



Navigating Your Period

A Comprehensive Guide For Teens

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Getting your first period is a significant milestone, and it's completely normal to feel a mix of emotions, ranging from fear and nervousness to excitement. Rest assured; it's a beautiful and natural occurrence that signifies your reproductive health.

In this guide, we will explore everything you need to know about your first period – what to expect and how to manage it comfortably. Remember, you are not alone in this experience, and we're here to provide you with accurate information, support, and guidance as you embark on this exciting and transformative phase of your life.



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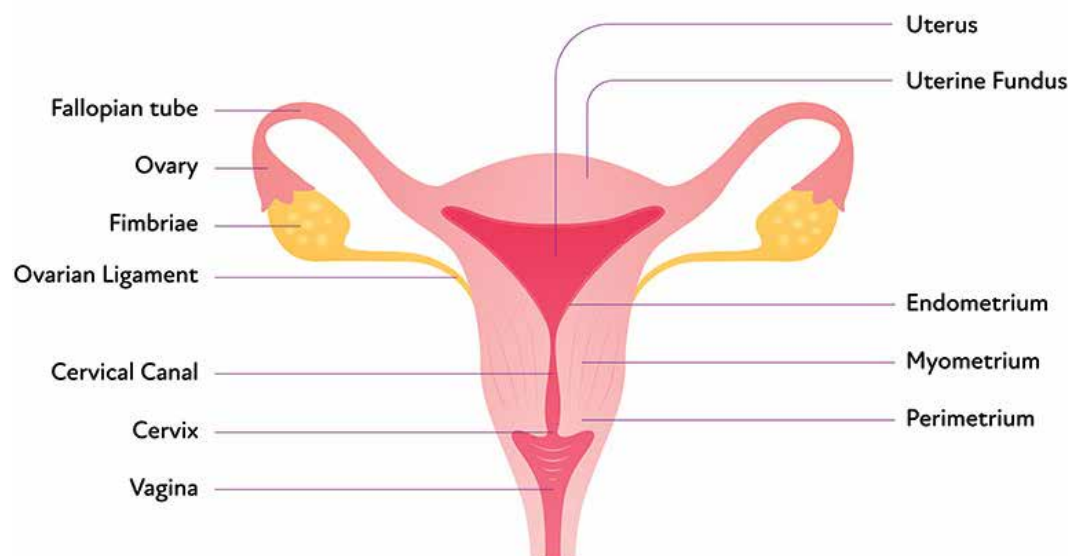
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WHAT IS A PERIOD?

A period, also known as menstruation, is when your body gets rid of the lining of your uterus, often called the 'womb.' The uterus is located in the lower abdomen and is like a home for a potential baby to grow.

During your period, blood and tissue from the uterus come out of your body through the vagina. The menstrual blood and tissue flow out through a small opening called the cervix, which connects the uterus to the vagina.

Uterus



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UNDERSTANDING THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

Your first period marks the start of your menstrual cycle. The menstrual cycle is a series of changes in a woman's body every month to prepare for the possibility of having a baby.

During the menstrual cycle, the ovaries (two small, oval-shaped organs in the lower abdomen on either side of the uterus) release estrogen and progesterone hormones. These hormones cause the lining of the uterus to build up, allowing it to implant an egg fertilized by sperm after sexual intercourse.

If an egg is not fertilized by sperm, these hormones drop significantly, and the uterus lining breaks down and bleeds. Then the process, or cycle, begins all over again. It takes about a month for the uterus to build up and shed, which is why most women get their periods every 28 to 32 days.

TERMS TO KNOW

Menstrual Cycle
The menstrual cycle is a monthly series of changes in a woman's body, preparing for potential pregnancy, involving stages like menstruation and ovulation, typically lasting around 28 days, but can vary.


Period
Menstruation, often referred to as a period, is the start of the menstrual cycle. If pregnancy doesn't occur after ovulation, the body discards the lining of the uterus, causing vaginal bleeding for about 3 to 7 days.

The Follicular Phase
Begins on the first day of your period, lasts for about 14 days, ends with ovulation. Hormones stimulate the production of follicles on the surface of an ovary. A follicle will mature into an egg, usually after day 10 of the cycle. The uterus lining thickens in preparation for pregnancy during this phase.

Ovulation
Ovulation typically occurs halfway through the cycle (around day 14 in a 28-day cycle). It involves the release of a mature egg from an ovary into the fallopian tube for potential fertilization. Ovulation lasts about 12-24 hours. Unfertilized eggs are shed during menstruation.


EXAMPLE OF A MENSTRUAL CYCLE

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
Period Start Beginning of New Cycle						
The Follicular Phase - Starts on the First Day of Your Period						
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
End of Previous Cycle						
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Ovulation						
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Ends in Ovulation						
28	29	30	31			
Period Start Beginning of New Cycle						
The Follicular Phase - Starts on the First Day of Your Period						
End of Cycle						




At Moreland OB-GYN, our goal is to be there as your go-to resource, helping to answer any and all questions you have about your body and your period.
Call us with any questions 262-544-4411


Feminine Hygiene Products to Consider




Menstrual Cups



Reusable Period Underwear



Pads (Sanitary Napkins)



Tampons

To download larger version [click here](#).

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What is ovulation and how does it relate to pregnancy?

Ovulation occurs about 14 days before the start of your next period. Ovulation is when the body releases an egg from the ovaries. This egg travels through a small tube called the fallopian tube to the uterus. If the egg meets a sperm and they join, it can lead to a baby (pregnancy). During pregnancy, you don't have your regular monthly period. But if sperm doesn't fertilize the egg, the uterus lining breaks down, and a new cycle begins, which means you'll have your period again.

Can a girl get pregnant as soon as her first period starts?

Yes, a girl can get pregnant as soon as her first period starts. In fact, it may even be possible for a girl to get pregnant right before her first period. Pregnancy before a first period is possible because the hormones that cause ovulation may already be active, preparing the uterine wall for pregnancy.

Have questions about your period, sexual intercourse, and pregnancy? Talking to a loved one about scheduling an appointment with a trusted gynecologist is a great place to start.

At Moreland OB-GYN, our team of caring providers is here to answer all your questions in a warm and caring environment. [Learn more about what to expect during your first gynecologist appointment here.](#)

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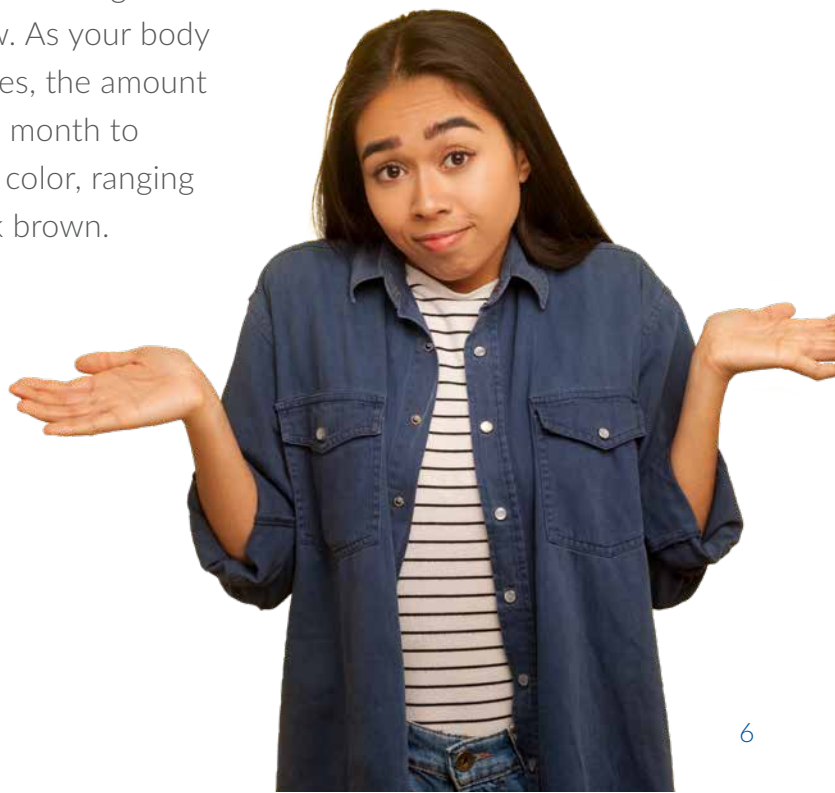
WHEN TO EXPECT YOUR FIRST PERIOD

Around 98% of girls usually get their first period between the ages of 9 and 15. But remember, everyone is different, so it's okay if you start earlier or later than that. It's important to know that everyone's body is unique, and your body will follow its own schedule.

A few signs to watch for may tell you your body is preparing for your first period. These include breast development, the growth of pubic hair, physical body changes like wider hips, and an increase in vaginal discharge. These changes typically start about two years before your first period.

What will the first period look like?

Everyone has their own experience with their first period. It might be lighter than future periods with a few spots of red or brown blood, or it could start suddenly with bright red blood and a heavy flow. As your body adjusts to these changes, the amount of blood can vary from month to month, and so can the color, ranging from bright red to dark brown.



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How to prepare for your first period

Getting your first period in public, like at school, on summer vacation with your friend's family, or even at the grocery store, can be a little scary. It's completely normal to feel nervous about this, as it's a new experience. However, being prepared can help calm your nerves and give you peace of mind.

One way to be prepared is to carry a small bag with essential supplies. You can keep a discreet pouch or bag in your backpack or purse that contains pads or tampons and a change of underwear. This way, if your period starts unexpectedly, you'll have everything you need to handle it confidently. Knowing that you have these supplies ready can help you feel more at ease and in control, even if your first period catches you by surprise.



Keep reading to learn about the different types of feminine hygiene products, what a normal period typically looks like, and common signs and symptoms!

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FEMININE HYGIENE PRODUCTS

There's a wide variety of feminine hygiene products on the market. Understanding how each product works and trying them out for yourself can help you choose what feels most comfortable.

Most girls use one or more of these feminine hygiene products:

- **Pads (or sanitary napkins)** — These are made of absorbent materials and are placed in the underwear to soak up menstrual blood. They come in various sizes and absorbency levels to accommodate different flow and comfort preferences. Most have adhesive on the back to keep them in place.

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- **Tampons** — Tampons are small bundles of absorbent material inserted into the vagina to absorb menstrual blood before it leaves the body. Most come with an applicator for easy insertion. Like pads, they also come in various sizes and absorbency levels.
- **Menstrual cups** — Menstrual cups are reusable, flexible cups inserted into the vagina to collect menstrual blood. They can hold more blood than other methods, meaning they can be left in for extended periods. Once full, they're removed, emptied, cleaned, and reinserted. While menstrual cups are an eco-friendly alternative to pads and tampons, they often require more practice to get the hang of using them.
- **Reusable period underwear** — Reusable period underwear is a simple approach to managing period flow. These look like regular underwear but are layered with highly absorbent materials that can last all day. Available for heavy, medium, and light flow days. Just throw them in the washer to clean.



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WHAT IS A NORMAL PERIOD?

A typical period usually lasts between 3 to 7 days, and the average menstrual cycle happens every 21 to 35 days. The flow might be heavier for the first couple of days and then get lighter, but it can differ for each person. Some girls have lighter periods, while others may have heavier periods. Although, on average, you can expect to lose about 4 to 12 teaspoons (20 to 60 milliliters) of blood during your entire period.

Over time, your periods and menstrual cycle might become more regular or somewhat irregular. They can be light or heavy, painful or pain-free, long or short. Remember that everyone's experience is unique, and as you become more familiar with your body, you'll start to notice what is considered a normal period for you.

It's also not uncommon to pass small blood clots, a mixture of blood cells and tissue, from the lining of your uterus. While this may be alarming when you first experience it, it's nothing to be concerned about and is completely normal.

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HORMONE & BODY CHANGES

Common Signs & Symptoms of Your Period

Your hormone levels will go up and down throughout your menstrual cycle, and you may experience physical and emotional changes as your period approaches each month. These changes are known as premenstrual syndrome (PMS).

Symptoms of PMS usually occur in the days leading up to the start of your period. While they can be uncomfortable, there are various ways to manage them, such as over-the-counter medications, heating packs, and regular exercise.

Here are some common symptoms and body changes associated with PMS:

- **Menstrual Cramps** — Painful sensations in the lower abdomen or back. They're caused by the uterus contracting (tightening) to shed its lining.
- **Bloating** — A feeling of fullness or swelling in the abdomen, often caused by hormonal changes that lead to fluid retention.
- **Lower Backaches** — Similar to menstrual cramps, lower backaches are caused by the contraction of the uterus and can range from mild to severe.
- **Mood Swings** — Hormonal changes can also affect your emotions, leading to sudden shifts in mood, and you may feel a little more on-edge, irritable, or notice you have less patience than usual.
- **Fatigue** — You might feel more tired or lack energy.

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- **Food Cravings or Appetite Changes** — You might find yourself wanting to eat more or craving certain types of food, especially sweet foods like chocolate.
- **Breast Tenderness** — Hormonal fluctuations can cause your breasts to feel sore or swollen.
- **Acne** — Some people may experience breakouts due to hormonal changes.

Experiencing PMS symptoms is entirely normal and a part of being a woman. Although, if these symptoms are so extreme they impact your life, such as debilitating pain and sadness, please talk to a loved one or your trusted doctor.



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How to manage PMS symptoms

Dealing with PMS symptoms can be challenging, but there are several ways you can manage these symptoms so you don't have to miss a beat:

- **Healthy Lifestyle** — Regular physical activity and a balanced diet can significantly reduce PMS symptoms. Exercise can help reduce bloating and improve your mood, while eating a diet rich in whole grains, lean proteins, fruits, and vegetables can keep your body nourished and better equipped to handle hormonal fluctuations.
- **Over-the-Counter Medications** — Non-prescription drugs like ibuprofen or Midol can help alleviate menstrual cramps and lower backaches.
- **Heat Therapy** — Applying a heating pad or hot water bottle to your lower abdomen can help relax the muscles and relieve menstrual cramps and lower backaches.
- **Rest and Relaxation** — Getting plenty of sleep and practicing stress-reducing activities, such as yoga, meditation, or deep breathing exercises, can help manage mood swings and reduce fatigue.
- **Stay Hydrated** — Drinking plenty of water can help reduce bloating and prevent dehydration, which can often exacerbate feelings of fatigue and discomfort.
- **Consult a Healthcare Professional** — If your PMS symptoms are severe and interfere with your daily life, it's important to seek advice from a healthcare professional. They can provide further treatment options and guidance.

Did you know stretching and yoga are great ways to ease painful menstrual cramps? [Take a look at our blog to learn 5 key yoga poses you can try to kick menstrual cramps to the curb!](#)

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IMPORTANCE OF TRACKING YOUR PERIOD

Tracking your period is a helpful way to understand your body and prepare for your menstrual cycle. It can help you predict when your period will start, identify any irregularities, and get to know your unique cycle better.

To start tracking your period, you can use a calendar, a period-tracking app on your phone, or even a special period-tracker journal. You can choose which specific details to include in your tracker based on what you find most helpful and informative.

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Below are some ideas to get you started!

- Start date of your period (first day of bleeding)
- End date of your period (last day of bleeding)
- Duration of your period (number of days it lasts)
- Flow intensity (light, medium, heavy)
- Any symptoms experienced during your period (cramps, bloating, mood changes, etc.)
- Notes or comments about your period (any irregularities, changes, or observations)
- Use of menstrual products (pads, tampons, menstrual cups, etc.)

Remember, it's normal for periods to be irregular when you first start menstruating. Your cycle might take a few months or even a couple of years to become more regular. However, if you notice significant changes or irregularities, such as missing periods for several months or having very heavy or painful periods that are debilitating, it's a good idea to talk to a trusted adult or healthcare provider for guidance.

Don't let your period keep you from having summer fun. [Dive into our blog post to learn more about swimming with your period \(yes, it's possible\)!](#)

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CONDITIONS THAT MAY AFFECT A WOMAN'S PERIOD

When it comes to your menstrual health, knowledge is power. Taking the time to learn about certain conditions and lifestyle changes that can affect your period is a great way to identify if something is wrong if you notice changes that are not normal to you.

These conditions and lifestyle changes include:

- **Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)**: A hormonal disorder that can cause irregular or missed periods. Other symptoms of PCOS can include acne, weight gain despite a healthy diet, and excessive hair growth.
- **Endometriosis**: A condition where tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside of it, causing pain and discomfort. This condition is like having tiny bits of the uterus in places where they shouldn't be, and it can make periods more painful and sometimes affect fertility later in life.



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- **Stress:** Whether from school, relationships, or other factors, stress can sometimes lead to irregular or missed periods. If you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed, reach out to a loved one or your doctor to discuss lifestyle changes that can help support a calm mind and body.
- **Extreme Exercise:** Excessive exercise and intense physical activity, like high school sports, can sometimes lead to irregular or missed periods. Maintaining a balance and listening to your body if it needs rest is important.
- **Weight Changes:** Being underweight or having low body fat may cause your periods to become irregular or stop temporarily. On the other hand, being overweight can also lead to hormonal changes and irregular periods. [Eating a healthy diet](#) rich in vitamins, listening to your hunger cues, and moving your body in a way that feels good is the best way to maintain a healthy weight.

**Learn everything you need to know about menstrual
cycle problems [here!](#)**



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PERIOD BEST CARE PRACTICES

Below are some [best care practices](#) to keep your vagina and its surrounding skin (vulva) happy during your period:

- Change your hygiene product every few hours to maintain cleanliness and avoid infection. Pack enough hygiene products in your school bag or leave extra in your locker so you always have one on hand!
- Avoid using feminine hygiene products with an added perfume or fragrance as they are unnecessary, and the added chemicals can irritate the vagina and vulva.
- Only use lukewarm water to wash your genital area, and stay away from any products that say your vagina should smell like “flowers.” Your vagina has a very complex ecosystem, and this comes with many [different smells or odors](#) that you may notice changes throughout your menstrual cycle — this is completely normal! Using these types of products to cover up a perfectly normal smell will only lead to irritation and infections.

Talk to a loved one or doctor if you notice a strong fishy or rotten odor. No need to be alarmed, but this could mean you have a vaginal infection that needs to be treated.

Want to learn more about your vagina and vulva and get more tips on best care practices? [Click here!](#)

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UNDERSTANDING BIRTH CONTROL OPTIONS

It's important to remember that getting your first period means you are now at the age where you can get pregnant, and it's a good time to start educating yourself on sexual health and birth control options.

There are many non-hormonal and hormonal birth control options. Talking with someone you trust or your healthcare provider if you are considering having sexual intercourse is a great way to learn about pregnancy prevention and choose the best birth control option for your body and lifestyle.

Birth control can help prevent pregnancy, and hormonal birth control, such as the hormonal pill, can also help [manage conditions associated with irregular periods](#), such as [polycystic ovary syndrome \(PCOS\)](#) and [endometriosis](#). These hormonal methods regulate hormone levels in the body, which control the timing and flow of periods and help ease debilitating PMS symptoms like painful cramping and extreme mood swings.

**Have birth control questions?
We have the answers.**

[Read our complete birth control guide](#) for a comprehensive overview of non-hormonal and hormonal birth control options.

[Download the Guide Now!](#)



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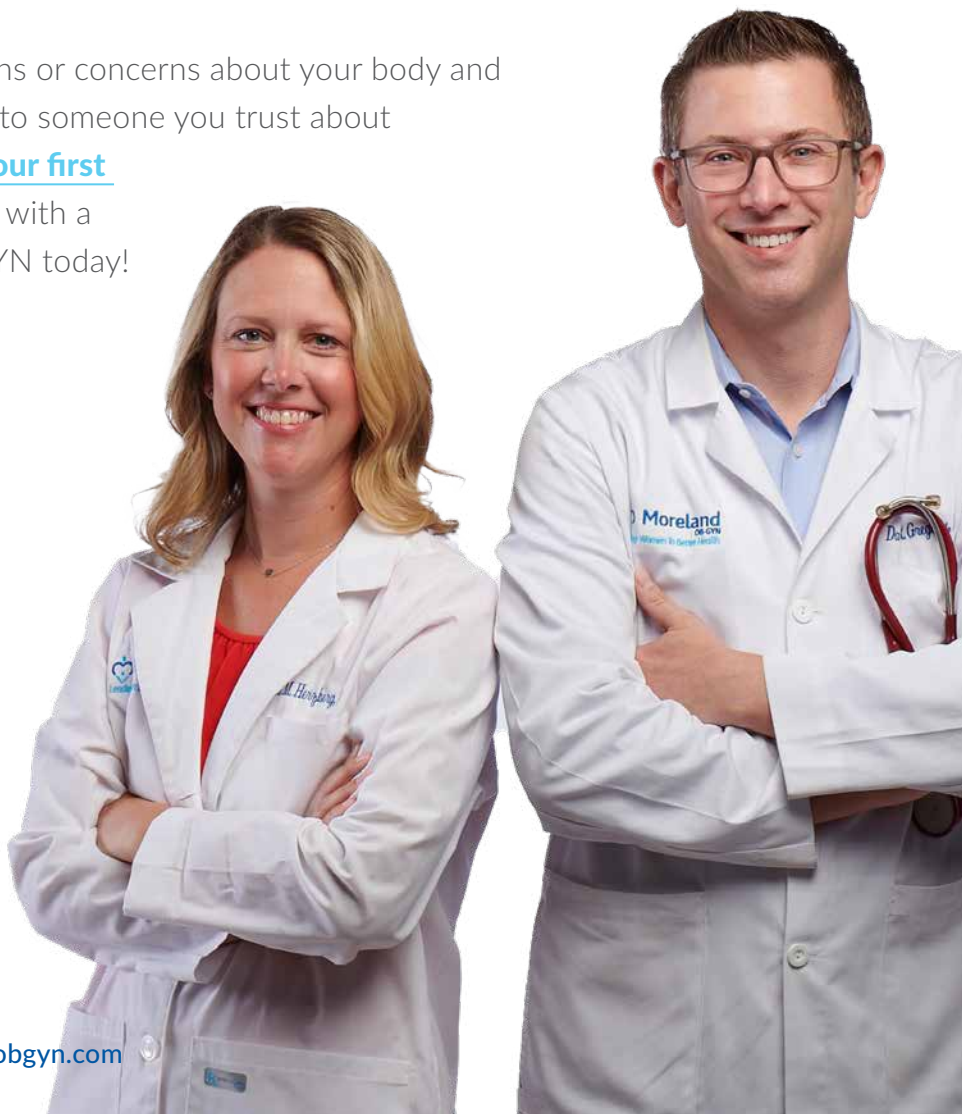
Scheduling Your First OBGYN Appointment

Your period is a natural and beautiful part of life, and it shouldn't hold you back and hinder your ability to exercise, have fun, and enjoy life to the fullest. While it may be a little scary at first, it won't take long until you adjust to getting your periods every month. You'll become a pro on your body and period in no time!

A woman's first OB-GYN appointment is at age 18. Your pediatrician can answer any concerns about your period leading up to this age. Although, you may be referred to a gynecologist at an earlier age for further evaluation.

When the time comes for your first gynecologist appointment, the [team of caring providers](#) at [Moreland OB-GYN](#) will always welcome you with a smile and are happy to help you navigate your journey into womanhood.

Have questions or concerns about your body and periods? Talk to someone you trust about [scheduling your first appointment](#) with a trusted OBGYN today!

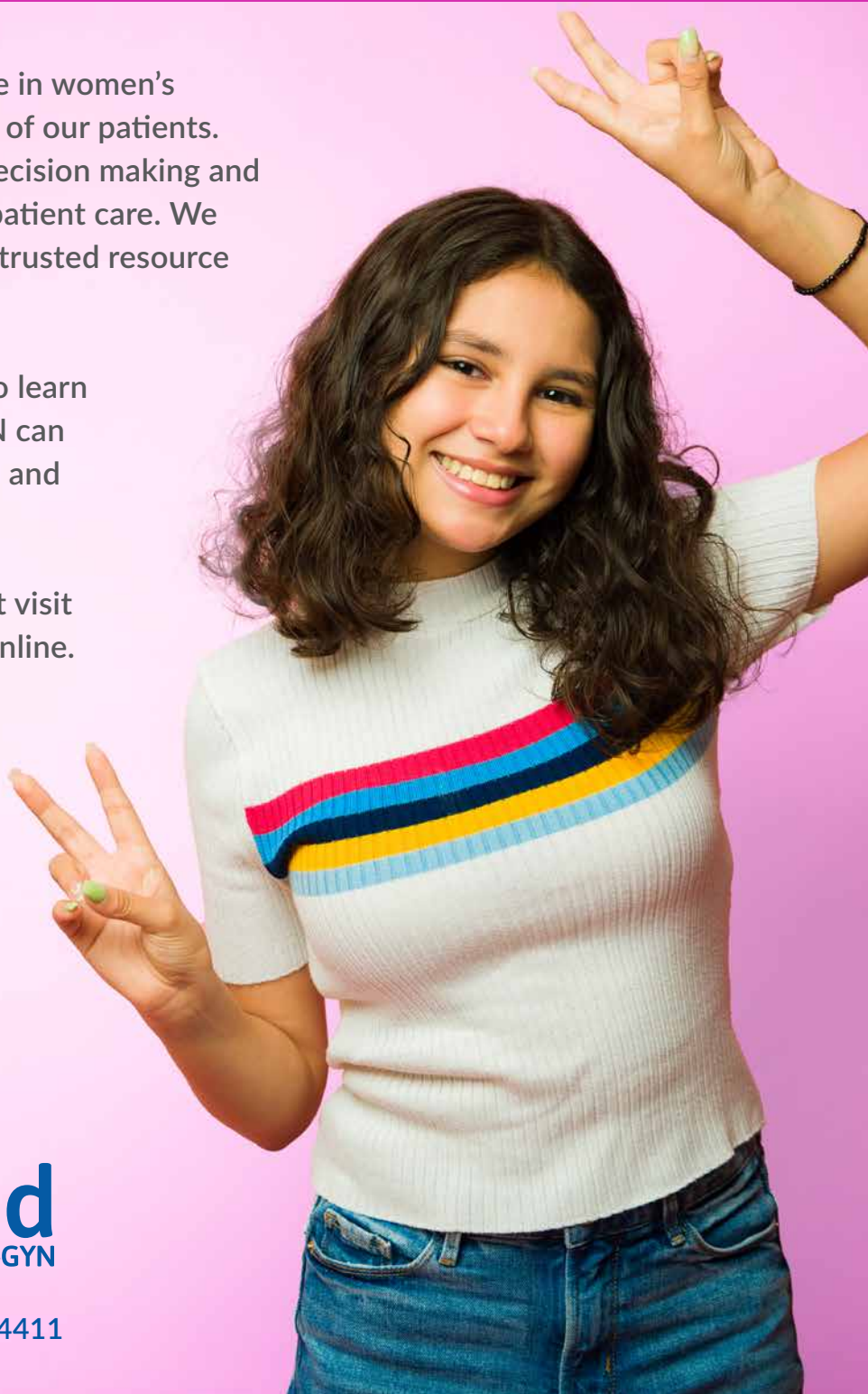


HELPING YOU LIVE YOUR BEST AND HEALTHIEST LIFE

At Moreland OB-GYN, we specialize in women's health care and prioritize the needs of our patients. We believe in the value of shared decision making and taking a collaborative approach to patient care. We hope you'll turn to our experts as a trusted resource for information and support.

Use the [resources](#) on our website to learn more about how Moreland OB-GYN can help you take control of your health and feel the best in your body.

Making an appointment is easy. Just visit our [request an appointment page](#) online. Or call 262-544-4411 and one of our patient representatives will be happy to schedule your appointment.



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