This document discusses menstrual bleeding, pain and symptoms of menstrual health conditions. Some readers may prefer to skip this section.

Additional support and further information remain available through UCB's health and wellbeing services.

What is a normal period?

A period is the start of the menstrual cycle when you bleed from your vagina for a few days. For most, this happens around every 28 days, but it's normal for periods to occur every 21-35 days. A normal period should not be heavy, very painful or prevent you from carrying out your day-to-day activities such as hobbies, university, work and being with friends.

What is a heavy period?

If your period is heavy, you may experience:

- the need to change your tampon or pad every 30 minutes-two hours, or empty your menstrual cup more frequently than recommended
- having to use two products together, such as a pad and a tampon
- regularly bleeding through your clothes or bedsheets (called flooding).

What is a painful period?

Any period pain that is so bad it interferes with your studying, work, socialising, sleep or other usual activities.

What is an irregular period?

Periods are irregular if the gap between them is less than 21 days or more than 35 days. Using an app or a diary can help to keep track of your periods and see if they're regular.

Other period signs that may not be normal:

- passing large blood clots (larger than approximately 2.5cm/1 inch).
- bleeding between periods or after having sex
- blood in your wee or poo
- missing or stopping your periods
- severe mood changes linked to your menstrual cycle that affect your daily life
- a significant change from what is normal for you.

If you experience any of the above signs, your period may not be normal. You should speak to a GP or healthcare professional as it may be a sign of something to look in to.

What is polyendocrine metabolic disorder (PMOS, formerly PCOS)?

PMOS is a common hormonal condition that can affect periods, hormones and sometimes can affect fertility. It can cause irregular or painful periods, difficulty getting pregnant, acne, unwanted hair growth and thinning or hair loss on the scalp. Everyone's experience of PMOS is different, and not everyone will have the same symptoms. Speaking to a GP or healthcare professional can help you understand your symptoms and find the right support or treatment.

What is endometriosis?

Endometriosis occurs when cells similar to the ones in the lining of the womb (uterus) are found elsewhere in the body. These cells can grow and change in response to hormones in the menstrual cycle, this can cause inflammation, pain and scar tissue. Endometriosis is most commonly found on the lining of the pelvis (peritoneum) and may occur in the ovaries and involve other pelvic organs, like the bowel or bladder. Less commonly, endometriosis can also be found outside the pelvis, such as in the chest. It can cause symptoms such as severe period pain that affects everyday life, pain when you wee or poo, heavy bleeding and fatigue, and can sometimes affect fertility. You can find more information and support on the Endometriosis UK website: https://www.endometriosis-uk.org/

What is toxic shock syndrome?

Toxic shock syndrome (TSS) is a rare but serious condition caused by toxins produced by certain types of bacteria. It can happen when using tampons or menstrual cups, although it can also occur for other reasons. Symptoms can include a sudden high temperature, feeling very unwell, dizziness, vomiting, diarrhoea, a rash or confusion. If you experience these symptoms while using a tampon or menstrual cup, remove it and seek urgent medical help.

What is incontinence?

Incontinence is when you accidentally leak urine or poo because you cannot always control your bladder or bowel. It can happen to anyone and may be temporary or ongoing. If you experience incontinence, you are not alone and support is available. Speaking to a GP or healthcare professional can help you understand the cause and find the right support or treatment.