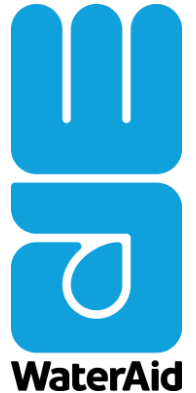


Let's talk about periods

A set of activities about periods for
Key Stage 2 and 3 based on Jaqueline
Wilson's *PERiod Excuses* animation

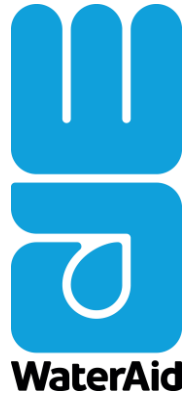
PERiod Excuses



Contents

1. WaterAid and periods
2. Learning about periods
3. Overview of sessions
4. Objectives and key words
5. Activities
6. Real period stories from around the world

PERIOD Excuses



1. WaterAid and periods

PERIOD EXCUSES

Every day, millions of women have their period, yet in most parts of the world it is still considered embarrassing and taboo. This secrecy makes it much more difficult for women and girls to get the help and support they need to manage their periods hygienically and with dignity – particularly for the one in three women around the world who have no access to a decent toilet. As a result, when girls are on their period, they often stay at home and miss out on an education altogether.

WaterAid is working to ensure that all girls have access to the decent toilets, clean water, information and support needed to manage their periods with dignity, so they can stay in school and achieve their dreams and aspirations. When a community gets clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene, it's girls and women whose lives can change the most.

2. Learning about periods

PERIOD Excuses

Young people are powerful agents of change and are vital in helping us break the taboo and stigma linked to periods. By giving young people a voice and empowering them to speak out on issues which traditionally are seen as taboo, they can be the change needed. But periods are not just a problem in the developing world.

The taboo around periods is still very much alive in the UK which is why we're thrilled that periods are now officially part of the National Curriculum in England and Wales. This will help break the stigma, mystery and taboos linked to periods, by encouraging everyone, everywhere to get talking about periods.

We can also help you bring your sessions to life with a free WaterAid speaker – online or in person - to help get the conversation about periods here and around the world flowing by visiting:

<https://www.wateraid.org/uk/request-a-speaker>

3. Overview of sessions

PEriod Excuses

This resource is made up of Jacqueline Wilson's Period Excuses animation as the core stimulus, and a set of accompanying activities to draw out your students knowledge and understanding about periods. The activities aim to get everyone talking openly and learning from each other, creating a safe space and open dialogue.

Suggested pathway through the pack

- 1. Watch the animation:** Introduce the lesson by showing the [PEriod Excuses animation](#) by Jacqueline Wilson to help start the conversation about periods.
- 2. Complete the activities:** Delve deeper into conversations about periods with the accompanying activities included in this pack. You can opt to do them all or to mix and match the ones that best suit your class.
- 3. Create your own storyboard:** Students can help keep the period conversation going by creating their own 'what happens next' storyboard based on the Period Excuses animation they watched at the start of the session. They can apply what they've learnt about periods and create their own story with the characters Tallulah, Sadie and Jess.

Session resources: PowerPoint presentation, activities sheets, storyboard template.
Curriculum links [p31](#)

4. Objectives and key words

PEriod Excuses

Objectives

1. To identify myths about periods
2. To explain the facts about periods
3. To create your own 'what happens next' storyboard for the PEriod Excuses animation

Key words

Periods

Myths

Taboo

Tampon

Period pads

Symptoms

Cups

Alleviate

Pain relief

5. Activities:

- a. Lets get talking!
- b. Talking lines
- c. Myth busting
- d. Is that a fact
- e. What do we know about periods
- f. What happens when you have your period?
- g. What happens next?
- h. Real period stories from around the world

a. Let's get talking!

Time needed:

Approx. 20 minutes

What you'll need:

2 large sheets of paper:
one headed 'open' and
the other with 'private'

Sticky notes

Blue tac

Shoe box or container
labelled with 'Period
Knowledge Box'

PERIOD Excuses

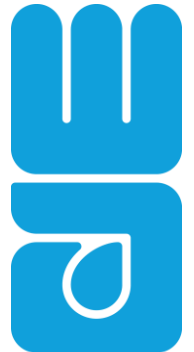
Aim of the activity

To get thinking about how we and others feel about talking about periods.

Objectives

To consider reasons why people feel uncomfortable talking about periods.

To think about why it is a good idea to talk about periods openly.



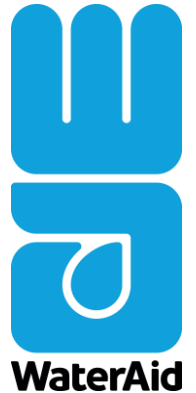
WaterAid

Let's get
talking!

PERIOD Excuses

What to do

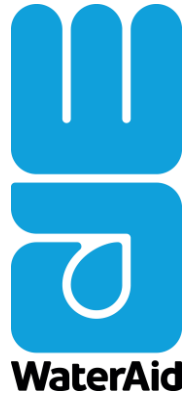
1. Write the following two headings onto each large sheet of paper: 'Open' and 'Private'. Stick these onto the wall in opposite ends of the room.
2. Explain that they will be doing an activity about things we are happy to talk openly about, such as the weather, and things that we might only talk about in private, such as our feelings about people. Emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers.
3. Split the group in two. One team will be trying to come up with open topics and the other team will think about private topics. Ask each group to stand in a line behind each other, facing either the paper marked 'open' or the paper marked 'private'.



Let's get talking!

PERIOD Excuses

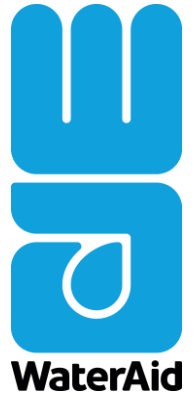
4. The students will take part in a relay race. The person at the front approaches the paper and writes something they think is an open or private topic (depending which group they are in). The next student in the line can only go to the paper once the first person has returned to the back of the line. The teams will have 2 minutes to write as many examples on the paper stuck to the wall as they can.
5. Bring the group back together, and looking at the sheet marked 'open', ask them to explain why this is so. They could think about how they feel talking about these topics and why. For example, comfortable, happy and so on.
6. Move on to look at the 'private' topics. How would they feel talking about these topics openly? For example, embarrassed, uncomfortable and so on. Ask them why they feel this way? For example, because no one talks about them usually, or they are embarrassing topics that they would only talk about with someone they trust.



Let's get talking!

PERIOD Excuses

7. If the topic of periods hasn't already come up, write 'periods' onto a sticky note and hold it up for the group to see. Ask them to decide under which heading they would place the sticky note to match how they feel about talking about periods. Ask for reasons.
8. Ask what they think these observations tell us about talking about periods? Explain that in general, periods are usually not talked about openly. People may find talking about periods difficult depending on where they are and who they are talking to. Girls may prefer to talk about periods to other girls privately, or they may find talking to boys about periods slightly awkward.
9. Can they think of any reasons for why it might be a good idea to talk about periods openly? Explain that if it is not talked about openly, the wrong information may be given which could affect your health or lead to not knowing what a period is, or what to do when they start. Periods should be talked about openly because it's nothing to be ashamed or embarrassed about. It's a natural change that happens.



Let's get talking!

PERIOD Excuses

10. Period knowledge box - explain that throughout their lessons about periods, they can post questions they may have about periods into the 'period box'. After each activity you can open the period knowledge box, read out the question and see if it can be answered by yourself or the class. If there is uncertainty on the answer, they could look it as homework. You can encourage students to bring in questions from home if they wish prior to the lesson.
11. You could bring the period knowledge box to the next few lessons if there is time, to allow students to post questions. Open the box at the end of the lesson to see if the class can answer the questions. If there are any questions which arise which you don't know the answer to, you don't need to have all the answers, and definitely not straight away!

You could suggest that students look the information up on the NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/periods/>.



b. Talking lines

Time needed:

15 minutes

What you'll need:

Conversation topics – the conversation topics should be printed / copied and put onto cards or slips of paper. There should be enough to hand out to half of the group. You may need more than one set depending on the size of the group.

Aim of the activity

To create a safe place to talk openly about periods.

To get everyone started on talking about periods.

Objectives

To begin to talk openly about periods openly to understand what is happening and why.

To be able to make choices about how best to manage periods.

PERIOD Excuses



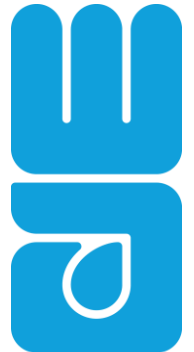
Talking lines

PERIOD Excuses

What to do

Make sure that students don't feel pressured to talk about personal experiences, but they are welcome to if they want to.

1. Ask the class what would need to happen to make them feel comfortable when they are talking about periods (especially as it is about a sensitive topic). They should share their suggestions to be written up. These could include 'listening without interrupting', 'being respectful of other people's ideas and thoughts', 'not being judgemental' and so on.
2. Give out the conversation topic cards to half of the class. They should stand in two lines facing each other. On one side should be all the students with the conversation topics. Give them a few moments to think about how to start the conversation then give them one minute to speak to the person opposite about the topic on their card.



WaterAid

Talking lines

PERIOD Excuses

3. After the minute is over, ask the line of students with the topic cards to move down one place, with the student on the end of the line moving to the front of the line. They should all be in front of someone new. This time they should give their card to the student opposite so that they can start the conversation. Give them one minute again.
4. When they have finished ask the following questions:
 - How did it feel?
 - Do they think it's a good idea to talk about periods openly or not? Why? Explain that periods are something that you should be able to talk about openly, because it's nothing to be ashamed or embarrassed about. It's a natural change that happens in our bodies.
 - How did they feel about starting the conversation? What kind of things did they say to get started?



Talking lines

PERIOD Excuses

5. Explain that often the more you talk about something, the easier it gets but it can be nerve wracking at first. Ask them to share some of the things they talked about in their conversations.

Conversation topics

Who would you be happy to discuss starting your period with?

How do you think you would feel / did you feel when you started your period? Excited, embarrassed, proud, relieved, sad...? What would make you feel this way?

Do we need to become more open talking about periods?

Do you think it's a good idea to talk about periods openly or not?
Explain your reasons

If you want to find out about periods, where would you look? Who would you ask?



c. Myth busting

Time needed:
15 minutes

What you'll need:
Myth statements

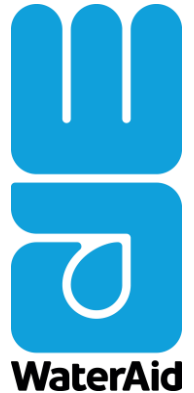
PERIOD EXCUSES

Aim of the activity

To understand that due to periods being a taboo subject, people are often misinformed and myths are created.

Objectives

To bust myths associated with periods.

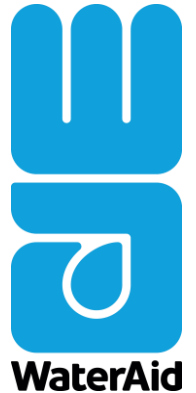


Myth busting

What to do

1. Ask what is meant by the word 'myth'? Explain that myths are stories that are often widely believed but are not true. Ask if they know of any myths – the Loch Ness Monster for example.
2. Explain that sometimes it is not clear whether something that is believed is a myth or a fact. There are lots of myths about periods because it is a taboo subject. As people will not speak openly about periods, myths are easily created and believed. Sometimes these myths can be bad for your health, or prevent you from doing what you need or want to do when you are on your period.
3. Split the class into pairs or small groups and give each one a statement (below). They should take turns to act out the statement to the rest of the group. So for example if the card read 'do no exercise' girls could pretend to do sport and then stop and shake their heads. The rest of the class should stand up if they think it is a myth, or sit down if they think it is a fact. Tell them the correct answer for each one.

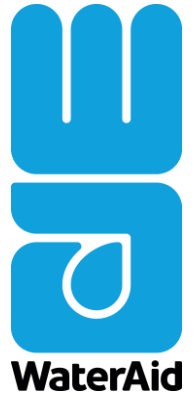
PERIOD EXCUSES



Myth busting

PERIOD Excuses

4. Have a discussion about what they think about the myths they have just heard and whether they know of any myths themselves. What could they do to help with busting these myths? How might talking openly about periods help with this?
5. Explain that by speaking up about periods and busting myths, women and girls can continue to have full and happy lives when they are on their period. Tell the class that myths about periods are common all over the world which is why it's important to talk about periods so that everyone has the right information to deal with them.
6. Ask the class what they have learnt from the stories and what they think they could do to bust period myths in this country? They could come up with some ideas and dedicate a future lesson to putting them into action to become period myth busters in the UK.



Myth busting

PERIOD Excuses

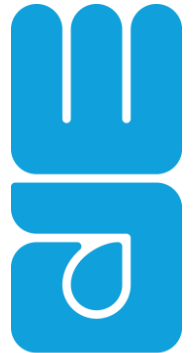
Myth or Fact statements with answers

You should not take part in sport when you are on your period.

MYTH – In the past, periods were treated like an illness and women and girls were expected to rest and not take part in strenuous or physical activities. This is not true as periods are a natural body function. In fact, taking part in sport can sometimes help relieve period pain.

You should not take a bath when you are on your period. **MYTH**

– Some people believe that by taking a bath when you are on your period, you could become infertile. This means that you could end up not being able to have children. However, this is not true. In fact it's really important to wash and keep clean when you are on your period as it can help avoid any infections. Baths can also help ease any pain.



WaterAid

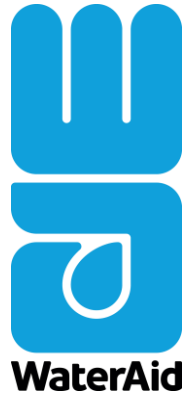
Myth busting

PERIOD Excuses

You are not clean when you are on your period. MYTH – Some people believe that periods are dirty and so when you are on your period you should be kept away from special places such as churches, mosques or even school. Periods are a perfectly natural bodily function. As long as you are washing yourself and your hands, and changing your pad or tampon regularly, you will remain clean and healthy and cannot spread disease or germs to anyone.

You should not wear trousers when you are on your period. MYTH – What you wear when you're on your period is entirely up to you. As long as you're comfortable then it's fine to wear trousers.

You can contaminate food when you are on your period, so you should not cook or prepare food. MYTH – Periods are natural and as long as you wash your hands and remain clean and healthy, you cannot contaminate or spread disease or illness through handling food.

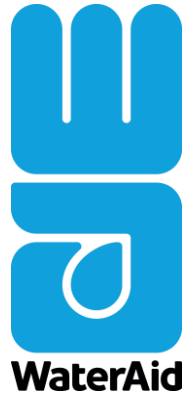


Myth busting

PERIOD Excuses

You can make men and boys sick if you are in close contact with them when you are on your period. MYTH – Periods are not an illness. You may feel under the weather, but this cannot be spread from person to person.

Remind the class that if they have any questions about anything to do with periods, they can post them into the period knowledge box. Set some time aside to answer the questions, or set them as a fact finding mission for homework.



d. Is that a fact?

Time needed:
15 minutes

What you'll need:
The 'true or false' quiz

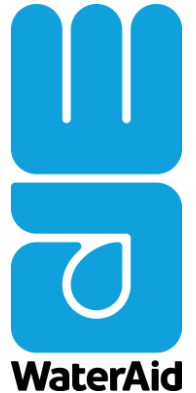
PERIOD EXCUSES

Aim of the activity

To introduce facts about periods that the group may not have thought of before.

Objectives

To check period knowledge to make sure that students are well informed without feeling embarrassed

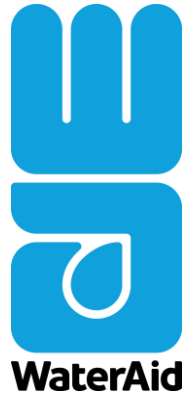


Is that a fact?

PERIOD Excuses

What to do

1. Explain that they are going to take part in a true or false quiz about periods. This will make sure that they have the right information they need to deal with periods or help others. If they think a statement is true, they should move to one end of the room and if they think a statement is false, they move to the opposite end of the room. If they are not sure or neutral, they should stand in the middle.
2. Read out the statements below. After they have chosen what they think the answer is, give the correct answer and accompanying information.
3. When you complete the quiz, ask if there were any facts that they found particularly surprising or shocking. Ask which ones and why. To end the activity, explain to the group that knowing about periods can help them prepare if they or their friends / siblings have periods, and help them understand that periods are normal, not something to be ashamed of.



Is that a fact?

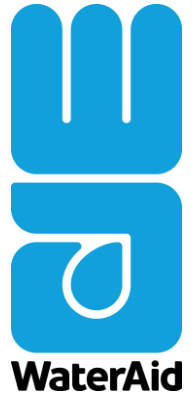
PERIOD EXCUSES

True or False quiz

Usually periods last for around two weeks. FALSE – A period usually lasts between 2-7 days.

Some women and girls bleed more than others. TRUE – Everyone's body is different, which means that the amount of bleeding varies according to the individual.

Periods occur every month, at around the same date. TRUE – The menstrual cycle (the time between each period) is usually around 21 – 35 days long. It varies between individuals. This means that periods are usually around the same time every month.



Is that a fact?

PERIOD EXCUSES

You can only buy period products from a chemist. FALSE –

Products such as period pads, cups and tampons are available from many places including newsagents, corner shops, chemists, supermarkets and even vending machines.

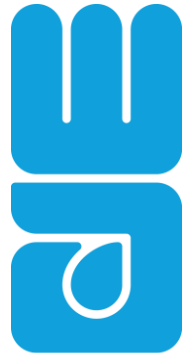
You could ask where else they think period products should be available from and who should be able to access these.

Every girl starts their first period at the age of 12. FALSE –

Periods can start from the age of 8 to around 16. Everyone is different and starts at different ages.

You should flush pads (or period towels) and tampons down the toilet. FALSE –

Period products should never be flushed down the toilet as they can cause blockages in pipes leading to sewers flooding, and sewage spilling into rivers and streams polluting them. It can even cause sewage overflowing from blocked pipes up through your toilet! Products should be wrapped up and put in a bin or placed into a period bin where available.



WaterAid

Is that a fact?

PERIOD Excuses

The flow (how much blood there is) of a period can change. TRUE

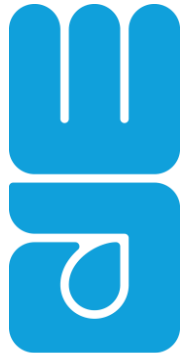
– The flow of periods will change. The first few days may be heavier than the last few days. Different products help to deal with the flow.

Sometimes periods can cause tummy aches and cramps. TRUE –

Many women and girls experience cramps and pain before and during their period. Medicine or tablets can be used for pain, or a hot water bottle can help.

Once periods start, they last for the rest of your life. FALSE –

Periods go on until around the ages of 40 – 60.



WaterAid

Is that a fact?

PERIOD Excuses

Some girls end up missing school because they cannot afford to buy period products or cannot access them. TRUE – Unfortunately some girls are unable to afford products such as pads, tampons, period pants or re-usable cups. This means that they have to use whatever they have available instead, such as tissue or even socks. Many end up not going to school when they are on their period as they are worried that their period may soak through their clothes. This happens here in the UK and in many communities all over the world where girls do not have access to what they need. This is called 'period poverty'.

Ask the class how they feel about this fact? What do they think could or should be done?



e. What do we know about periods?

Time needed
15 minutes

What you'll need
Images of period products e.g. pads, tampons, cups (or the actual products if you can't print them).

Copies of the questions about each product

Blue tac

PERIOD Excuses

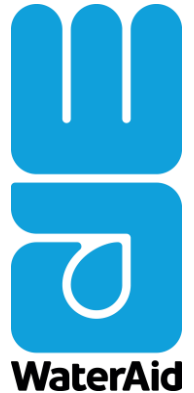
Aim of the activity

To ensure that everyone in the class has a shared understanding of periods.

To build up knowledge about periods and how to manage them.

Objectives

The opportunity to share your knowledge about periods and period products and learn from others about things students may not already know.



What do we know about periods?

PERIOD Excuses

What to do

1. Remind the students that throughout this lesson, they can post questions into the 'period box'
2. Split the class into small groups. Provide each group with one of the images of period products. Give the groups 5 minutes to create a short (1 minute) presentation to explain the period product they have to an alien from another planet who wouldn't know a thing about it. Display the following questions on the wall for inspiration on what they'll need to cover:

What is the item in the picture?

Where can it be found?

What might it be used for?

How is it used?

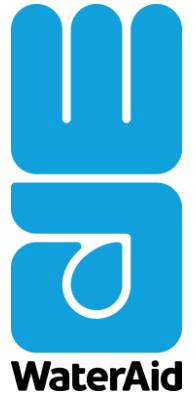
Have they seen it before? Where?



What do we know about periods?

PERIOD Excuses

3. Give the groups one minute each to present their presentation to the class.
4. Ask the students if they have any questions. They can either ask them or put them in the period box.
5. Explain that by having as much knowledge as possible about period products, girls can be prepared for their own periods, but also be able to help others who may have questions.



f. What happens when you have a period?

Time needed:
15 minutes

What you'll need:
Period symptom relief cards printed / copied and cut out.

PERIOD Excuses

Aim of the activity

To find out what happens before and after a period arrives.

To discover and share ways of dealing with symptoms before and during periods.

Objectives

To discuss and learn ways to deal with some of the symptoms experienced before and during a period.



What happens when you have a period?

PERIOD Excuses

What to do

1. Ask the students if they know what sort of symptoms may be experienced before and during a period. If you have periods, you could let them know any symptoms you experience when if you are willing to share or girls may want to share their own experiences with the class. Write up the symptoms on the board. These may include:

Develop spots

Tummy ache

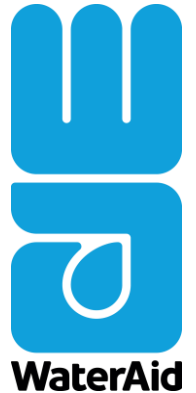
Feeling tired

Headache

Feeling emotional

Feeling irritable

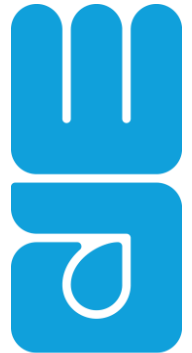
Feeling uncomfortable



What happens when you have a period?

PERIOD Excuses

2. Explain to the class that all these symptoms are normal. Some will experience all of the symptoms, some a few and others none.
3. Stick the period symptom relief cards up on the walls around the room. Read out each symptom and ask students to move in front of the relief cards that they think might help relieve the symptoms. Remind them that there may be more than one right answer and not everyone has to agree. There may be more than one answer for each. They can also call out their own ideas. If moving around the room is not possible, display each of the cards for the class to see or do the activity in pairs.



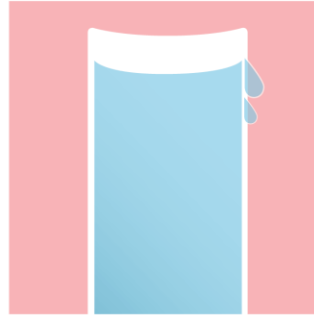
WaterAid

What happens when you have a period?

PERIOD EXCUSES

Period symptom relief cards 1

Left to right – hot water bottle, do some exercise, drink water, lay down, sleep, rub tummy



What happens when you have a period?

PERIOD Excuses

Period symptom relief cards 2

From left to right – eat a nice meal, have back rub, hot drink, talk to someone, mindfulness exercises, listen to music



g. What happens next?

Time needed:
30 minutes

What you'll need:

Access to the PEriod Excuses animation

Storyboard templates printed onto A3 paper.

PEriod Excuses

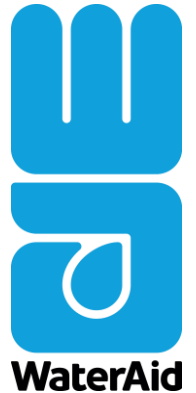
Aim of the activity

To use knowledge gained about periods to decide what happens next in the PEriod Excuses animation.

Objectives

To create a storyboard to continue the PEriod excuses animation.

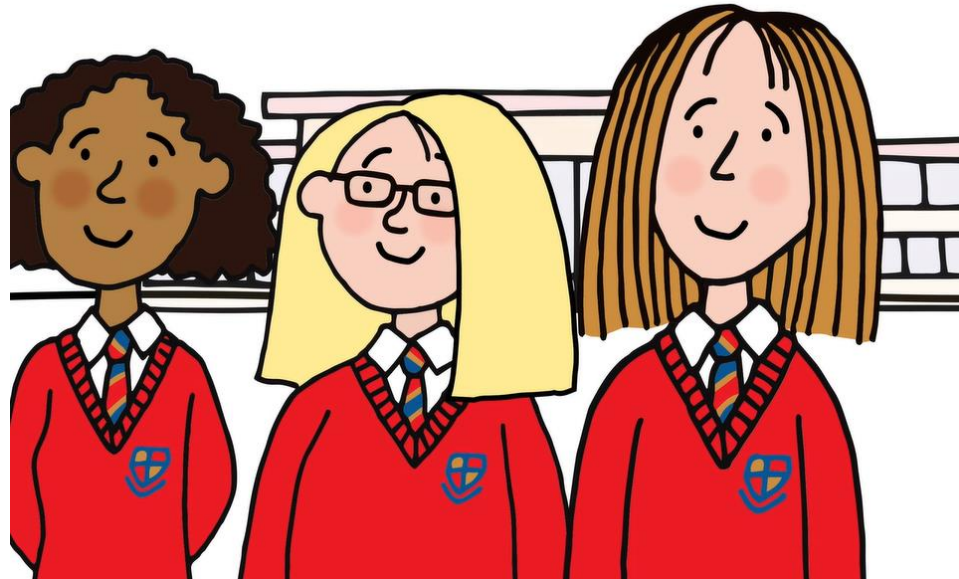
To consolidate and recap learning about periods.



What
happens
next?

PERIOD EXCUSES

1. Click the image below to watch the animation



What happens next?

PERiod Excuses

2. Using what they have learnt about periods, students should decide what happens next to Telulah, Sadie and Jess in the [Period Excuses story](#).

They should draw and explain their story using the storyboard template provided below. Print the templates onto A3 paper.

Remember! We want to get people talking about periods, so the story needs to be period themed.

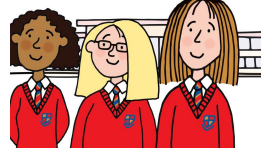
Plenary

3. Read out the real period stories from around the world, to understand why WaterAid work to ensure women and girls have access to decent toilets to manage their periods.

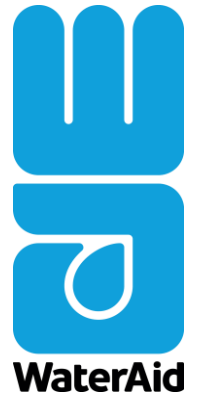


PEriod Excuses

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h. Real period stories from around the world



Period poverty is not just about having the money to buy period products. For some girls across the world, they don't have some of the basic facilities such as clean water and toilets to enable them to manage their periods hygienically and take part in everyday activities.

Bina (far left) is 15 years old and lives in a village in Mozambique. Her school doesn't have access to clean water and decent toilets which makes it difficult for her to manage her period. Due to this, she ends up having to stay at home when she is on her period so she misses out on lessons every month. Can you imagine how difficult it would be to manage your period if you didn't have clean water or a toilet? Here she talks about how having a decent toilet at home (a latrine) has made life much easier when she has her period, but not having toilets at school means she has to miss out on her education which could affect her chances of achieving her ambition.

"I leave home at 6 and I arrive at school at around 7. Maths is my favourite subject - I like doing sums. I'd like to be a teacher when I'm older. I now have a latrine at home. Before we built the latrine I had to go to the toilet under a tree. I like my new latrine because it helps us to stay healthy and avoid diseases. When we used to go to the toilet under the tree, chickens would walk through all the waste and it would spread germs everywhere making us sick. I learnt about washing my hands at home - my mum taught me. They also teach us about hygiene at school. I have to go home when it is my period. I end up missing class. I have to stay home four days every month. I feel bad staying at home but I don't have a choice as there is no water at school, so I can't change my cloths or wash my hands. It is the same for my friends. I'll be so happy when there is a new school toilet block. The new block will have everything girls need to manage their period. I will no longer have to miss lessons. I am really looking forward to it."

Ritah



At this school in a village in Uganda, an inspiring group of students are working with the charity WaterAid to help transform people's lives. WaterAid helped to build a latrine block at the school and taught the students about good hygiene as well as how to make reusable period pads and how to manage their periods. The students formed a hygiene club, and shared the lessons with their families and community so that everyone could benefit from improvements in health, education and wellbeing. Ritah, pictured in the middle, is a hygiene leader and works at the school. She is also a former pupil of the school.

“When I went to this school, we didn't have a hygiene club and girls missing school due to their periods was a problem. There would be up to five girls absent from school each day. Before the new latrine block was built, we would have to go to the toilet outside in the open. This made it very to deal with our periods.

Now we have the hygiene club, things have changed. We talk about periods openly, and I have taught students how to make pads. Parents no longer have to worry about not being able to buy period towels, so this has really helped them. We teach boys and girls together, so they learn more. If you separate them, then boys don't have the chance to learn about periods.

Another change the hygiene club has brought to their community has been washing hands. The children have taught their parents how to wash their hands properly, and how to use and build latrines. As well as the toilet block, we also have taps to keep the children clean and healthy, and help girls who are on their period deal with it comfortably. The changes have been amazing. Parents really wish for their children to go and stay at school, instead of not being able to finish their education.”

PERiod Excuses

