All About Menstruation
It's so nice to have you home, sister. You must be tired from your trip – would you like some water?

Yes, please!
Oh, Mya Mya! There is some blood on your longyi.

Oh no! My period must have started early... how embarrassing!

Don’t be embarrassed! Menstruation is a normal and healthy part of all women’s lives.

I guess so... but I am always so worried I will ruin my longyi. This one is brand new too!

Do you use pads or tampons?

No, I just usually wear an extra longyi. Don’t you?
I use pads and tampons now. They make my period much more manageable. Let me show you.

This is a monthly pad. You put it in your underwear and it collects the menstrual blood and keeps your longyi from getting stained. You just need to change it after 4-6 hours.

How do you change it? I peel it out, wrap it up like this, and throw it in the garbage.
This is a tampon. They are still new to Myanmar and not widely available yet, so it’s no wonder you haven’t heard of them!

A tampon is a soft cotton tube. You insert it in your vagina to absorb menstrual blood so it doesn’t stain your underwear. You just have to make sure you change it at least every 4-6 hours, or else you might get an infection if you leave it in for longer than that. My friends abroad showed me how to use it.

First you should make sure your hands are clean.

Then, you pull down this string, and put the tampon on your finger like this.
Then, you sit or squat and insert the tampon into your vagina. It can be hard to get used to at first. But tampons are safe, even for young women and women who haven’t had sex yet. There is nowhere for it to get lost or stuck, and the string comes out of your vagina – just pull it gently to remove the tampon!
Does it hurt to use?

Not at all! It’s small and fits inside you easily. Do you want to try it?

That was easier than I thought!

You will feel so much more comfortable when you use them.

I never feel that comfortable with my period – isn’t menstrual blood dirty?

Of course not! It’s a natural process that shows you are healthy.

What is the process of menstruation?
Menstruation is a cycle that happens every month, and lasts for around 28 days, although it varies by woman.

1. The first day of your cycle is the first day of bleeding, or your period. It usually lasts for around 5 days, although it may last longer for some women. Your period is your body releasing an unfertilized egg, together with the tissue that develops to help a fertilized egg implant on the uterine lining. Around the first day is when you might get the most cramps and stomach pain.

2. Once your period finishes, the lining of your uterus, which is made of soft tissue, begins to thicken again to get ready for the next egg, which has been maturing in the ovary during your period.

3. The egg is released into the fallopian tube. This is called ovulation.

4. If the egg is not fertilized by the time it reaches your uterus, it disintegrates and leads to the next menstrual cycle.

And that’s it! It’s a very normal process. Do you have any other questions about it?
One of my friends told me that we shouldn’t wash our hair when we menstruate – have you heard that too?

I have heard that too Mya Mya, but my doctor friend told me it’s not true. She said it’s actually important to keep clean when you are menstruating, including washing your genitals. Washing your hair helps you feel clean too.
For me, the worst part of my period is not feeling unclean, but the cramps, backaches and stomach pains I get.

You get those too? I thought it was just me! Is it normal?

Very normal, Mya Mya! The cramps are caused by the muscles in your uterus and abdomen contracting to expel the menstrual fluid. Many women get them. Some women also get bloating, breast tenderness, headache, and mood swings. These other symptoms are caused by changes in the hormone levels in your body.
My doctor friend says you can actually alleviate the discomfort somewhat by doing exercises, resting, or taking pain medicine if you're really uncomfortable. There's no reason that you can't do anything you would normally do while you have your period!
I’m so glad we talked about this, sister! I feel so much better.

You can always talk about these things with me, little sister. It’s important that we share information about our health with our sisters and friends! I’m looking forward to talking about more of these topics with you.