

SCHOOL & TEACHER CORNER

# How to Talk About Periods

## A Guide for Using Inclusive, Medically Accurate Language in the Classroom

For teachers, counselors, and school staff working with students in Grades 5–8

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### Why This Guide Exists

Many teachers feel unprepared to discuss menstruation in class — not because they lack knowledge, but because they were never taught how. Awkward phrasing, vague language, or outright avoidance sends a message to students that their bodies are something to be embarrassed about.

This guide gives you the words, the confidence, and the framework to handle menstrual conversations in your classroom with clarity, accuracy, and compassion.

*You do not need to be a doctor to talk about periods. You need to be calm, accurate, and willing. That is enough.*

### Core Principles for Classroom Discussion

#### 1. Use Correct Medical Language

Avoid euphemisms like "that time of the month," "the curse," or "being unwell." These phrases reinforce shame. Use the correct words confidently:

- Menstruation / menstrual cycle
- Uterus, ovaries, fallopian tubes
- Menstrual blood / menstrual flow
- Sanitary pad, tampon, menstrual cup

#### Why it matters

When teachers use correct language, students learn that their bodies are not shameful — they are biological and worthy of discussion.

#### 2. Include Everyone in the Conversation

Menstrual health is not a "girls only" topic. Including all students — regardless of gender — is one of the most effective ways to reduce peer-based stigma and ridicule.

When boys understand menstruation, they are less likely to tease, more likely to support, and better prepared to be respectful peers and partners throughout their lives. Frame the lesson as: "This is how human bodies work. Understanding it makes all of us better."

### 3. Create a Safe Environment First

Before the lesson, set clear expectations with your class:

- No laughing at questions — curiosity is always welcome
- No sharing personal information about other students
- Written anonymous questions are always an option

### 4. Respond to Embarrassment with Calm

If students giggle or seem uncomfortable, do not scold or ignore it. Try: "I know this might feel awkward at first — most people feel that way. But this is important health information, and you deserve to have it." Then continue. Your calm is contagious.

*The single most powerful thing a teacher can do is not flinch. When you speak about menstruation as matter-of-factly as you speak about digestion or circulation, students learn to do the same.*

## What to Avoid

Avoid This	Say This Instead
<i>"That time of the month"</i>	"Menstrual period" or "menstruation"
<i>"Becoming a woman"</i>	"The body is going through puberty"
<i>"Private / personal topic"</i>	"An important health topic for all of us"
<i>"I'll explain it later" (and never do)</i>	"Let's talk about it now — it matters"
<i>Skipping the lesson</i>	Teaching it simply and honestly

## Quick Reference: Key Facts Every Teacher Should Know

- Menstruation typically begins between ages 9 and 16 — some students in your class may already be experiencing it.
- A normal cycle ranges from 21 to 35 days. A period typically lasts 3–7 days.
- Menstrual cramps (dysmenorrhea) are real and can be debilitating — never dismiss a student's pain as exaggeration.
- Some students may not have access to sanitary products at home. Your school should have a discreet, accessible supply.
- Menstruation is not unhygienic, contagious, or spiritually impure. These myths cause measurable harm.

*This resource is part of the MAA initiative by Rigel Foundation.*

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