

Augmentative and Alternative Communication package on Menstruation

How can I teach a young woman who has an intellectual disability about Menstruation ?

Beginning or coming into menstruation means a lot of changes in a young persons body. These changes can be confusing especially if you don't know what's going on, so the most important thing you can do to help a young person with an intellectual disability to understand these changes is reassurance. Be sure to let the young person know that the changes are a normal part of a young girls life. Letting the person know that going through your first menstruation cycle is normal. Remember that you may be the first person to explain this aspect of growing to the young person.

BE POSITIVE.

This package uses pictures and symbols to help talk about menstruation. The use of pictures and symbols is a very powerful means to communicate a message. Even if the person has verbal skills, pictures and symbols can reinforce a message.

Being up front and positive about periods will help the young person to develop a positive healthy attitude about this aspect of her life.

Some mothers allow their daughters to be in the bathroom with them when they change a pad. If you feel comfortable doing this it can be a great way of helping the young person understand not only when to but also how to change a pad.

Re wording a question and asking the person to show you can be a useful way to reinforce a message.

About the workbook.

This workbook has been designed to suit as many different types of people as possible.

The workbook is in two parts.

1. Picture cards
2. Script cards.

On the script cards you will find two or three sections.

A. Simple scripts.

Use these to explain what the picture is about. Using your finger to point to the picture while you talk is a very good way of getting the message across.

B. More in-depth scripts

Use these if you feel the person has the ability to understand more in-depth concepts. You don't need to use them if you don't want to.

C. Message of the card.

If you feel that the language of the scripts is not ideal for the person and wish to use your own scripts try and make sure they are around the message contained here. These messages contain the concepts of each card.

Have fun with these workbooks.

Take your time and don't worry if you only get one picture card done in a session.

Concentration can be a major factor with people with an intellectual disability. So it is better to stop when you feel it is getting too much.

Don't be afraid to leave them where the person can get hold of them and look at them. This is very beneficial and can allow you to talk about more often. The more you talk about it in a relaxed way the easier it will become to teach. And learn.

Most women get periods

A. Simple scripts

Draw your finger around the circle of women and point to the symbol for period and say "most women get periods."

Have a talk about all the different types of women in the circle and say "Look the nurse gets her period and so does the singer" etc.

You could talk about how you get your period, if you feel comfortable to do this. The more normal you can make periods the easier it will become.

B. More in-depth scripts

Who gets periods?

- Periods start around the time of puberty and last until about age 50. A girl may be as young as 8 when she gets her first period, or as old as 17.
- Periods start after a girl begins to develop breasts. Other signs that she will soon start having periods include: getting pubic and underarm hair, having a light, white discharge from the vagina and rounding of her hips.
- Women who are pregnant don't have periods.
- Periods may stop if a woman loses too much weight, or if she exercises too much.
- They may also stop if she is under too much stress.
- It is important to see your doctor for a health check if your periods stop.

C. Message of the card

Message : Getting a period happens to most women . It is natural. Many of our girl friends have them.

Sample Only



The following material has been produced as a gift for the care and benefit of people with disabilities.

Copyright March 2002 © by The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (Q). for and on behalf of Wesley Mission Brisbane.
Permission to copy and distribute this document is authorised provided that this notice is retained on all copies, that copies are not altered, and that Wesley Mission Brisbane is credited when the material is used to form other copyright notices.

Images copyright index

- | | |
|-----|--|
| WMB | Drawn by David Beal for the Wesley Mission Brisbane. Copyright Wesley Mission Brisbane 2002 |
| PCS | "Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) used with permission of Mayer-Johnson, Inc.
(www.mayer-johnson.com) Copyright 1981-2002. All Rights Reserved Worldwide." |
| WS | The Rebus symbols used in this publication are included with permission from Widgit Software Ltd. |

Concepts

Augmentative layout and design David Beal



This project was envisioned a long time before we became involved. We have not worked in isolation and are indebted to the following people for sharing their knowledge and experience with us:

Thank you particularly to Wyn Fletcher – your enthusiasm and passion for this project is truly inspiring. This project was Wyn's brainchild and she has remained its most enthusiastic supporter throughout its development.

Thank you to those on the Reference Group – your input, support, advice and encouragement have been invaluable. The members of the Reference Group were:

Rev. Dr. David Pitman	Mr. Lawrie Thomas
Mr. Geoff Batkin	Ms. Margaret Corney
Mrs. Wyn Fletcher	Ms. Heather Den Houting
Dr. Sue Brady	Prof. Jill Wilson
Dr. Glenys Carlson	Ms. Miriam Taylor

We would especially like to acknowledge the contribution made by the Wesley Mission Brisbane both financially and philosophically to the social justice issues in relation to women with disabilities and their basic human rights to celebrate their womanhood in all areas of their lives. And for the belief that people with a disability can learn, and are able to make choices.

We also need to acknowledge the Gambling Community Benefit Fund Queensland Government for their generous financial support of this project

Jane Manderson
David Beal

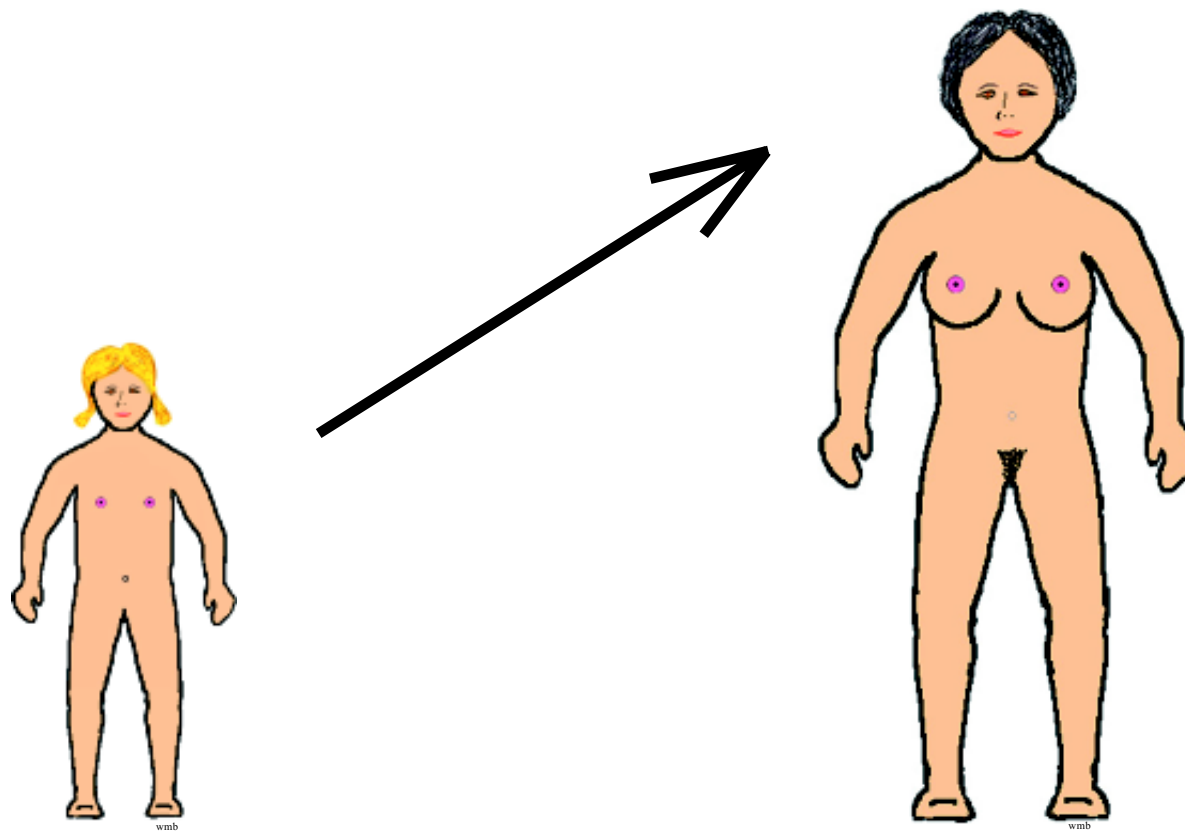
I would like to add a personal thanks to the following people ;

Wyn Fletcher for all her advice and patience, and for her belief that people with a disability have the right to decision making as do all of us.
Anne Finamore and Jane Remington-Gurney, for their input and advice.
Geoff Batkin, for giving me the opportunity to work on such an important project.

Working on this project has been challenging and rewarding, from both a gender and communication perspective. It has shown me that while we say we understand what other people face each day, it is only when we attempt to live and breathe as they do that understanding comes. When that understanding comes, the barriers in society that separate us won't need to be torn down, they will fall down.

David Beal

When a girl grows into a woman



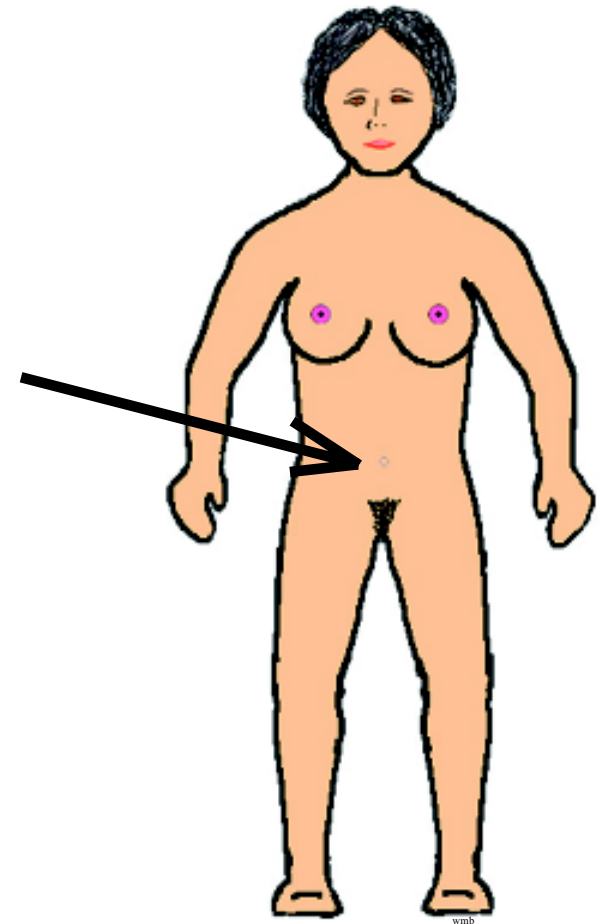
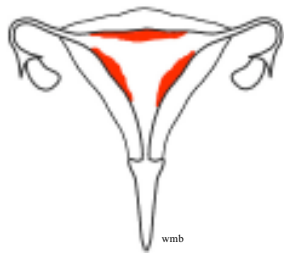
When girl grows into a woman

Use your finger to follow the arrow from girl to women while saying “when a girl grows into a woman”

It would be useful to talk about how you were once a girl and now you are a woman and that it happens to all girls.

Message : You will grow into a woman

Blood builds up inside her womb



Blood builds up inside her womb

Use your finger to follow the pictures while saying “ blood builds up inside her womb.”

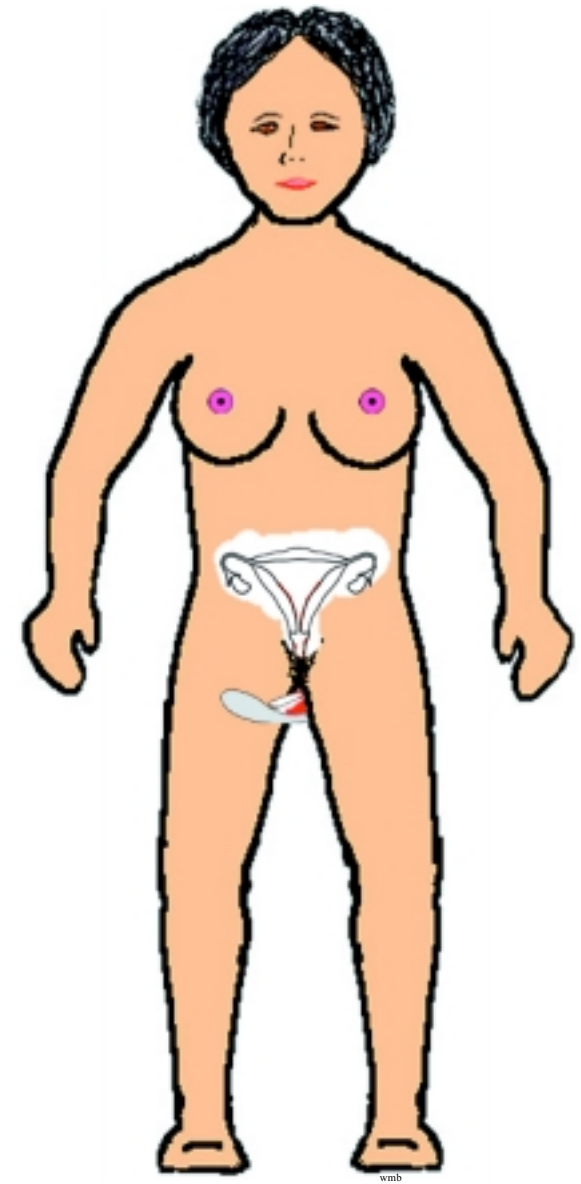
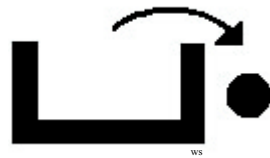
Show the difference between the womb with blood and the one with out blood.

Make sure you explain again that this is inside her tummy.

What is a period?

- A period happens when the lining of a woman’s womb (or uterus) is shed. Blood, mucus and cells come out of her body through the vagina. (The vagina is the hole between her legs).

The blood comes out onto a pad.



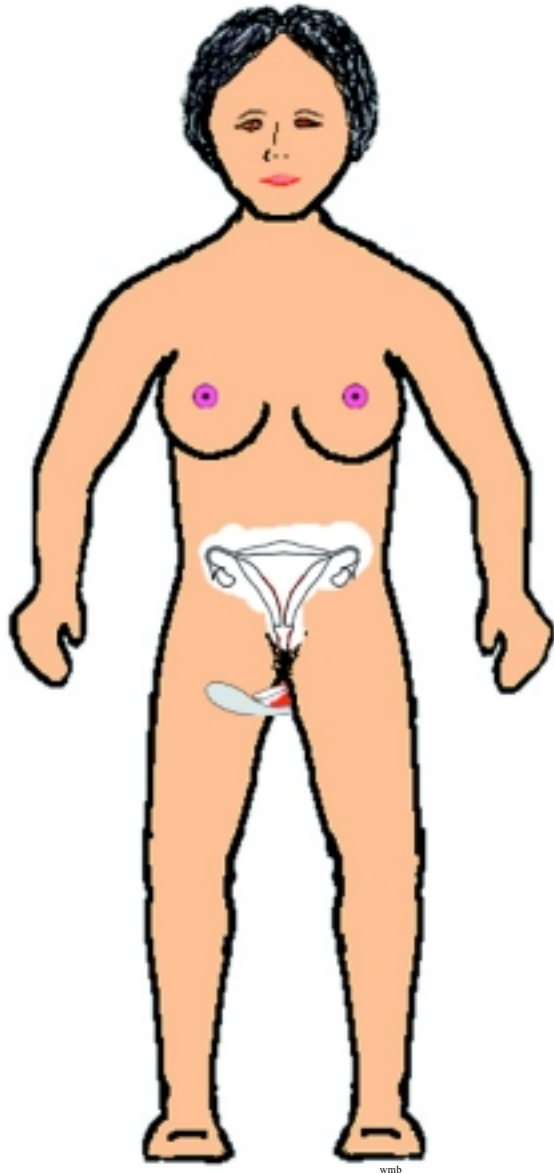
The blood comes out onto a pad.

Use your finger to follow the pictures while saying “ the blood comes out onto a pad.”

Use the picture of the women to show what is happening..

Remember to reinforce that this is a natural process.

This is called a period



=

period

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

pcs

wmb

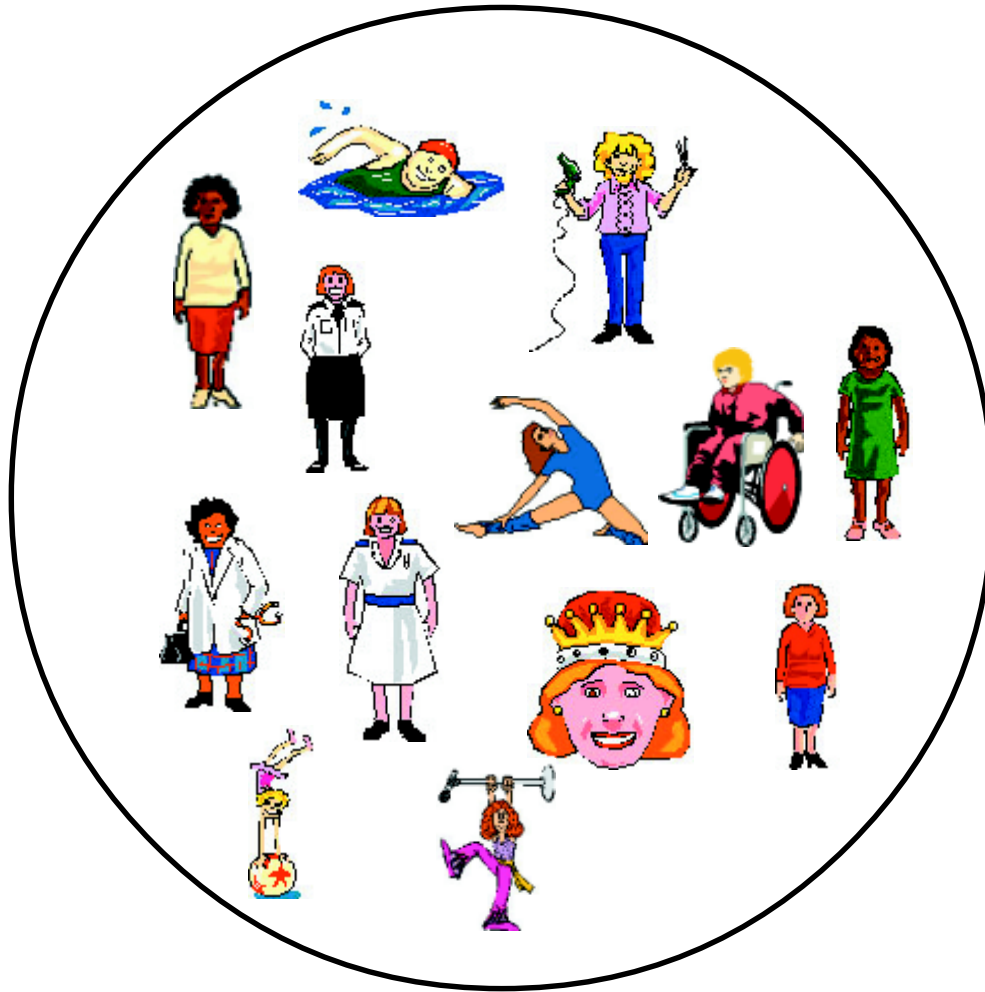
This is called a period

Using your finger start at the picture of the women and say “This is called a period”.

You may need to go back over the last card again to reinforce the message.

It is important that the person understands the symbol for period.

Most women get periods



period

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

DCS

wmb

Most women get periods

Draw your finger around the circle of women and point to the symbol for period and say “most women get periods.”

Have a talk about all the different types of women in the circle for example “ Look the nurse gets her period and so does the singer ” etc.

Remind the person that periods are normal.

You could talk about how you get your period, if you feel comfortable to do this. The more normal you can make periods the easier it will be.

Who gets periods?

- Periods start around the time of puberty and last until about age 50. A girl may be as young as 8 when she gets her first period, or as old as 17.
- Periods start after a girl begins to develop breasts. Other signs that she will soon start having periods include: getting pubic and underarm hair, having a light, white discharge from the vagina and rounding of her hips.
- Women who are pregnant don't have periods.
- Periods may stop if a woman loses too much weight, or if she exercises too much.
- They may also stop if she is under too much stress.
- It is important to see your doctor for a health check if your periods stop.

You get a period once a month



period

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

pcs



S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

pcs

You get a period once a month

Using you finger to point to the pictures say “You get your period once a month”

You could talk about how often you get yours and when they are due.

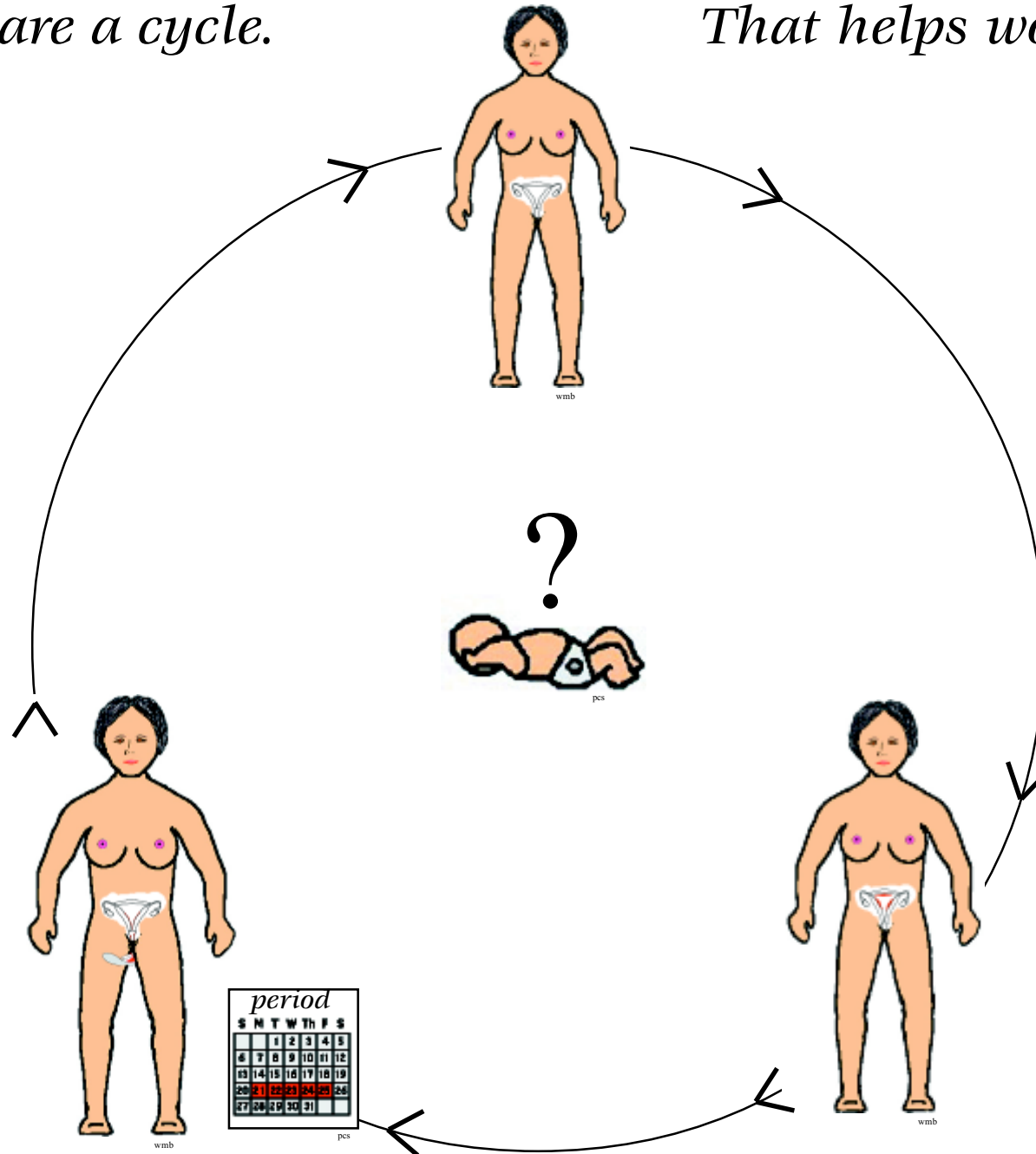
You could use a calendar to show the person how often a month is.

When does it happen?

- Periods happen about once a month. Exactly how often they come is different for each woman. They usually come every 3 to 5 weeks and last between 3 and 8 days.
- Periods usually occur regularly – that is, there is usually about the same time between each one.
- In the first one to two years after periods start, they may not be regular. Some women never have regular periods.

Periods are a cycle.

That helps women have babies



Periods are a cycle

That helps women have babies

Running your finger around the circle starting at the top and say “periods are a cycle that help women have babies. See here the lady has no blood in her womb”

Move to next picture “Here the lady is starting to get blood”

Move to next picture “Now the lady is having her period”

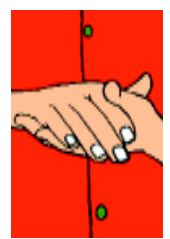
Move to the top picture “She waits for the blood to come again”

Repeat this as many times as you need to.

Why does it happen?

- Regular changes occur in some parts of a woman’s body throughout the time she is able to have children. These changes are called the “menstrual cycle”.
- This cycle repeats itself about every month. The length of time between each cycle is different for each woman. It may even be different at different times in the same woman.
- A period happens at the beginning of every menstrual cycle. The lining of the womb is shed.
- After the period finishes, the lining of the womb begins to grow again. It becomes thicker so it will be ready to help a baby to grow inside the womb if the woman becomes pregnant.
- Right in the middle of the cycle, an egg is released from the ovary. If the woman has sex, this egg may be fertilised by a sperm from her partner. If this happens she will become pregnant.
- If the woman does not become pregnant, another period will start.
- **Having periods is normal.**

Who do you want to help you with your periods



Period

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

pcs

Who do you want to help you with your periods

Find as many photo's as you can of people involved in the persons life. If you can cut them out to head shape.

Working with the person point to the pictures with your finger and say "Who do you want to help you with your periods?"

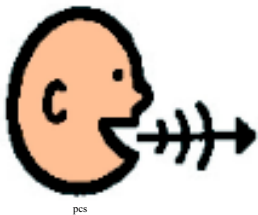
You could also place a photo in the card and ask "Do you want _____ to help you with your periods ?"

Using the photo's work with the person to find out who she feels comfortable with to help her with her periods.

It is important to find someone the person feels comfortable with to help her, this may not be you.

Re-asking the question after a few days will help reaffirm the choice the person has made.

Tell _____ when your periods start



period

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		



Tell _____ when your periods start

Point to each picture and say “ tell _____ when your periods start”

Use the name and photo of the person chosen in the last card.

Make sure the person who has been chosen knows about it.

Message : Let (name of person) know when your periods start.

Changing pads.

Cut the cards out along the dotted line.

Using the cards in sequence point to the pictures and read the cards.

There is a 'shut door' card, if you have issues with this, that you can use after the 'go into bathroom'.

There are a number of choices for the last card depending on the system you want to use. You can take a photo of the system you have been using and stick it on one of the spare cards.

You can use these cards in a simple sequence game to reinforce the message. Mess the cards up and ask the person to put them back in order. You may have to talk the person through this a couple of times before she gets the idea.

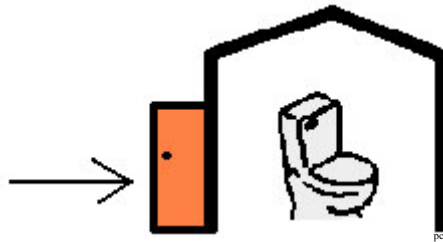
Changing pads.

Wash your hands



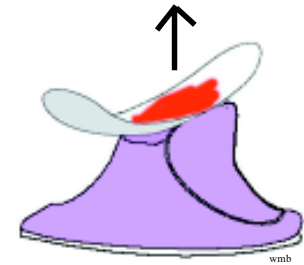
1

*Go into the
bathroom or toilet.*



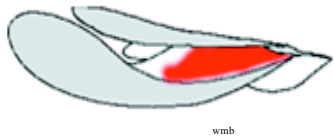
2

*Remove dirty pad
from pants*



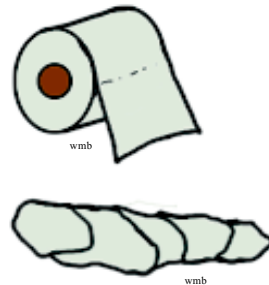
3

Fold pad in half



4

*Wrap the pad in
toilet paper*



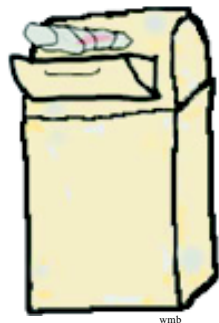
5

*Place pad in
paper bag*



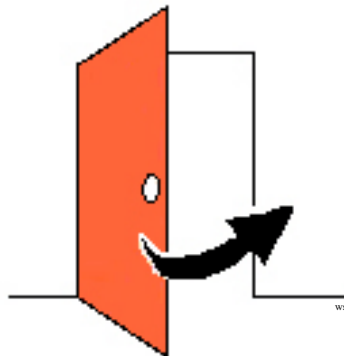
6

*Place pad in
bin*



6

Close door



6

*Place pad in
bin*



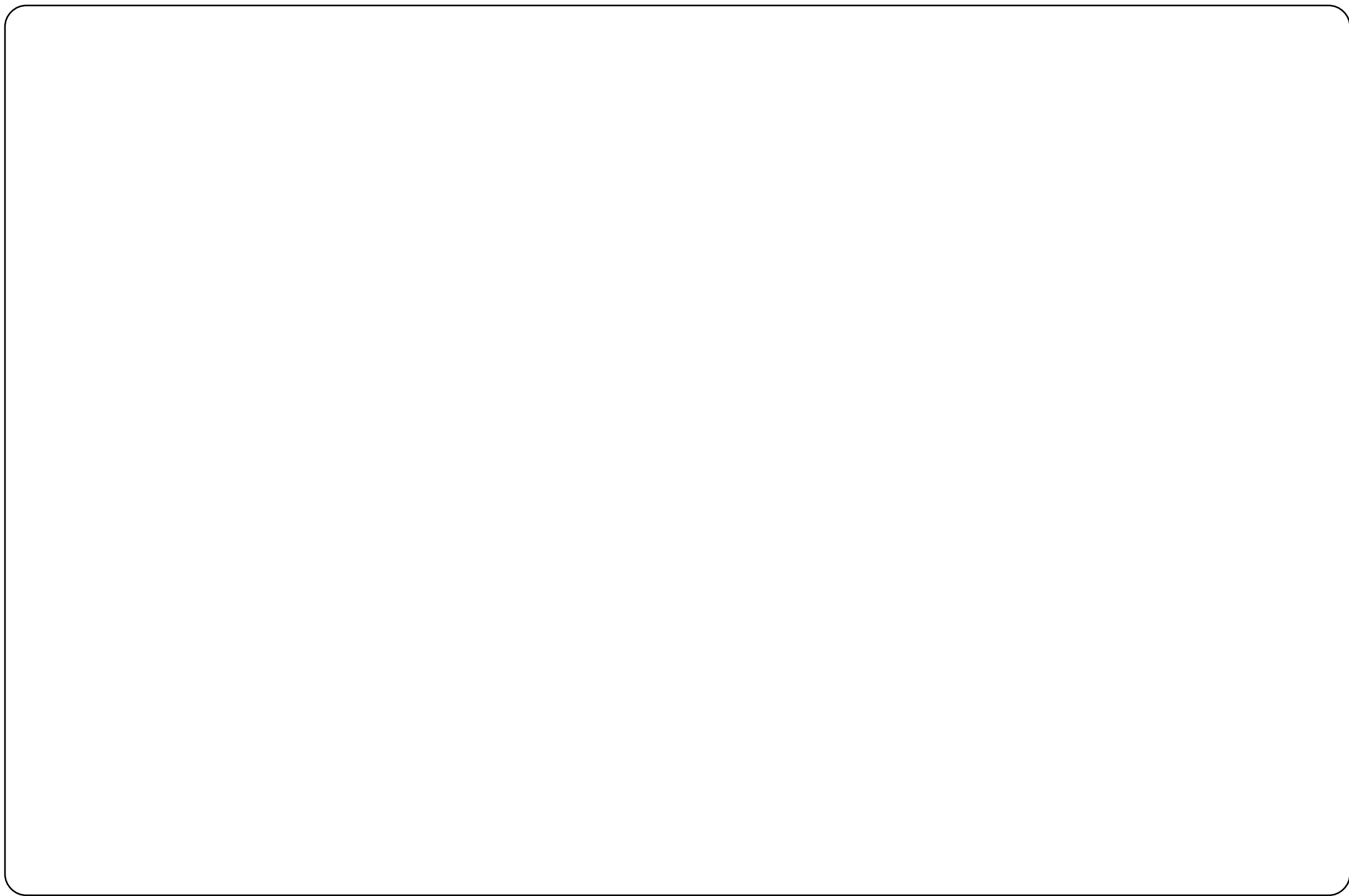
6

*Place pad in
bin*



6

6



Putting on a clean pad.

Cut the cards out along the dotted line.

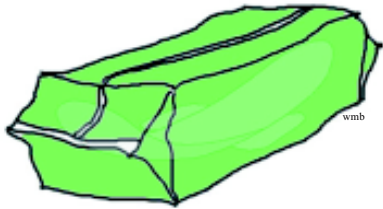
Using the cards in sequence point to the pictures and read the cards.

You can use these cards in a simple sequence game to reinforce the message. Mess the cards up and ask the person to put them back in order. You may have to talk the person through this a couple of times before she gets the idea.

If you can find an unopened pad to use while doing this exercise. You could also go into the place where the clean pads are stored with the person and get one out.

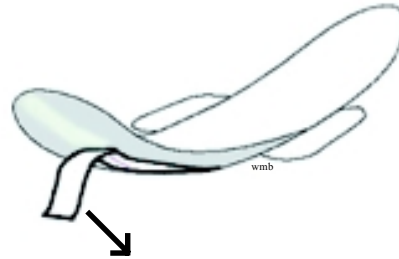
Putting on a clean pad.

Take a clean pad



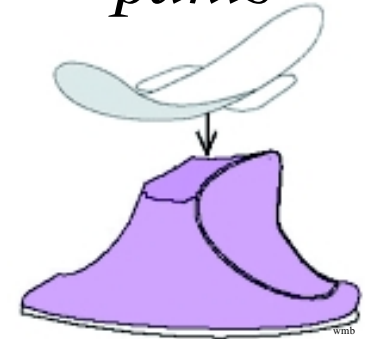
1

take backing off



2

place pad over pants



3

push pad onto pants

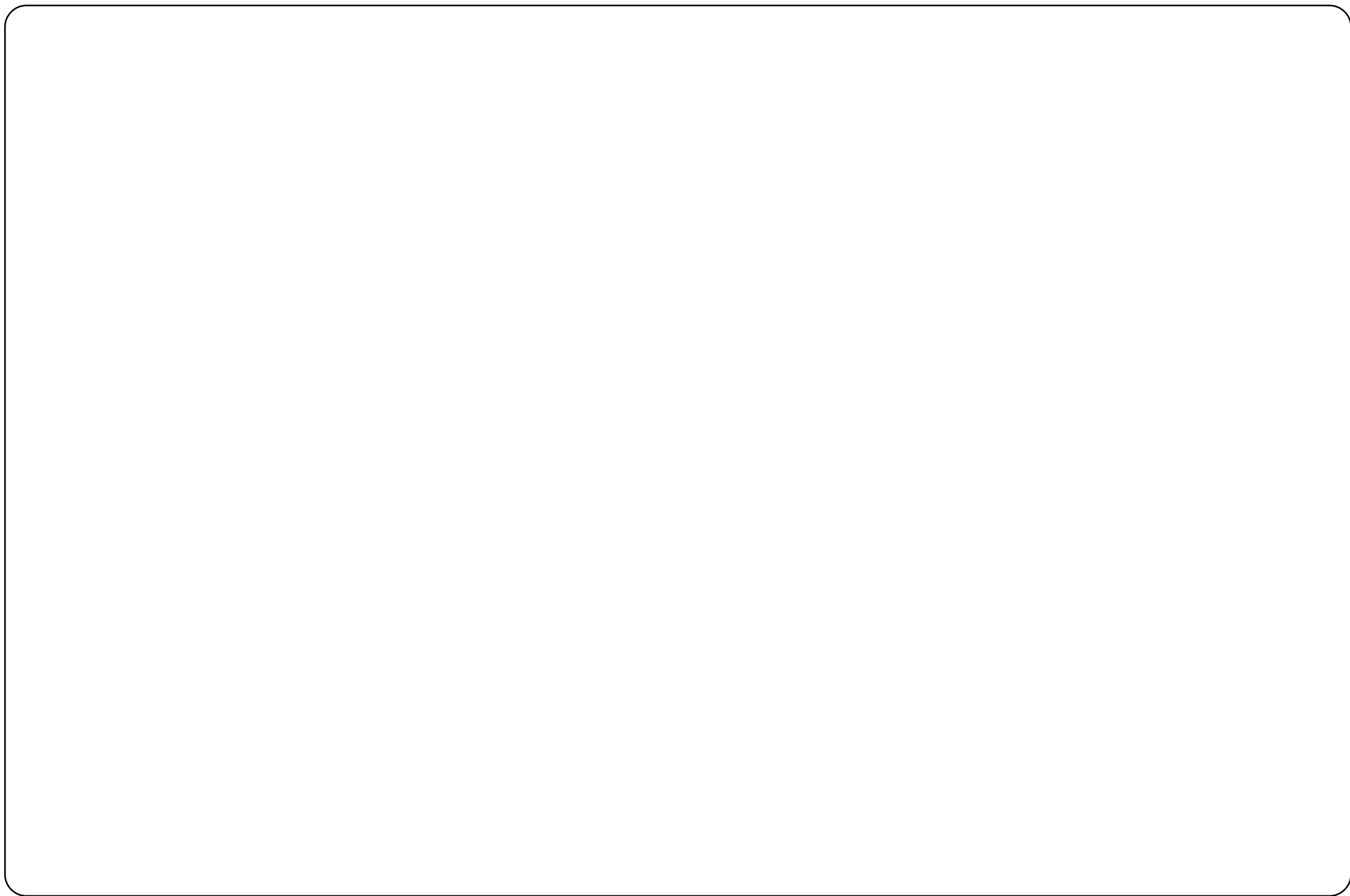


4

wash your hands.



5



Pads are not toys



No touching used pads



No leaving pads lying around



No pads in toilet



No pads near your face



No pads on walls

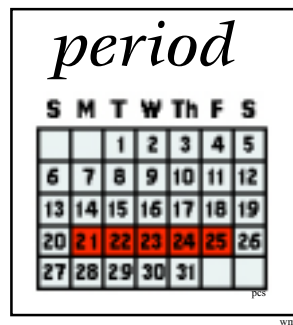
Pads not toys

This card is to be used only if the person is displaying any of behaviours shown.

Showing any of these behaviours to someone who is not displaying them may trigger an idea.

Cut out the cards that apply to the situation and use them after each behaviour is displayed.

When your periods start, mark it on a calendar.



When your periods start, mark it on a calender.

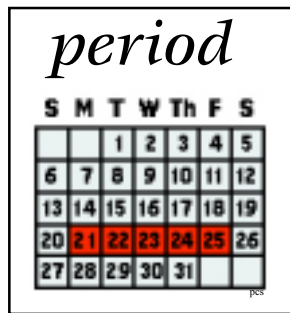
Using you're finger point to the pictures and say " When your periods start mark it on a calender"

If the person has chosen someone to tell when her periods start, talk about ways in which to let them know to mark it down.

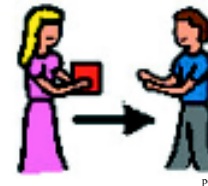
Keeping track of when periods start and finish can be very helpful. For example if the person gets sick before her periods, having an idea of when the periods are due can help in relieving stress and tension. Having the periods marked on a calendar can be a useful visual reminder that having a period happens once a month and it is OK.

There is a calendar at the back of this workbook that you can photocopy and use.

Periods may give you



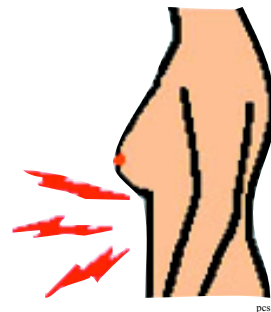
?



Headaches



Tummy cramps



Pimples



Tearful



Periods may give you

Point to the pictures and say “Periods may give you” then point to each of the pictures and read them.

If you get periods it would be useful to talk about how they make you feel. Remember to keep positive about periods.

Yearly recording chart for emotions and flow.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	De
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
9												
10												
11												
12												
13												
14												
15												
16												
17												
18												
19												
20												
21												
22												
23												
24												
25												
26												
27												
28												
29												
30												
31												

Yearly recording chart for periods

Keeping a record of when periods and emotions can help you see if there are any patterns in a person cycle.

This can be helpful for both the carers and the person to be aware of what to expect. If for example the person can be a little depressed a week before her periods then carers can be ready for that and help the person understand why she is feeling that way.

You can also see very quickly, using this chart, if someone is late with their periods or has missed them completely.

Being prepared and knowing what to expect can help relieve stress and tension in the persons life.

Place the chart in a private place that is not seen by anyone else who is in the house. It is a good idea to place the chart in a place where the person can have access to it and look at it whenever they want to.

The codes on the chart are an idea only, you may want to use your own.

You can photocopy this chart as many times as you want to.

The period wheel.

The period wheel is another way to visually represent to the person how long before her period starts.

1. Cut out the two circles and join in the middle with a split pin so that the smaller circle spins inside the bigger circle.
2. The dots around the outside of the big circle represent days. There are forty in all.
3. If you know roughly how many days in the persons menstruation cycle then cut out the days not needed. (figure 1)
4. At the beginning of the persons cycle place a red dot, move the smaller wheel every day placing a red dot for the days of a period.
5. as you move the smaller wheel around you will be able to see roughly how many days to go until the persons period is due.(figure 2)

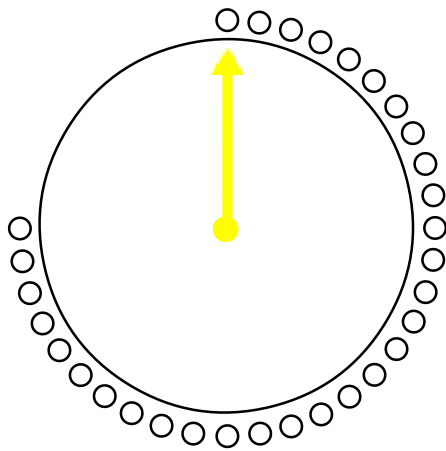


Figure 1

about three days to go
until the persons period
is due.

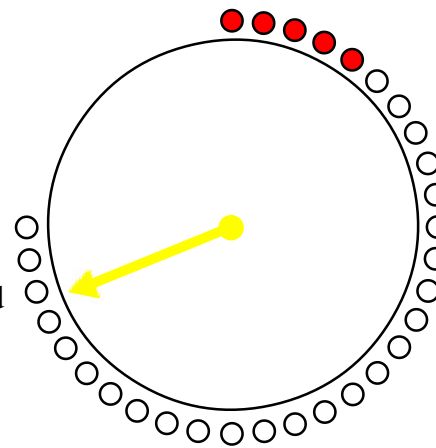


Figure 2

