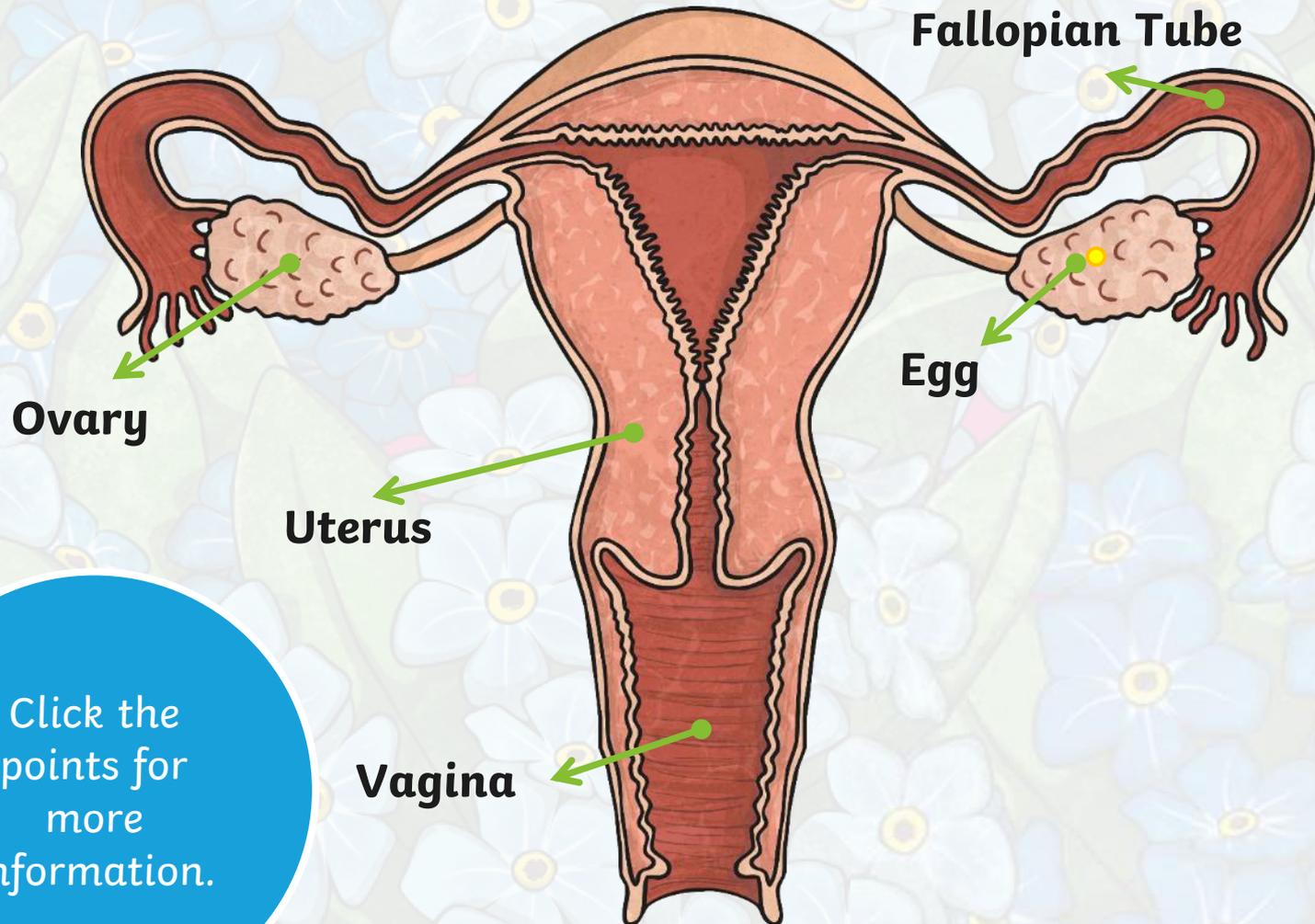




# Menstruation

Periods: what happens and why?

# The Female Reproductive System



Click the  
points for  
more  
information.

# What Are Periods?

Periods (menstruation) happen due to the hormones changing in the body.

When puberty is reached, an egg is released each month from the ovaries.

The egg moves from the ovary and along the fallopian tube and down into the uterus (womb).

Even before birth, a female baby has 1-2 million tiny eggs (ovum) in her ovaries.

If the egg is not fertilised by a sperm, the lining of the uterus and the egg leave the body through the vagina; this is called a 'period'.

# Why Do Periods Start?

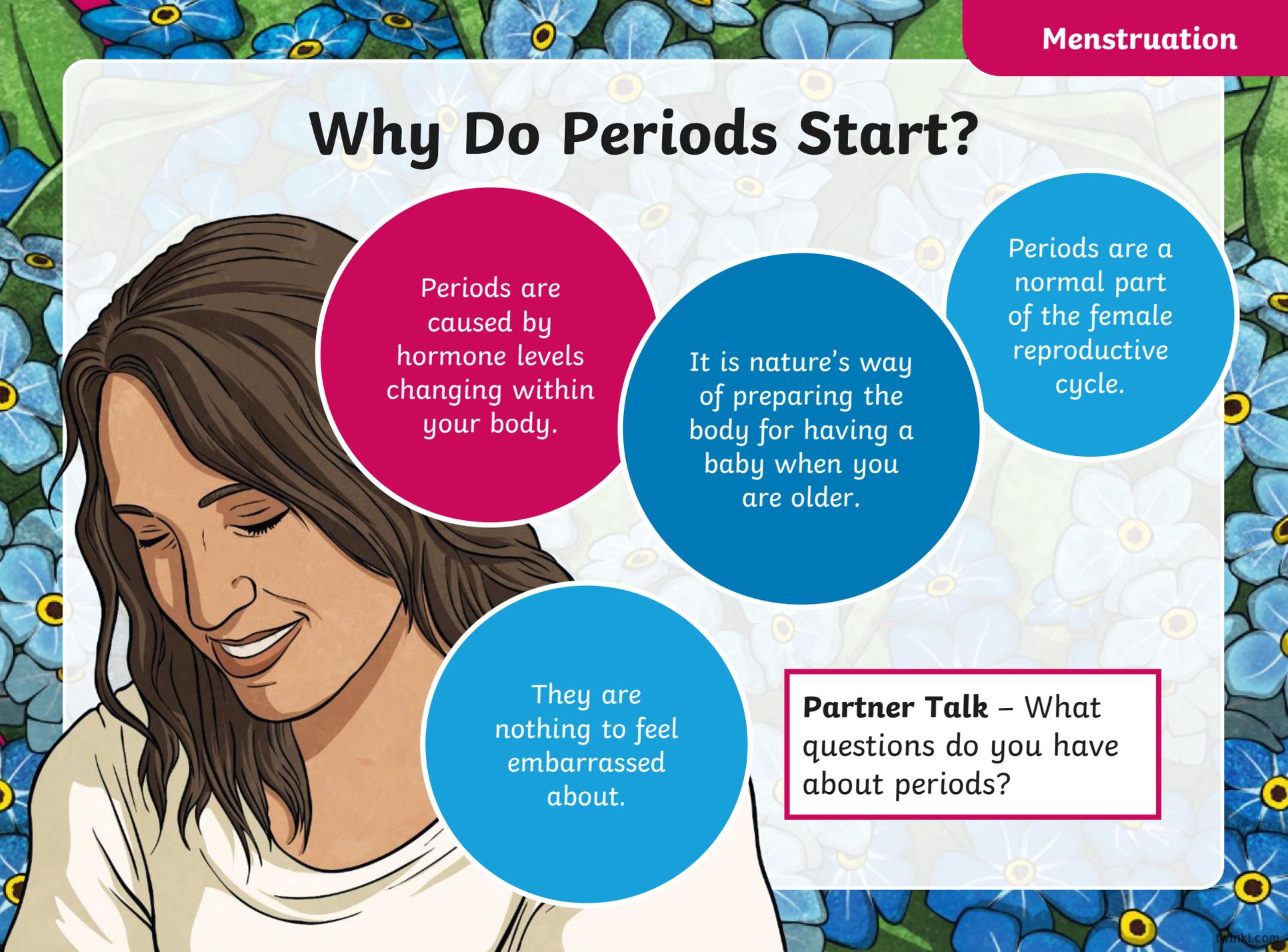
Periods are caused by hormone levels changing within your body.

It is nature's way of preparing the body for having a baby when you are older.

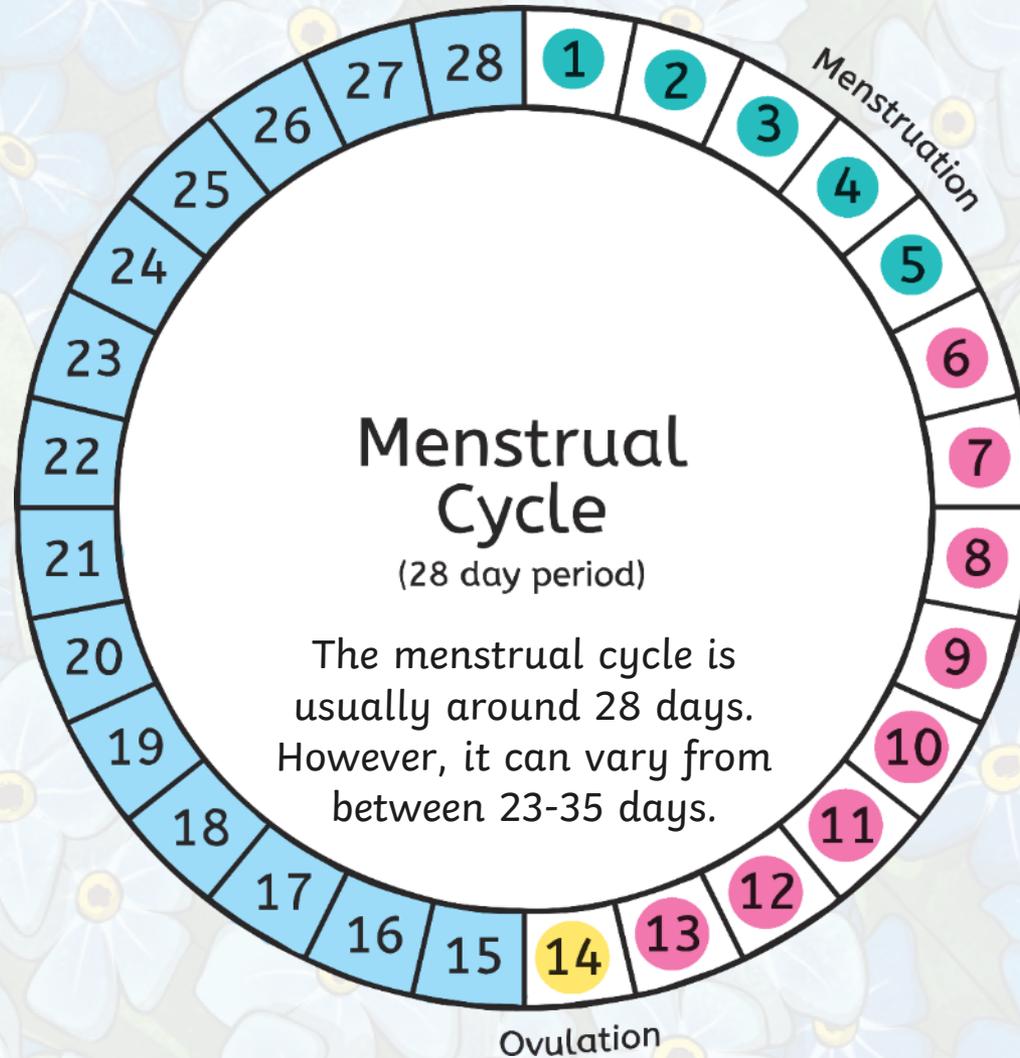
Periods are a normal part of the female reproductive cycle.

They are nothing to feel embarrassed about.

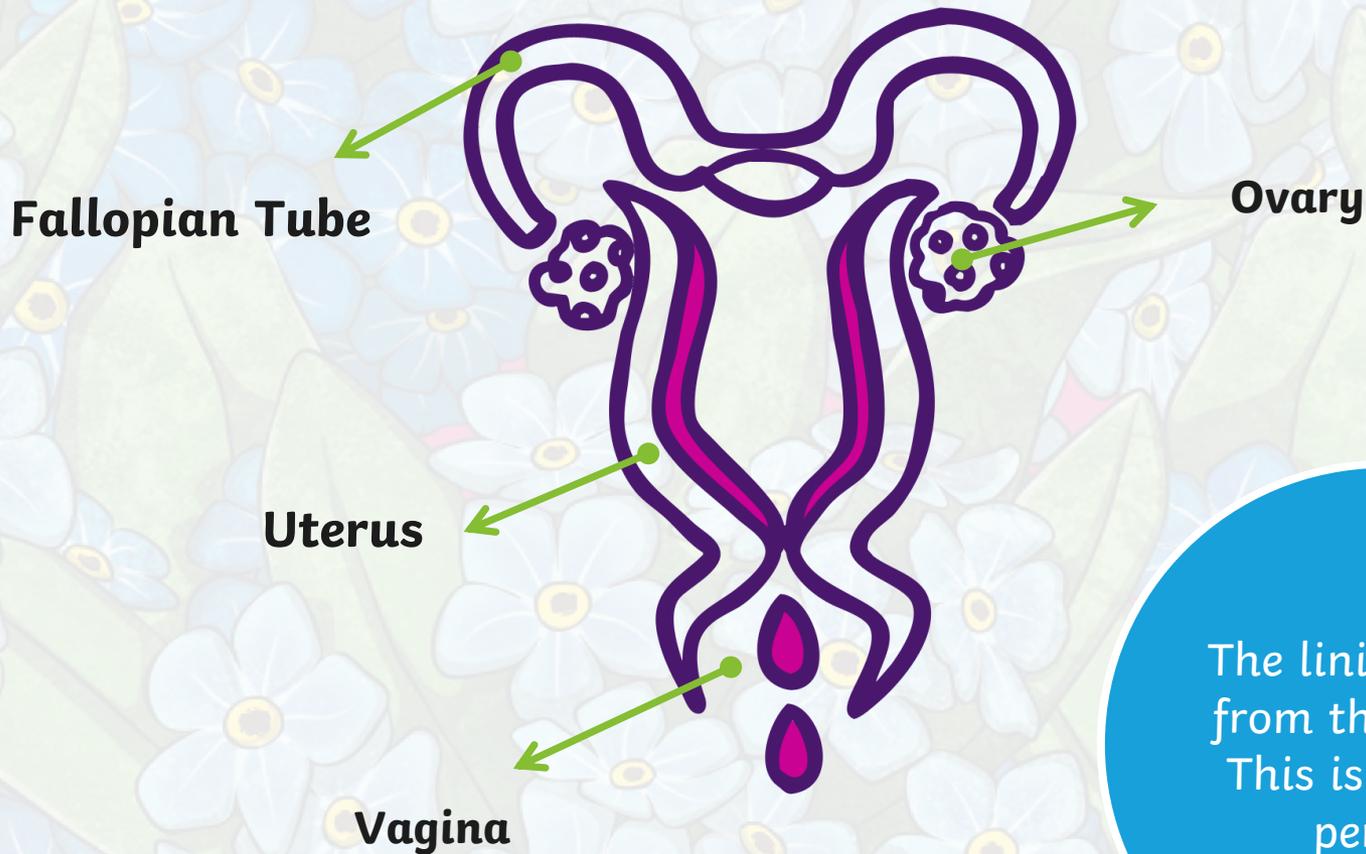
**Partner Talk** – What questions do you have about periods?



# The Menstrual Cycle

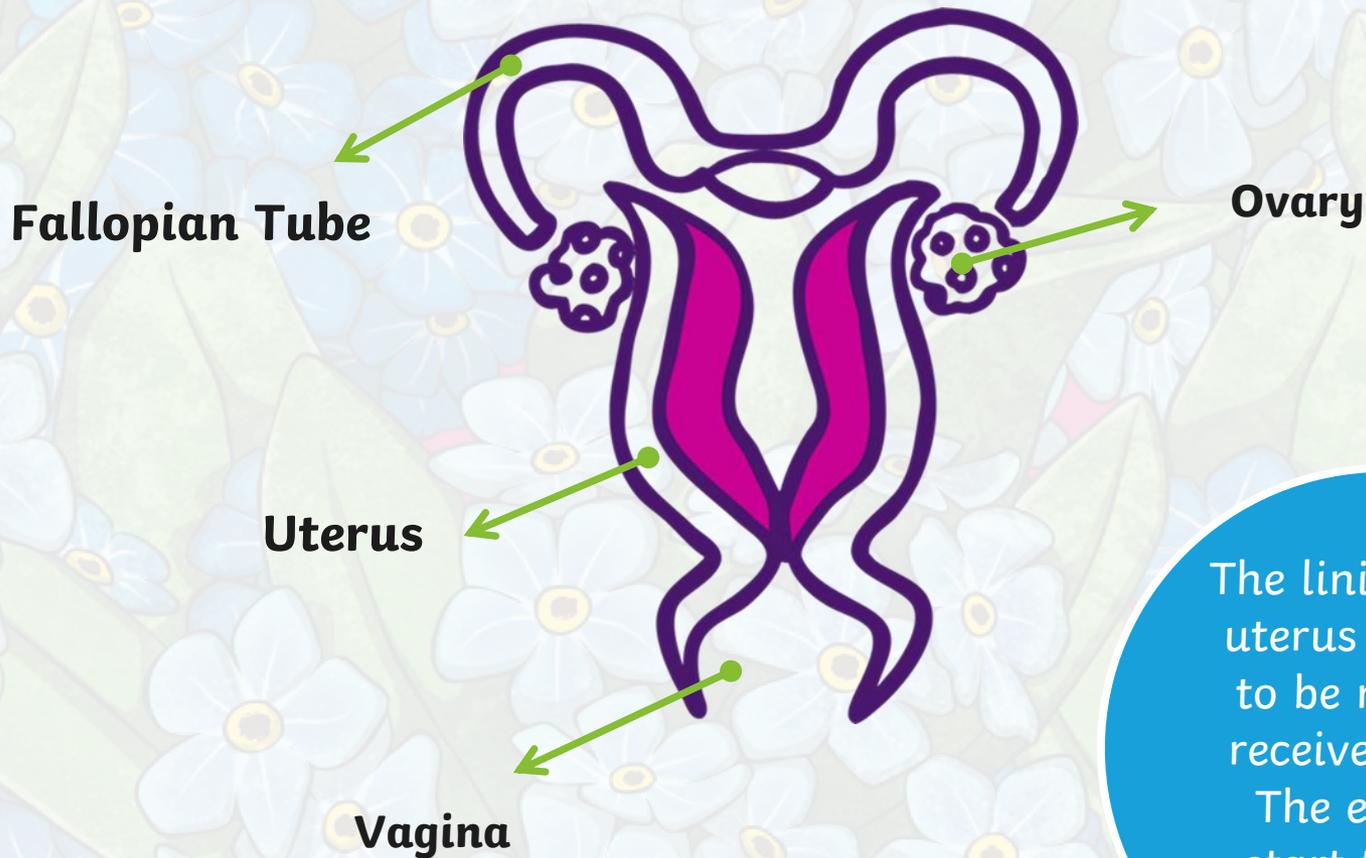


# The Menstrual Cycle Days 1-5



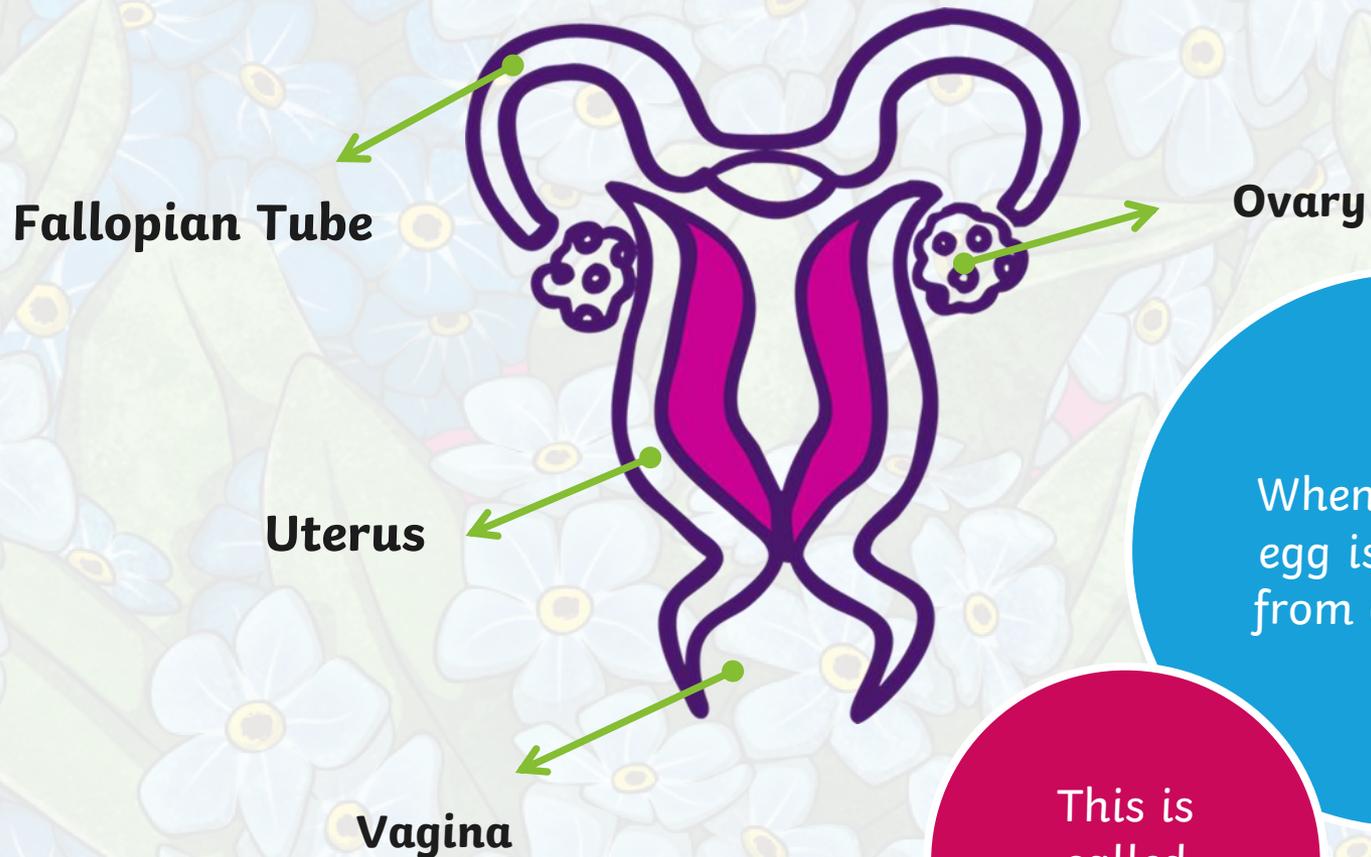
The lining is lost from the uterus. This is called a period.

# The Menstrual Cycle **Days 6-13**



The lining of the uterus thickens to be ready to receive an egg. The egg will start to ripen on day 12.

# The Menstrual Cycle Day 14



When ripe, the egg is released from an ovary.

This is called ovulation.

# The Menstrual Cycle Days 15-28



The lining of the uterus will stop developing if the egg is not fertilised.

The cycle will start again.

# When Will My First Period Start?

Usually between 10 to 16 years old;

about 2 years after your breasts develop;

after you grow pubic hair;

after you start to notice vaginal discharge.

**Remember -  
Everyone is  
different!**



# What Symptoms Will You Have?

It is common to experience PMS (Pre-Menstrual Syndrome) before a period. The symptoms can include:

difficulty  
concentrating

stomach  
cramps

feeling  
bloated

tender  
breasts

mood  
swings

tiredness

food  
cravings

headaches

spots

**Partner Talk** – What could you do to help ease some of these symptoms if they occur?

# PMS - Things You Can Try!

Eat a well  
balanced  
diet.

Take part in  
some gentle  
exercise.

Use a hot  
water bottle  
or use a heat  
pad.

Have a nice  
warm drink.

Massage  
your  
stomach.

Have a  
warm  
bath.



# During Your Period: What Happens?

**Bleeding can last between 3 and 8 days.**

**The average blood loss is only around 80ml (roughly 3 tablespoons).**

**Your first period may be so light, you may not even realise that you are having one.**

**Blood flow may be heavier in the first few days.**

Periods happen once a month but your body takes time to get into a routine so for the first year or so the time between each period may vary.

# During Your Period: Feminine Protection

There are **many different** types of protection you can use during your period to absorb the blood and to stop it getting on to your clothes/underwear.

Some of the same products can also be used for vaginal discharge.

It is a personal choice and different for each girl.  
The most common type of protection are:

**Sanitary  
towels**

**Tampons**

**Pantyliners**

**Partner Talk:** What do you know already about the three types of feminine protection?

# Pantyliners

These are worn outside your body in your underwear.

They are best used:

when your period is light;

in addition to a tampon;

in-between periods to absorb discharge;

to help keep you fresh every day.



**Partner Talk** – What are the advantages and disadvantages of pantyliners?

# Sanitary Towels

These are worn outside your body in your underwear.

There are many different absorbencies depending on how heavy your period is.

Some have sticky tabs called 'wings', which help provide extra protection to the sides of your underwear.

They should be changed frequently to keep you fresh and dry (generally every 4 to 6 hours but more often when your period is heavy).

**Partner Talk** – What are the advantages and disadvantages of sanitary towels?



# Tampons

These are worn inside your body in your vagina to absorb blood.

There are many different absorbencies depending on how heavy your period is.

Some come with an applicator to help when inserting them into the vagina.

They are good for swimming and other sports, such as gymnastics.

Should be changed regularly (every 4 to 8 hours but more often when your period is heavy).

**Partner Talk** – What are the advantages and disadvantages of tampons?



# Period Pants

These are underwear with a pad built into the lining.

There are a range of pant styles available.

Each style holds a different amount of absorbency.

After use, the pants can be rinsed and washed like a normal item of clothing and then re-used.

**Partner Talk** – What are the advantages and disadvantages of period pants?



# How Should You Dispose Of Your Feminine Protection Products Appropriately?

Some products are reusable so they don't need to be disposed of. These include:

- Period pants
- Re-usable pads and tampons

Others are **single use** and should be disposed of after use. These products include:

- Pantyliners
- Sanitary towels
- Tampons

It's important that these products are **disposed of appropriately**. The most important rule with all of these single use products is simple, **do not flush!**

These products should be disposed of in sanitary bins or in ordinary bins if sanitary bins aren't available. You can use the packaging from your new product to wrap up the used product before disposing of it or if it's the end of your period, you may use some toilet tissue to wrap them up.

# How Will I Know When My Period Will Start?

Make a note of the date your period starts.

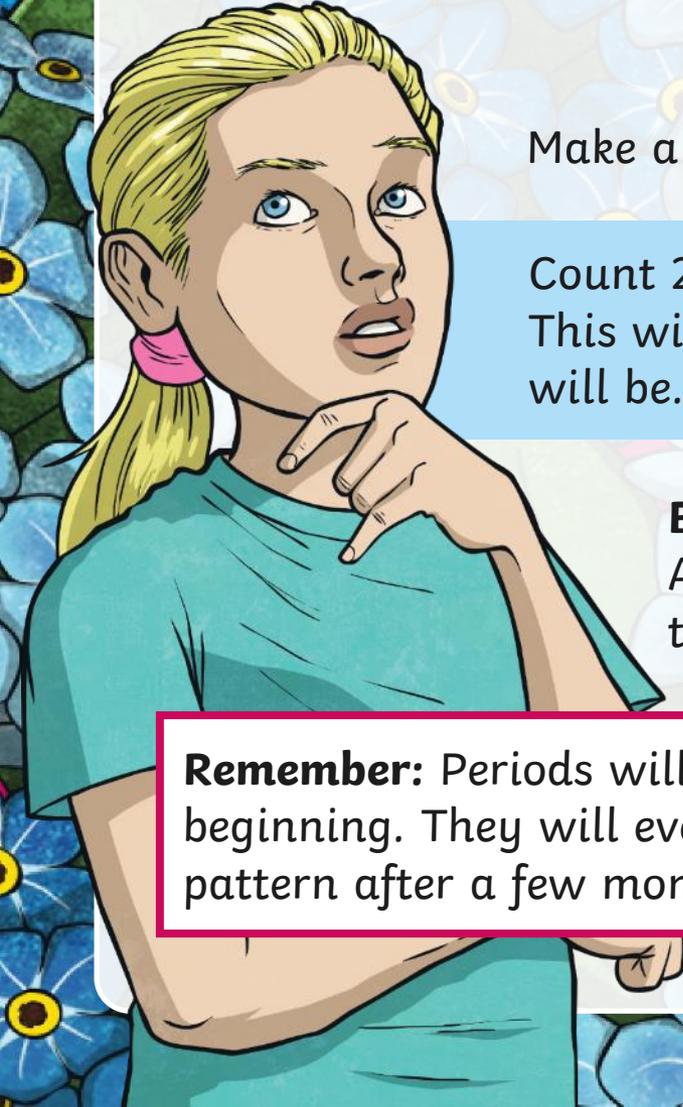
Count 28 days from the day of your **first** show of blood. This will give you a rough idea of when your next period will be.

## Be Prepared

Always carry some spare underwear and sanitary towels or tampons in your bag.

**Remember:** Periods will not have a set pattern in the beginning. They will eventually settle into their own pattern after a few months or years.

Let's take a look at how to do this...



# Working Out When Your Next Period Will Start



A hand holding a red pen is writing on a calendar for October. The calendar is spiral-bound and shows the days of the month. The days are arranged in a grid with columns for the days of the week (M, T, W, T, F, S, S) and rows for the dates. The dates are: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13; 15, 16, 17, 18, 19; 22, 23, 24, 25, 26; 29, 30, 31. The days 27, 28, and 31 are shaded blue. The hand is writing on the 19th.

OCTOBER						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	
15	16	17	18	19		
22	23	24	25	26		
29	30	31				

# Remember

Having a period is a normal healthy thing to happen.

It is a natural process for the female body.

It can take some time getting used to having periods and feeling confident about dealing with them.

Periods are a sign that your body is working properly; they are a special part of being a female.

**Remember:** no-one will know that you have your period, unless you tell them.

Any  
question  
is a good  
question

Do you have  
any questions  
you would like  
to discuss?





BBC  
**Teach**

