools and public bathrooms."
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
39. "CRAMPS. I got in the pool and leaked. Stigma = where flower is pollinated."
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
40. "Make period products free in school please! Thanks Rishi Sunak! No maths also."
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
41. "Please make period products free and accessible to use (for the young people) (no maths a-level)"
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
42. "Our periods are expensive. To get comfortable non-scented pads we have to pay ridiculous amounts. I felt embarrassed when someone made fun of me leaking. I feel worried I will leak on a school chair or bus. I felt embarrassed when I got my period before the school talk. Talking to parents is embarrassing and schools use pretend words eg 'Aunt Flo' and 'shark week' making everything confusing. Teachers won't let us go to the toilet twice in a lesson if we start after our first toilet trip. If we bleed through uniform, we're stuck in a blood skirt."
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
43. "Hi I was in Y6 when I started my period and no one really talked about them because we were told not to talk about them because they were embarrassing when that's not the case it's a natural thing and it happens to all people but not everyone can afford to supply pads for themselves. Which is why all products should be free ! :)"
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
44. "I think that products should be free at schools and public bathrooms."
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
45. "I feel uncomfortable, I need cheap pads and sanitary products to allow me to have my period without embarrassment, which increases stigma. HELP US. BE MORE LIKE SCOTLAND. STOP PERIOD POVERTY."
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student

46. “EMBarresd to talk to my DAD.”
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
47. “I've suffered from the hell that is my period since I was 8. I've missed so much school because of my period that I can barely concentrat anymore. I cry everytime I see any blood. I'm tempted to get pregnant to halt this suffering. There was a period in time that I would only use tissue paper and socks to stop the bleeding. I was so embarrassed of my period and asking for help. Please help me.”
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
48. “Hi, getting a period can get quite embarrassing like having to hide a pad up my sleeve going to the toilet or my dad not understanding and making jokes about it.”
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
49. “men should be more supportive and educated on products”
Portsmouth, Year 10 Student
50. “I started my period when I was 8. My mum didn’t tell me what it was. I thought I was dying. My school made me stay in a room on my own for ages as I cried and wanted my mum but they wouldn’t let me go home. That feeling still makes me tear up today. That was my first ever experience of anxiety that haunted over me and still does today.”
51. “My mum nor school taught me about periods. Had to find it YouTube. Still don’t really understand exactly what it is as an adult and I’ve had them for over a decade.”
52. “If men had periods we wouldn’t even need to do this.”
53. “Only today was I using words like menstruation and periods in my car, with my window open to be stared at and tutted at by an older gentleman who happened to be near my open car window. He thought he could shame me because he was uncomfortable with my discussion of a natural bodily function. How crushing that could have been with a less strong disposition.”
54. “I remember once I was at my dads house and there weren’t any tampons there and I felt to embarrassed to tell him because he’s a man so I just used tissue instead and told my step mum when she got back”

55. “When I was 14 I was at school and came on my period, I was totally unprepared and was too embarrassed to tell anyone even my own mum! There was absolutely no where to access period products discreetly or really at all but I still went to my lesson in complete pain and discomfort, I’m so glad my younger siblings have access to this more now but that’s a very recent occurrence and many young people are still having to deal with their periods in totally the wrong way while at school!”
56. “My cramps are so bad. Feels like they travel down my legs and up my body, down my arms. I’m throwing up and can’t go to school. I miss 3-4 days every month whilst on my period from school and I’m in year 12 so I can’t afford to for my alevels. I don’t know what to do.”
Year 12 student
57. “I was made believe painful heavy periods, blood clots, nausea and missing school was all normal! It's not normal, 7 years i was told the pain was in my head, it wasn't! it was endometriosis! So please please listen more and learn more & do more for every single person struggling with periods, it's not fair and affects mental health massively!”
58. “the first time i realised there was a massive problem with menstruation education was when i was in year 9. my friend struggled with periods and i suggested maybe she tried tampons. she was very confused and asked “how is that meant to get up the tiny hole?”. she didn’t realise that we bleed and urinate through different holes which is such a simple thing to be taught about our bodies.”
59. “I started my first ever period maybe 2 minutes before I was meant to take to the court in a junior netball match. I had received little education on this from school but had older cousins so knew what was going on. However, there were no products available in the leisure centre (which to add, was not only home to every other sporting event you could think of, but without a doubt there would be 300+ female netball players from the ages of 8 all the way to adults week in week out) this meant in a panic and rushed I had to make a diy pad from toilet paper, whilst the seconds counted down on the clock for me to be on court. This was incredibly embarrassing for me, with the netball dress I was required to wear was extremely short, but at this point in time I was incredibly grateful for the shorts we wear. But the stress, fear and panic I felt that day is like no other I’ve ever felt, and could have quite easily been prevented had local facilities such as the leisure centre offered menstrual products”

60. "Being on my period, throughout the years of secondary school, was extremely difficult. My attendance was extremely poor due to extreme menstrual cramps, the poor state of the bathrooms and fear of being unable to access any menstrual products if I required more during the school day. There were on multiple occasions times where I would bleed through my trousers, onto the chair and because of my own embarrassment and the shame I felt, I would pretend I was unwell just to be sent home, as I was too embarrassed to reach out for any support or to ask for any period products. I believed that there wasn't a lot of support or understanding from staff, even coming down to situations when I needed the go to the bathroom during class and wasn't allowed as I "should've gone during break". This was a huge struggle for me as I suffered from heavy bleeding to the point I was medicated for this. I couldn't just stand up and explain why I needed to go to the toilet during every lesson. I believed that if there were more support and knowledge during my school years, my attendance would've improved greatly and I could've been more focused on my work."
61. "When I first had my periods they were light and didn't cause me any pain but as I grew older these became very painful and made it difficult to do anything. I now am forced to take contraceptive for two years purely to be able to be considered for testing for endometriosis and even still am denied the right of a surgery as I'm 'too young'. It's horrific that I have to deal with this pain or medicate my body with a medicine that causes loss of fertility and other side effects just to get tests"
62. "I wish that I was taught from a young age about all the different type of menstrual products as I remember being embarrassed and sitting out of certain sports such as swimming as I was only aware of sanitary towels and was given the impression only girls who are sexually active use tampons. However, being the sporty girl I was in high school I would have been way more confident and comfortable during my period if I knew about the other products available to me and their benefits.
- I also know several girls who would call in "sick" to school or work during their periods so that they didn't run the risk of being stuck in a situation where their period could become obvious and be made fun of. This is something no girl or woman should have to feel or potentially miss out on opportunities because of this."
63. "The day I get my period I always cry because I know exactly how much pain and discomfort I'll be in every second for a week. I won't sleep, can't eat, and then can't do well in school. I'm so scared for the day I have to do exams when on my period as I know I'm gonna fail"
64. "I use toilet roll can't afford products I couldn't before but especially not now"



65. "I didn't know until I followed Love Your Period in 2022 that you could get free period products in school. Only then did I get them from school because they aren't in toilets they're in the caretakers locked cupboard and there's no posters or signs. I do buy them but they're expensive so I just use like one heavy tampon for the whole day or get a pad and wear in for 24-48 hours try stretch it out as they're so expensive"
66. "I can't talk to anyone about my period and I have so many questions and I'm scared and don't know where to find the answers :("
67. "The only sex education that I received was that I would get a period. I believed for a long time that tampons would take my virginity. When I finally got over this fear I inserted the tampon with the applicator because I had no idea how to use it."
68. "I remember when I was 10 and sitting in assembly, I started to feel something wet underneath me. I didn't think anything of it, but when I stood up there was a pool of blood underneath me. Everyone around me saw it and I just left the hall without saying anything"
69. "When I was in secondary school, I was known for always having pads or tampons on me. Regardless of whether it was my time or not, even when I was on hormonal birth control and didn't have periods at all, I always carried a little bag of spares for anyone who needed them. The power of girls to support other girls never fails but it shouldn't fall to them alone"
70. "I remember having my first period and my mum buying me pads. I feel like I didn't really know how to use them or how to feel confident. I used to wear multiple pairs of pants during my period as it made me feel safe but this was awful when it was summer. I remember asking my friend to buy me some tampons because I was too scared and spent ages in the toilet trying to figure it out. I felt lost and too shy to bring it up to my mother!"
71. "My first period, in high school and I had no products, as a young girl I was nervous around asking someone for some and my parents hadn't known what to tell me at what points. So I had to wrap toilet roll around my knickers like hundreds of other girls around the country and world. If there was access to free products or the education to know what to do, I would have had such a different experience.
72. My dad refused to buy me pads and tampons when I needed them. He said it was embarrassing and disgusting"



73. “When I first started my periods they were extremely heavy but I had no idea how to control what was happening to me. I had seen quick demos on how to use a sanitary pad but no other types of period products. As a result I spend most of the school day running back and forth to the toilets to change my pad, which meant asking especially in class to leave, this wasn't always allowed. I would wear 2 or 3 pairs of pants to try and stop leaking. I remember standing up at the end of one lesson and feeling the blood run down my legs. I was so embarrassed and luckily had a friend who could help me. I plucked up the courage to speak to my mum and explain what was going on and we talked about it together. I was so scared and ashamed. If I had received better education in first place to understand that there are different types of flow and periods impact people in different ways and that's ok. I felt that I was weird for having heavy periods as none of my friends or sisters seemed to have this kind of experience. There needs to be better education around the types of products available and how they work. There needs to be a way that people can talk freely and not feel afraid to ask what they should do when they are struggling to control their symptoms or are confused.”
74. “The first time i ever got my period i was in an exam in school. I went 5 hours with just tissue in my knickers because their was no services for free pads which would've helped me a great deal.”
75. “I first started my period in school, I was in year 9. That day in school I completely froze, there was no facilities for me to use, I was to embarrassed to go and ask someone at reception desk if they had anything. Since that day my periods were nothing but trouble, my periods were so out of cycle I was practically on all the time. I thought there was something seriously wrong with me, I was never educated that this can be normal and they might not settle down and become frequent straight away. I struggled with serious cramps and heavy periods, the school had no heated pads to help relieve any pain, and I was questioned about why I was needing the toilet so often.”
76. “I didn't have access to period products in school, even the school nurse wouldn't provide pads/tampons. In my last lesson of the day, after using 3 night time pads over 5/6 hours I ended up bleeding through my clothes and onto the chair, I was in a physics lab and we always put our chairs onto the tables at EOD. I was so scared and embarrassed and ashamed that someone would notice, especially as I was at the front of the class. I felt awful that our cleaners would then have to come and clean up possibly harmful bodily fluids too. If I had access to free period products and closer toilets, the shame I felt and carried for years around my period wouldn't had been so intense and crippling. I'm sharing so my younger cousins and others around the UK and further world won't experience this, de-stigmatise bleeding!!!”



77. "I have regular periods but they're very painful and I had to use ibuprofen and paracetamol for multiple days a month to live life normally. I then found out that magnesium supplements can reduce the pain and I have been so much better since. I wish this was more common knowledge otherwise I would be in a lot more pain!"
78. "I always get warning signs before my period starts but the day it starts is always unpredictable and is normally a heavy flow. I have been caught out a few times especially at university. My university started a free period products scheme in the women's bathrooms across campus- I know that if I need something there will be somewhere I can get it on campus quickly and for free and makes my period less stressful and more spontaneous"
79. "One time I was having a super heavy period and had to sit on a stool in a biology lab for 3 hours whilst bathroom breaks were discouraged meaning I ended up leaking through my underwear, tights and skirt onto the stool. I was mortified when I realised but I was so embarrassed that instead of asking for some tissue to clean it up or asking to go to the toilet to sort myself out I decided to use my jumper to wipe it up and had to spend the next 4 hours of school hiding the fact that I had leaked and that it was on the majority of my clothes at that point."
80. "We have 3 holes!? I thought we had 1 and everything came out the same 1. Should've been taught that i didn't have my period or poo through the same hole."
81. "It's not just a period we go through a whole cycle. Every day of our lives we are on some point of this changing cycle. Do men actually understand that? Life is so hard. I wish I was a man."
82. "I feel like I'm never in tune with my body and don't recognise myself when I'm on my period. It's scary."
83. So, getting my period quickly turned from "a fun womanhood ceremony" to a new world of monthly dirtiness & restraint. I couldn't sleep over at friend's houses on my period, I couldn't play with friends, I had to go to the toilet looking like a drug smuggler (hiding my pad inside my sleeve), and I certainly couldn't openly talk about it. I had to whisper it to my PE teacher and to my female friends. I was quickly tired of it. The final straw was turning 13 and realising I experience something known as sexual arousal. I knew that periods and sex were connected and there were rules surrounding them: 1) You can't have sex on your period, 2) You can get pregnant if you have sex after your period, 3) Your vagina smells during your period so keep men away from it. As if that wasn't already more than my 13-year-old head could handle, my best friend at the time started making jokes about how unappealing and unsexy her "period underwear" were. I was so confused. My period underwear are the same underwear I wear normally but with a pad. But no, the



period panties are large and unsexy. Normal underwear are smaller, possibly thongs, and sexy. Men cannot see the period underwear because they look like "granny underwear". When my friend started making these comments I remember thinking "you are a virgin without a boyfriend, so why do you care if they are unsexy", but I didn't question her for long. I started wearing sexier underwear when I wasn't on my period, and I kept the ugly "period underwear" for that specific use.

84. By the age of 14, my friends and I were already used to having a period so talking about period pains and stained underwear was nothing unusual. This only meant one thing, our period was recontextualised into our horny 14-year-old existence, which spent hours online accessing content we probably shouldn't be reading. Another period rule was established, this time even more relevant to boys and sex: "If you are on your period, you have to give your boyfriend a blowjob". This rule perfectly encapsulates how conversations about periods were when I was a teenager. Our period was an inconvenience. It didn't matter and we didn't know how it fully worked, or what it does for us, or whether our blood was actually dirty or not, because no one ever sat down to explain any of that to us. Our period was a painful inconvenience for us, and a frustrating inconvenience for our boyfriends who couldn't get access to our bloody vaginas. It took me years to appreciate my period and ironically, I only appreciated it when I started birth control that completely stopped it. I was on the mini pill for 3 years (from 19 to 22 years old) and I "loved not having a period". Granted, I loved the money I saved from not having to buy pads, and how "clean" I always felt. However, I realised that I didn't feel like myself. I stopped feeling sexual arousal and it was very difficult to make myself wet. Sex was literally not enjoyable, and I rarely had orgasms. I stopped masturbating and I only liked men because of the validation they provided, not because I felt "butterflies" or any type of attraction to them. To me, that missing feeling of sexual arousal was more than lacking horniness; it meant that something was missing. I came off my pill and I started feeling like myself again. I realised that I was bisexual at the age of 22, which was something very difficult to come to terms with before because "something was missing". I am not a writer, and I cannot fully explain what I felt, but my period ended up being integral to my personality and emotions. Once it stopped being an inconvenience, and it started being a valuable asset of my personal physiology, I realised that not only is it not shameful, but it's literally a necessary biological function for a lot of people. I also obviously realised that periods are not an "inconvenience to your boyfriend", but something that influences your relationship with your own self; no one (not even your mother or other people with periods in your life) can come between you and your period."
85. "I hate my period. I have suicidal thoughts so bad when I'm on my period. My doctor won't listen to me though."



86. "I was in secondary school when I thought I had gotten my period early (not my first one). Having a male teacher and a load of male classmates and being unprepared led me to feel extremely anxious. The more time went on and the more I thought about it, the more anxious I became until I had a panic attack and ended up having to fake an illness to go home early. If there were free period products at school, or if it wasn't seen in society as an "embarrassing" thing to have happen, maybe I would've been able to go about my day normally (without worrying about having an accident), not miss part of my uni application prep, and not have had to experience one of my first panic attacks. And if there wasn't such a stigma around talking about it especially to male peers/teachers, maybe I would've been able to freely express my concerns without having to be embarrassed."
87. "I starting my period April fool day and I was 15 years old age"
88. "I went to a Catholic high school, where we received no sex education - nothing regarding periods either. There wasn't any information regarding staff that you could speak to regarding periods/sex. No products available. When I asked to go to toilet during my cycle, I was always told no. And it was embarrassing to have to stay in front of the whole class why I needed to go.
- This topic should be spoken about more!!"
89. The fact that so many of my friends, and myself all from different schools haven't received any education regarding periods and sex, scares me. Especially for the future generations!"
90. "My period smell makes me feel sick. It's like metal like coins mixed with a food waste bin. So then it makes me sick. I spend the whole month dreading it. My life is consumed by my period and it also really gets in the way of school"
91. "Nappies get disposed of in a hygiene collection, so why aren't menstrual products?"
92. "Periods don't just affect those that have them, but those who have health issues and don't get them either. Normalise it for both!"
93. "I wish I had of learnt that tampons don't take your virginity away earlier"
94. "I wish there was a starter period kit available to purchase in supermarkets for those having their first cycle, unsure of what they'd like to use!"

95. "I started using menstrual cups to try and be more environmentally conscious. But, on days when my period was very heavy, I needed to change my cup during school. This was difficult to do due to the unsanitary conditions, busy bathrooms and due to the stigma that was there. Also, when I was in so much pain from my period there were little options offered by the school"
96. "When I was 12 I told everyone that I had started my period (including my mum etc.) because I was embarrassed that I was a late bloomer. This meant that when I did eventually start my period at 14 I did it all alone pretending I had done it for years previously. My mum still doesn't know the truth by maybe one day I will admit it but I am embarrassed about all the period products I wasted in those couple of years."
97. "when I first started my period I didn't know what it actually was as I was never taught about it in school, throughout my years of having a period I have had none to very little support especially through my exam seasons, in my English language exam a 2 hour exam I had my period and leaked, I was uncomfortable and was extremely distracted and it clearly affected my English exam, I start my exams in a few days and the worry it will happen again is building up"
98. "The weird fear about carrying period products around school, and the fact that people and teachers in particular would judge you for carrying them round so they could be seen. Taking your bag to the toilet because it would be so horrendous to even show a tampon or pad in public. It being an embarrassing thing having to ask for pads from the school nurse because you'd be met with judgement about not having brought your own, when you sometimes can't predict when it's going to be. And instead of facing the judgement wrapping so much toilet paper up in your pants to use instead - so much better than the embarrassment and judgement from peers and teachers especially."
99. "It affects my education because when I'm on my period I struggle to concentrate. I am a medical student sometimes I find that I am a topic behind because I am unable to focus and do work"
100. "My teachers don't let me go to the toilet on my period. Or just at all. And the ones that do let me say I can't take my bag but then everyone would see my products. I wish they'd put some in the toilets like on the wall in the cubicle so you could just have them there and then."
101. "They lock our toilets during lessons. But even when they're open the individual cubicle locks are dodgy so you feel unsafe."



102. “We have new unisex toilets and I HATE them. The boys try kick down the doors. I’m scared of using them. So when I’m on my period I don’t go during school time and hold it which really hurts my tummy.”
103. “I love using a menstrual cup but it’s not really doable in school because we have unisex toilets with sinks in the middle so I can’t wash it out.”
104. “There should be access to free period products. I suffer from endometriosis which means I have incredibly heavy periods and need considerable amounts of period products for every period. This is very expensive for me and I would appreciate access to the products at a reduced rate or hopefully free.”
105. “I was put on a progesterone injection to get my body used to it before getting an implant inserted as they’re supposed to be the same thing. The injection made my periods awful. I would bleed heavily with intense cramps for 3 weeks a time with often less than a week break between each 'period'. I went to my gp as soon as it started happening and was told I needed to give it a chance to settle. I was eventually prescribed a drug to lessen the bleeding after about 6 months and multiple trips to the doctor. I was on the injection for about 9 months total. I was Anemic, I was in school and constantly worried about it, I couldn't do a lot of things I used to and had many humiliating moments where I bled through clothing, for example, I bled through my dance leotard and white ballet tights in front of a full dance class. I wasn't taken seriously, I wasn't helped and I was made to feel like I was the problem by medical professionals , teachers, my peers and even my own mother.”
106. “my periods hurt I used to have to take days of school because of them.”
107. “My period week is the week that I will hardly get any revision done, will under perform on school tests. Exam season is worse because every person who has a period will have one during the season. And I dread English or maths landing on that week”
108. “I was put on birth control for severe period pain when I was 14 and it ruined my life. They just stuck me straight on medication and told me to lose weight.”
109. “Doctors won’t see me for my periods anymore. I keep going back and blood tests etc aren’t showing anything so the receptionist told me to stop bothering them about it as I cried to them in agony. I’ve been going consistently for years. I can’t live like it. Sometimes I think about just ending my life because I cannot deal with this pain. And it’s throughout the month like on week 3 but then my period week 1 is worse”



110. “LoveYourPeriod say schools in wales have free period products but I cannot find them anywhere in my school and there’s no advertisement in the toilets.”
School pupil, Wales
111. “I live with my dad. I have no one to talk about growing up with especially periods. I’m so alone.”
112. “I’m 16 and I just have no hope. I wish I was born a boy because everything about being female, including periods, will always be the reason why I’m raped on the side of the road, I’m murdered, I underperform in a male-based world or get less pay. Just doesn’t feel like it’s worth living in this world.”
113. “Why aren’t we ending period plastic? I’m so scared for the environment and my future as are all my friends. HeyGirls and loads of others do plastic free pads and everyone should be offered reusable. Like send them to people’s houses. I’m so scared.”
114. “I started my period when I was 16, quite late. I always went to the doctors because it wasn’t beginning and they kept sending me away. Anyway it eventually came but I felt like I was failing because I’d always be a ‘girl’ and not become a ‘woman’. There’s so much pressure around ‘virginity’, growing up, using tampons and not pads because you’re more mature if you use a tampon. You’re just never good enough for anyone.”
115. “I’m convinced I have PMDD but my doctor called me ‘hysterical’ because of my hormones and it’s just PMS. My moods are uncontrollable and it’s ruining my relationships, I’ve lost interest in life and I’m just hopeless. It’s so extreme, especially the week before my period (pre-menstrual I think it’s called?). I’m never taken seriously and i don’t know what to do.”
116. “Took me 7 years of constant doctors visits for them to actually agree to internally check for endometriosis. I was gaslight into thinking I was being ‘a woman’ and just needed more sleep and a hot water bottle. I had multiple suicide attempts because I couldn’t deal with the pain. 7 years. Disgusting. Things need to change and they need to change now. Stop making women believe they’re wrong about their own bodies.”
117. “I didn’t and still don’t have anyone to talk to about my periods. Luckily I found the LoveYourPeriod Campaign online and learnt everything I needed to from there. We should have proper education in school.”
118. “I asked my school if the period products we had could go in the toilets and they said no because people would steal them. Surely you can’t steal what is free? And maybe someone has sisters at home and is in poverty so is taking a stock for everyone?”



119. "I'm only a teenager but I watch my mum go through menopause and I'm really scared because she's losing her memory and ability to do anything. Can you die from menopause? I don't know anything about it at all."
120. "My periods stopped out of no where. I went to the doctors multiple times over about 2 years, told I was stressed, needed to eat more, exercise less, gain weight, then lose weight, everything. Turns out it was an indicator that I was becoming really unwell and they wouldn't listen to me and refused to do any tests. Now I'm infertile. Maybe if I was listened to and treated in the first place I'd be able to have children when I'm older. I'm only 17 but finding out killed me. I'll forever be judged for not having children."
121. "I get the worse stomach and back cramps and they make me cry and throw up and everyone says I'm dramatic"
122. "I was never taught about my period in school at all but when I started my friend just gave me a pad so I used that but that's all I know, that I have to use a pad when I bleed nothing else."
123. "Have been in excruciating pain around my time of the month since I was 15y.o. I am now coming up to 24 and have only just been diagnosed with endometriosis. If any other girls feel something isn't right then fight to be heard"
124. "My period leaves me with intense nausea and sickness. Everytime I end up throwing up in the bathroom with unbearable cramps that pain killers don't help with. I also do competitive dance in which we wear white. Being on my period whilst competing gives me so much anxiety as I fear I have leaked whilst competing"
125. "When we had sex education in secondary school most girls already had their periods. And yet it was the first time we covered the topic in school. We had to fill in a useless worksheet about what a period was and what products there were. The boys all laughed and made jokes and our (female) teacher said nothing. I never felt comfortable talking about periods in school and I would open my pads at home to reduce noise in the school bathrooms when I had to change. I definitely wore pads longer than I should have because I was ashamed to go change them. All because of the period stigma. Now I am researching the menstrual taboo as part of my masters and getting comfortable talking about this absolutely normal subject. I will be playing my part in breaking the stigma. What will you be doing for us?"

126. “When I first got my period, it was an hour before playing a school football game when I was twelve. I was confused and scared to ask someone for help. Even when I texted my mother I had started, I was too embarrassed to say the actual words “I got my period” and tried finding ways around it by having her guess. I was grateful one of my friends gave me a pad, but I would have much preferred it if I could have gotten one from the toilets in the school I was visiting. This shows how we really need to de-stigmatise this issue and make period products accessible for all so that people getting their period’s first reaction isn’t fear.”
127. “I started my first period in primary school. I didn’t have access to any products and had no idea what to do so I sat in the classroom bleeding in shame all day, praying I wouldn’t leak through.”
128. “It is very hard for me to access period products because they are too expensive! In addition to this I have been denied stronger painkillers on numerous occasions because doctors are not understanding the extent of the pain I get with my cramps”
129. “I have so many symptoms that because of this social media I know is my period but I wish someone had told me when I was younger. Headaches, more thirsty, strange textures/frequency of number 2s, bum cramps, back pain, dizziness. It was so hard to work out what was happening growing up and I had a lot of health anxiety. Could’ve been prevented if I’d been told/taught.”
130. “My period is soooo heavy I have to change my pad every hour almost and it’s just so difficult to live through”
131. “I had my first period aged 12 and was so mortified I text my mum instead of telling her in person. Within a year of my period when it settled, it settled into an excruciating monthly cycle, of bleeding through the heaviest pads and having blood clots as big as tennis balls. The pain was shocking and rendered me useless crying all day. Yet I was still forced to go to school. I got ignored at my doctors and only listened to when I went to my local sexual health team. I got diagnosed with pmdd. I’m now on the combined pill. I no longer have periods and my life has drastically improved. But I don’t like having synthetic hormones in my body, and I don’t feel like a real woman. I wish there were a solution to my terrible periods that was outside of the pill.”
132. “When I’m on my period I’m always getting dizzy and fainting and I don’t know why. I can’t get a clear answer online. I’m too embarrassed to go to my doctor.”

133. "Why doesn't anyone talk about TSS anymore? You never hear anyone talking about it. My daughter's friend nearly lost her life and was in hospital for 5 days. Nobody tells you that you need to change your pad/tampon every 4 hours. So girls go to school and leave it in all day."
134. "I've found it a mixed bag. I've had loads of support from friends and family, yet I felt for a long time I cannot speak openly about periods in school"
135. "I had my first period when I was in year 6 at primary school. My Mum told some of her friends who were parents of kids in my class & one of the girls used it as a way of bullying me, threatening to "tell the boys" if I didn't do what she wanted. I wish there was better education about periods so that it isn't seen as "gross" & something we should hide. I bleed once a month - get over it!"
136. "The biggest thing that stays with me is feeling the shame of not changing my sanitary towel for the whole day at school because of the shame of stating I was on my period when asking to go during a lesson and the lack of privacy (due to no locks on toilet doors) if I wanted to use the toilet at break times. There was also no toilet paper available which made heavy bleeds hard to deal with. Instead I would spend my time hoping I hadn't leaked and wishing the day away until I could go home to change my pad.
- Also it was never talked about/ normalised in my household/with my family so when I went to stay at my dads I would hide all the used sanitary towels in my bag until I went home so he wouldn't find them in the bin!"
137. "We aren't taught how to use sanitary products! This needs to be normalised. I spent hours reading the instructions page and luckily have sisters who I asked after building up the courage."
138. "More education needed around periods and the effects they can have on someone in terms of mood and physically. Especially in the week before (PMS) and during. I have only just began to understand how much it can affect one's mood and whole being after 15+ years of experiencing them."
139. "I was unpacking my groceries onto my uni halls' kitchen table and I put a box of sealed tampons on it. I was asked by my male housemate to take them off the table as it's "unhygienic to put them on the table we eat at". The shaming was insane"



140. "I hate my period. I know when it's starting I get outrageous suicidal tendencies."
141. "When I was a teenager the pain would be so excruciating that I wouldn't be able to move from bed or the settee... I would spend around a week off school crippled in pain. One of my worse memories was when my mother has to carry me to the bathroom to change as I had bled through a large thick pad and my pj trousers. My teachers never understood and would still force us to wear leotards for P. E to avoid humiliation I would bunk lessons. I still have months where my periods impact my daily life only recently I went shopping and had to leave as I was doubled over in pain and leading through my clothes. The experience and pain can be mentally and physically exhausting."
142. "as a non binary person,getting my period makes me feel so uncomfortable in my body in more ways than just cramps! watching the progressions in gender inclusive language and products surrounding periods makes my heart so warm! we still have more steps to make but the progress is incredible #notjustwomengetperiods"
143. "I started my periods aged 10. There was one toilet cubicle with a sanitary disposal bin in the whole school. Girls were not allowed to wear trousers - until I refused to comply and then they changed the rule. In my secondary school, the toilets were often LOCKED so using them was more difficult than it should ever have been. Many of us had no choice but to use disabled facilities - IF they were unlocked! Often disposal bins were every other cubicle as well so there was usually a queue for those specific toilets. We were also never taught the truth about periods, like how most cycles are in fact not 28 days but vary, and how painful periods are in fact not normal. Boys were even made to leave the room when we learnt about them (in ONE inadequate lesson). This contributed to their ignorance surrounding menstruation and the teasing that accompanied it."
144. "I hate my period. Suicidal thoughts, bloating makes me not want to eat because I look and feel fat, awful headaches I can't even open my eyes. A whole body shut down and we just have to continue like it's nothing."
145. "Free period products are absolutely essential, particularly in schools!"



146. "I got my period (first) really early like year6 so I couldn't really ask for any products and I luckily knew what it was because of my sisters and my mum and the pain almost made me vomit but I thought that was the only time it would happen because it was my first one. It wasn't. I often had to take pain killers before and during school and even invested in a little hand warmer so that I could ease the cramps a bit but I still am often keeled over with no motivation to do anything but cry and ache. They're still that bad and I have on multiple occasions missed school and appointments(dentist, doctors and check ups) because of the pain however I am looking in to getting a doctors appointment to see why they are so bad"
147. "I have excruciating cramps and extremely heavy bleeding and long periods (9 days long). Ibuprofen makes my cramps go away, but not if there's a big blood clot that can't get out. Growing up, the hardest thing for my was my friends, other girls, telling me I was being dramatic and period cramps aren't that bad. I once couldn't hear because of the pain. Being demoralised by other women who were lucky enough to not experience what I did was heartbreaking. I'm pretty sure I have endometriosis"
148. "I used to bleed on to the school chair.. not being able to return to class incase someone had noticed the mess I left behind me!"
149. "I remember my mother rationing my sanitary towels because she couldn't afford them. I used to roll up toilet paper instead.so she rationed that too!"
150. "Having period products at school would have saved many embarrassing situations. Where is nothing worse and starting your period at school and not having the right stuff to sort it out. I think that boys and girls should be educated about periods so that it not a hidden thing any more. It would have all women in society because it is a natural thing that happens and they shared experience helps all understand."
151. "I got my first period when I was 12. I was travelling home from school and had a bad cramp, which I thought was just a stomach ache. When I got to my house I rushed in and saw brown blood in my pants and it took me a second to work out I hadn't had an accident. I had had a puberty talk in year 6 so I knew about pads and knew where they were at home but I was very upset that I had stained a pair of pants. I used some tissue as a pad quickly so I could get some clean pants to use a pad in and then took a few attempts to put the pad on properly. Then I had to go and ask my mum for some pain killers and told her I had started my period."



152. “The first time I started my period, I was 11 years old and the first in my friendship group to start. Though there was a sense of pride in finally becoming a ‘grown up’, it did feel quite scary and quite lonely knowing that I was the only one (that I knew of) going through it. I remember wrapping toilet paper around my underwear, as my high school had no pads available and my little emergency stash had been left at home. I called my mum on the way home and she managed to get me everything I needed, which I was grateful for. I was fortunate to have a good support network around me, I was taught about my period when my parents felt I was ready, and therefore I was more prepared than some when I started menstruating for the first time. However, not all girls are as fortunate as I was. Many girls will start their periods and feel fear, dread, loneliness and confusion. We need to ensure that girls learn about their body and their period, and stop the shame and stigma surrounding the menstrual cycle. Along with making sure period products are accessible to ALL, so that when they start their period, they can feel comfortable and supported.”
153. “I wish I’d know sooner about period cups - I’ve saved so much money over the years and done my bit for the environment as well.”
154. “Why isn’t the government holding retailers to account on their high profits on period products? It’s a necessity for those AFB and yet it’s costs us a fortune over our lifetime and so many suffer period poverty. I discovered the period cup late in life and could have saved more money had I know about it earlier. This would be an affordable long term solution for that helps the purse and the environment.”
155. “Period education when I was in school was poor. I remember my first period was the first day of high school and I just shoved tissue paper in my pants to catch the blood and I had no idea what was happening to me or why I was in so much pain. Education needs to start in primary school so if you start young you know what’s happening and what to do.”
156. “I wish I’d received proper menstrual health education when I was in school. If I had I’d have known that my debilitating period symptoms weren’t normal, I’d have had the confidence to seek medical help sooner and also the awareness that menstrual health conditions such as endometriosis exist. This would’ve saved me many a lost year waiting for diagnosis and earlier treatment would’ve lessened the impact the chronic disease has had on my body.”



157. "To this day I still remember my first period. I was 12 years old, and in Welsh schools or at least Welsh speaking schools it was a fairly common tradition to go to this activity centre in Llangranog for a few nights, I remember waking up and seeing the blood and just panicking. I knew what it was and I knew what I had to do but I was so awkward about it told no one, even though I was in a room with maybe seven or eight other girls and nearly all other them had started their periods. So what I did, which I still feel guilty about to this day, was when the girls weren't in the room, I'd secretly steal pads off of them, just a couple per girl so they wouldn't notice because I didn't know what I was supposed to say. I thought it out in my head but nothing felt right. I missed out on so many of the activities because I was paranoid that I would bleed through and it honestly was horrible. The next few months I hid my period and I told no one not even my mother, she's the one that caught me stealing her pads. And over the years I've come to grow more and more comfortable with my body. Now I'm sixteen and I've grown so much from this shy twelve year old girl that I have the confidence to talk about periods, including my period with anyone of any gender at any time. I used to shove pads up my sleeve and now I will openly and proudly talk about it because it's nothing to be embarrassed of, why should I be embarrassed of something that I can't help, something that gives women the potential to create life? I love taekwondo with my heart and soul and I used to be paranoid about bleeding through into my all white suit, so much that I'd wear 3 pads, 2 pairs of period underwear and shorts in case I bled through or I just wouldn't show up at all. Now I realise that if I have to rest, I have to rest and if I have the strength to do it, I should do it without worrying about bleeding through, and even if I do bleed through, it's nothing to be embarrassed about! I've won three gold medals on my period, I've ran 10 kilometres on my period (and beat some of the cocky boys in my year), and I've been on a day long horse ride in my period. Periods are not a sign of weakness, they are a sign of strength and no one should feel ashamed or embarrassed about their period."

16, Wales

158. "When I was 11 (before me and most of my class had started our periods) our teacher taught all the girls that we shouldn't say the word period in front of the boys, if we needed to discuss our period in front of the boys we should refer to it as our "performance". To this day I am so angry that before I even understood what a period was (the teacher did not explain this well at all) we were taught it was something to hide and feel shame about."



159. "I got my first period when I was on a French exchange trip. Luckily my clever mum had packed some sanitary pads, just in case but there were only a few and I quickly used them up. There was no bin in the loo of the house where I was staying so I kept my used pads in my suitcase for nearly a week. I was too embarrassed to tell my friends, let alone a teacher so once the pads ran out, I stuffed my pants with toilet roll. On the bus on a day trip, the toilet roll worked its way up the back of my pants and trousers and was spotted by fellow pupils."
160. "I must have been about 15. Sat in an end of year assembly watching my classmates get their 100% attendance awards, while knowing that I'd had to stay home at least one day a month. The first day of every period was a write off for me - vomiting, diarrhoea, dizzy spells, intense pain. I felt so alone with it"
161. "My period symptoms are mood swings and cramps so bad I can't sleep"
162. "School was really hard for me when my period was here. There would be months where i would have to take days off due to not having any period products, i couldn't even go to school to get them as we didn't have them there only a paid machine which i didn't have the money for most days. When i did manage to get period products and go into school our school would lock the toilets during lessons in an all girls school. As someone with anxiety this terrified me the possibility of leaking through in class but this happened to a lot of girls due to the locked toilets, it was a completely humiliating experience and got girls bullied."
163. "In the first couple of years of using pads I was using them all wrong! I was too worried to ask even my parents the right way to insert a pad into my underwear so continued sticking the wings to my legs rather than the underside of my underwear! It seems crazy now but at the time I just really had no idea how they worked - no one told me, and the stigma around periods meant it was way too awkward to ask anyone. It's time for the stigma to shift."
164. "When I started my period for the first time I was in school and had no idea what to do. I didn't know I could ask for products or even tell anyone what had happened. I spent the next four hours stuffing toilet paper in my underwear to stop bleeding on the chairs. I didn't do anything until I got home because I didn't know I could do anything."
165. "I leaked in school once, but they refused to let me go home. So I had to wear my PE kit the rest of the day"
166. "I used to get period cramps so bad that I couldn't move from being curled up in a ball, and missed quite a few days of school due to this. But the school said it was no excuse"



167. “No one explained to me in school that periods aren't supposed to make you feel suicidal. PMS had been explained to us as if it was some sort of rite to passage of womanhood. I guess in my addled teenage brain, I believed that and assumed the suicidality was some taboo thing that didn't get mentioned. Years later, after multiple attempts on my life, fractured relationships, lost jobs and friends who cut me off for their own mental wellbeing, I learnt that I have PMDD.

I had my first period in primary school before they even told us what a period was, what puberty was and how our bodies were supposed to do that. I, luckily had been told by my mum because my sisters had started theirs and I had noticed the old packaging and wanted to know what it was. I was embarrassed and ashamed of it (for whatever reason) but I knew what it was and had to stuff wads of toilet paper into my underwear until I got home. We really should start talking about them earlier and educating children on what they are sooner because if I hadn't asked about the pads in my house I would not have known what to do. I could've thought I was in trouble or that I was hurt.”

168. “every month, i am wiped out on the first day of my period.
 i do not want to take birth control of any form because of the many horror stories i have heard, and being on antidepressants, i dont want to put anymore hormones etc into me. how do people cope with severe period pain? i also think i have pmdd, but my doctors wont listen to me and just suggest birth control”

169. “I am embarrassed to go out and get period products by myself due to the fear and experience of being shamed for it, as well as sexist comments from uneducated young men who are also being influenced by their fathers to do this”
Oxford, Year 8 Student

170. “I had started my period at school and got caught texting my mum telling her what just happened. My phone got confiscated and I had to have an extremely awkward conversation with my head of year”
Oxford, Year 8 Student

171. “My boyfriend said I resemble a chocolate lava cake when I am on my period. he hates chocolate lava cakes”
Oxford, Year 8 Student

172. “I live with my uncle and once, me and my cousin ran out of pads. We both had exams the next day and it was 22:00. He refused to run to the shops and buy some”
Oxford, Year 8 Student



173. “There are men always looking at you weirdly when you’re in the period product section. Some products are very expensive. I always feel embarrassed to have it as I am a school girl!”
Oxford, Year 8 Student
174. “One time I had my period and I was too embarrassed to go to the Health Centre so I had put tissues on my underwear to absorb the blood”
Oxford, Year 8 Student
175. “Public toilets need period products – no more embarrassment or leaks”
Oxford, Year 8 Student
176. “Get shops to lower prices! Over 10% of women in the UK overuse products because of poverty! We want change! Take action now! Your family members need this too! Not just us! #tackleperiodpoverty”
Oxford, Year 8 Student
177. “My friend got a period cramp when we are P5 but she was not brave enough to tell the teacher. She has got period cramp for the rest of the lesson”
Oxford, Year 8 Student
178. “I had to ask my mum to buy me pads because I was too embarrassed to buy them myself”
Oxford, Year 8 Student
179. “Period products should be free”
Oxford, Year 8 Student
180. “ I thought my period ended so I didn’t use any products. I wore white shorts to big park and I bled through. No-one had a spare pad for me”
Oxford, Year 8 Student
181. “If I’m on my period in a public bathroom, even in a only females bathroom, I wait for someone to turn the handrier on before unwrapping a pad because I’m so embarrassed by the sound”
Oxford, Year 8 Student
182. “A male GP told me that I should be able to tell when I am about to have a period and he assumed that cramps would not impact my life”
Oxford, Year 8 Student

183. "I feel embarrassed that I have to spend money on my essential products"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
184. "My period started when I was on a trip and I was very scared, but the bathroom I was at had a dispensing machine for pads (sadly you had to pay but still) and it helped me a lot"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
185. "teacher don't let us go to the loo!"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
186. "I don't get my period but I would be embarrassed talking to my dad or other males about it"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
187. "I got my period in a science test and couldn't go to the loo for over an hour"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
188. "men are the problem"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
189. "I was on holiday alone with my dad when I first started my period. I wasn't aware what to do or if there was any products available anywhere"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
190. "Pool anxiety around periods!"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
191. "Public women's loos don't have bins"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
192. "Teachers don't have pads in a first aid box"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
193. "I feel like I can't go to the toilet in class because my teacher won't let me"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
194. "Male teachers not understanding that it is not a question but a statement. That we need to go to the bathroom when we have our period"
Oxford, Year 8 Student

195. "I get really paranoid when I go out on my period because I'm scared it's getting on my clothes"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
196. "I'm scared to tell my parents when I get my period"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
197. "It's really embarrassing to have to sit on the side of the pool when my class have swimming lessons because I can't swim"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
198. "I didn't change my pad before a flight because I didn't want people knowing I was on a period so I kept the same pad for 10 hours. And I was embarrassed to tell parents"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
199. "It is really embarrassing and very expensive! We hardly have any money but buying period products for 3 is NOT cheap"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
200. "They ran out and said they were out of stock but I could see them and was told no. Told it wasn't important"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
201. "Teachers don't let you go to the toilet. They always want you to go at break but you don't need it then"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
202. "It is embarrassing not having your period when everybody else has"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
203. "I am always worried that I might leak and everyone will see"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
204. "I once didn't feel supported at school one week because my period was really heavy, and they didn't believe me when I said I was in pain"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
205. "Once I bled in front of my whole swim club because I didn't know what it was and all my blood came out"
Oxford, Year 8 Student

206. "I feel embarrassed to talk about periods to my dad"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
207. "I felt sick one day because of the cramps and tiredness of my period. However, I was embarrassed to tell my father, so I just told hm I ate non-hygiene food"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
208. "I haven't got my period yet but I do swimming lots, I am worried (even though I'll have the supplies) on how to handle it in water"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
209. "Well it can be awkward when you're the only one without your period cause everyones like 'I am soooo grown up now'. I think getting your period late needs to be normalised"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
210. "I ran out of pads and was too embarrassed to ask for some + it leaked through my trousers. Makes me really sad hearing people saying that periods are disgusting and shameful"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
211. "My best friend laughed at me when I said I was in pain because of my period 😞"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
212. "People from my primary school (especially boys) started a rumour that I had my period (even though I didn't) because there was a stain on the toilet seat and everyone acted like it was embarrassing. Children should be educated about periods earlier"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
213. "I feel embarrassed sometimes when I go to swimming training or even a competition and I am worried I will bleed in the pool even when wearing a wuka costume"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
214. "In year 6 a girl in my year got her period. She told some people but asked them not to tell anyone else because she was embarrassed"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
215. "When I started my period, my mum called everybody to tell them. I sat alone in my room for dinner and cried 😊"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
216. "It's awkward to tell a teacher you're on your period or have cramps"
Oxford, Year 8 Student



217. "Not being able to talk to my family about it"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
218. "I had my period but I didn't know much about it until after which was really worrying + scary"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
219. "Not being able to talk to male family members about it"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
220. "I suffer with really bad period pain and sometimes have to miss school because of this. Awareness of period pain needs to become much more widespread"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
221. "I started having my period when I was quite young and I didn't really have anyone my age to discuss it with. In Year 5, bled through my yellow dress and wasn't told about it because people thought it was too embarrassing. I spent the whole day with a huge blood stain"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
222. "Couldn't go swimming (my fave sport) because I didn't have the right products. Then had to explain to my friends family and younger brother why I wasn't getting in the pool. Rly embarrassing"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
223. " I had to tell my brother and dad I couldn't swim, and they kept asking why I had cramps and it affected my sport"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
224. "I've had to tell my brother's (boy) friends having too speak about them which was really awkward but they were so supportive"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
225. "at the swimming pools I had my 1st period and everyone was laughing. Some pools prohibit girls on periods"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
226. "my boyfriend broke up with me because I got my period"
Oxford, Year 8 Student

227. "I once fainted at school and wasn't allowed back the next day in case I spread the "bug". I was too embarrassed to say I was on my period and didn't go to school for the week"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
228. "I had to hide in the toilet because I didn't have anything"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
229. "If only I had the courage to give a chat to my mum about this it would 100% make me feel better. WE NEED EDUCATION NOW!"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
230. "I was on my period and I went to the bathroom and saw that I had bled through my pad, my shorts and all the way to my trousers. (This was school uniform). Thank goodness the trousers had two separate layers, otherwise I would have bled right through. I had to stay the whole day like that and it was really uncomfortable. P.S. this happened again this week"
Oxford, Year 8 Student
231. Once my male teacher bullied me because of my period. Once I bled in front of my whole swim club because I didn't know what it was, I ruined my £60 white trousers with blood.
Oxford, Year 8 Student
232. "I got laughed at in school because I bled through my uniform and then the teachers refused to give me spare from the uniform borrow store in case I dirtied it as well"
233. "My dad refused to buy me products when I needed them I had to wait on the toilet for 4 hours for my mum to come home with some"
234. "I didn't tell my parents for 2 months that I started my period because I was scared they'd tell me off"
235. "I cant remember a time I didn't feel embarassed because of my period every period since i started it"
236. "All my friends who are boys in school make fun of me for being moody and ask me if I'm on my period when I get upset"
237. "I didn't use a tampon till I was 16 because a teacher told me it's only for girls who lost their virginity"
238. "If I had a penis I would have more rights. Why does having a vagina mean I'm at a disadvantage? And why is the word 'vagina' dirty but penis is fine?"



239. "I missed my period and thought I was pregnant but was too scared to ask anyone, then I found out I had amonahhreia and could've known sooner if I wasn't scared of being shamed"
240. "I'm scared to go to the doctors but my blood is black and gloopy and I don't know what to do"
241. "I told my doctor I had bad period cramps and he told me I was overreacting"
242. "I was put on the pill at 13 and it was the worst thing ever. I came off it now being 18 and I feel awful and my whole body is messed up. I was told it would help my periods but it didn't"
243. "My school don't have period products"
244. "Whenever I go to my doctor about my period or mood changes etc he just tells me to go on the Pill but I'm only 14 and don't want to do that"
245. "My mum isn't around and I can't ask my dad about periods. I don't really know what they are"
246. "I was also made fun of by my dad for having my period and now I feel like if I tell anyone I'm on they will laugh at me"
247. "I'm only 14 and I'm scared that the government is going to try control my body"
248. "I wish I'd learnt to use the right words for my anatomy when I was younger I'm 17 and just learned what the difference between a vulva and a vagina is"
249. "My periods began during the Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020. I was really blessed to have started during that time I thought as my periods were heavy, painful and irregular. I was told it would even out in a few months to a year so lockdown was good for me. But when I returned to school in September 2020 my periods were only getting worse. I couldn't be in a lesson for more than 20 minutes before needing to change and I would go through 30 pads and 10-20 tampons a day. My periods would last more than just seven days and the flow did not decrease. I was in agony all of the time and there was one time I was on my period for three months straight. I am from a low income family so affording period products was so difficult. I constantly bled through my school clothes and was bullied for the last three years because of my menstrual struggles. It has been ongoing and still when I'm on my period I can't not go to the toilet every 30 minutes as I risk bleeding through and that mortification is so difficult especially when you're hormonal already. I went to



the doctors in December 2020 for my periods, I was prescribed the pill and since I've been put on many forms of it and nothing has helped. I was given an ultrasound in July 2021 and because nothing showed up I was discharged and told to change my diet and exercise more. I was 14 and anorexic with an exercise addiction. The support I received over the last three years has been awful. The only reason I've been able to afford my period products is one of my teachers who provided me with sanitary products no question. I'm leaving high school this year and going to sixth form and it scares me that I will not be able to afford period products as I need them. And I do not believe my sixth form has a supply of them which they can hand out. It is scary. All schools with children from ages 9-18 need access to free period products. It is essential for dignity and will help end period poverty."

250. "I get super lethargic during my period probably because I have a heavy flow and I just know my grades are so bad that week of the month school is so hard"
251. "The headache leading up to my period is paralyzing. The headache during my period doesn't go away so is bad for school"
252. "I stained my skirt in year 8 English and when I stood up my friend pointed and laughed and I remember not wanting to go to school and fighting with my mum and dad over it. I'm traumatised I'm still panicking about it years later when I am on my period"
253. "My cramps were so bad in PE i threw up and i got in trouble with my teacher and she was a woman"
254. "My period gives me bad diahorrea and I hate talking about it. We have double periods and it's back to back science for 2 hours and we don't get a break. I really needed to go and my teacher wouldn't let me and when I finally managed to convince him I'd already actually minorly poo'd my pants. It was so humiliating and I had to go round like it the rest of the day hoping no one would notice a smell"
255. "I wasn't allowed to go to the toilet so I was hinting but my food tech teacher she still said no so I said 'It's literally not my fault my uterus is shedding blood from my vagina' and I got lunchtime detention"
256. "When I saw my period blood for the first time, I froze in shock wondering what just happened, I wiped again to make sure I wasn't crazy and was terrified my friend gave me a pad but i remember not knowing what it was and i was 13"



257. "I started my period when I was 9 years old. My primary school did not believe me, claiming I was saying so for 'attention' and 'copying my sister' . I was really scarred for P.E. because we all changed in the same classroom, boys and girls, I was really embarrassed and worried. The school refused to believe me until my mum took me to get a doctor to assess me and write a note. It still sticks with me because they made me feel ashamed of my period by changing on my own in the staff toilet after that and the teachers acted a huge burden, and not being believed really knocked my confidence."
Young person, Sheffield

258. "I started older so had "normal " experience but I do believe and think all people should have access to resources as its important and essential. My experience was when 16 so people understood more but should still be essential to everyone and knowledge and guidance should be passed on and made more aware."
20, Sheffield

259. "In school for me it was very hard as we wasn't able to afford period products so when I was on I didn't go to school."
19, Sheffield

260. "Boys should be taught about periods so its not embarassing for girls ."
Sheffield, 12

261. "Our school has pads and tampons in the first aid room. We are allowed to go to the toilet. If you start in school you cna walk out if the teacher doesn't allow you to go."
Sheffield, 15

262. "I think it would be better if teachers and students just talked about it in the open with no shame so people don't feel ashamed and they can stop using secret signals and let the students use the toilets during lessons."
Sheffield, 13

263. "I wish I knew how bad period cramps could be. I started taking the combined pill to stop my periods for the cramps. After 8 months of being on it, why am I still getting terrible cramps?"
Sheffield, 15

264. "In my lessons anytime I go to the toilet I have to discreetly put a pad or tampon in my sleeve or in the waistband of my skirt. My uniform has no pockets and this is more difficult in summer when wearing t-shirts."
Sheffield, 15

265. "I recently had to go to the toilet to change but I had run out of spare pads, the ones in the toilet cost £1 which most people can't afford during the recent cost of living crisis."

Sheffield, 16

266. "My high school was an all girls convent high school. It was strict and fed us lots of stereotypes of what it means to be feminine for example, being told not to run around in the playground because it was 'unlady like'. Sex education was limited and by the age of 13, I wasn't entirely sure what a period full was, let alone the impacts of a period on the body. It felt incredibly taboo. I remember a friend whispering to me what they described as a tampon, which left me in shock. "You surely can't stick something up there? how does that work?". Once I started my period, I felt so much shame. I didn't know what to do or who to tell because of the embarrassment, not even my own mum. I remember deciding that I was going to hide it, but what came with that was also having to buy sanitary products, which felt even more exposing to do. I had to toy between the idea of telling someone or trying to overcome the anxiety of buying pads for the first time- both felt like I was going to be laced with huge judgement because periods were something seen as bad and embarrassing. I decided to tell my mum and I remember her hugging me and giving me some pads- we never really spoke much about it, and it took me years till I told my older sister too. Following on in high school, I still felt petrified to buy my own sanitary products because if I did, the sales assistant would know I had my period and that felt overwhelming. I paid my friends to buy me pads or relied on my mum to get them for me. As I grew into my late teens, the talk of tampons returned. Because of the religious ideologies of my school, tampons were a huge discussion between our year group. So much false information was being spread amongst us. "If you use a tampon, you'll lose your virginity" "If you use a tampon, you're a slut" "People who use tampons are loose" etc. There was such a heavy weight of sexism and misogyny carried with whether you used a tampon or not and what that meant for you as a person (both spoken and unspoken). It took a lot of unlearning and self-education around periods to feel more confident in something that is so natural and beautiful."

London, 25

267. "I always felt like I had to hide my pads and like it was a shameful secret to bleed in school. I felt very misunderstood when I had too much pain to even go in. I think the education around periods wasn't sufficient enough, especially around the LGBT+ community. Growing up I didn't have access to this education. Whereas now I am trans and nonbinary and bleeding is a big part of my life, in terms of living in a cyclical way. It's a way for me to honour my inner rhythms and changes, having read Wild Power. I remember there was a protest in our school where one of my friends stuck period pads all over the walls to make a point about how sanitary items should be free."

Prestatyn, 24



268. "This may seem a little basic but I started my period in class and waited to go to the toilet when I got there they didn't have any products on the toilet I knew that they were in the library but going there whilst I had leaked didn't feel comfortable and it was on the second floor in the other building so it would take a while to get there. I think that we should've had some in the toilets."

Sheffield, 15

269. "Whilst at school, I concealed my pads in my blazer pocket as I was too embarrassed to take my bag with me to the toilet. The shame was too much as boys would make fun of us for bleeding.

I remember a male teacher making a big deal of a girl taking her bag to the toilet, telling the boys 'She's on the blob'. That really stuck with me."

Leeds, 21

270. "During my year 10 English Language exam, I leaked on my exam chair and went 2 hours sitting and not saying a word, at this time products were hidden away in the cupboards and none were available in the exam venue. At the end of the exam I broke down as I didn't know what to do. My school had locked the girls toilets and we only had one unisex toilet, the girls toilets were destroyed, no locks on the doors, always dirty, sinks falling off dirt spreading around the walls. My school uniform is very period unfriendly as it is made of thin material and is uncomfortable. My period became a big issue for me in school, not being able to focus and the constant fear of leaking and people seeing. A few of my teachers were supportive but not all that made me feel more uncomfortable about my period in school."

Anonymous, still in school

271. "Feeling really unwell with period symptoms but not feeling able to talk about it to teachers. Symptoms, especially the emotional ones, are not discussed seriously enough and there is not enough awareness among other students about how debilitating these can be and how they affect studying. PE teachers not being sympathetic"

272. "I started my period at age 10, in primary school. My mum had died 5 months earlier and I was being raised by my stepdad - who didn't know anything about menstruation. I hadn't had sex education in school yet and so I didn't know what was going on. At the time, everyone would get dressed for PE in the same room and I had to ask to go to the bathroom to get dressed out of embarrassment, while everyone else laughed about me."

Anonymous, Essex