



written by Claudia Bellante
 illustrated by Ludovica Todano

NURU'S DIARY

Everything (or almost everything) about the menstrual cycle



This publication is made in partnership with Education Above All's Educate A Child programme.

This publication was created with the contribution of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation. Its contents are the sole responsibility of WeWorld and do not necessarily represent the views of the Agency.



NURU'S DIARY

Everything (or almost everything) about the menstrual cycle



Hi, my name is **Nuru**,
I'm twelve years old, and
of course, I go to school.
I love reading books and
I wish I had magical
powers to make the
lives of girls around
the world better!
I also like to sing,
especially in the choir
with my friends.



For example, how our bodies
change, our sensitivity, how
we see ourselves, and
the feelings we
experience. I
thought I could
write a bit, and
you could write
a bit too, so I
can get to know
you and you can
get to know me.
Shall we begin?



Since I know that
growing up can be
complicated, I decided
to write this diary to
help girls like you and
me understand **what**
happens during the famous
and much feared (by adults)
adolescence stage!





Here you can make
a drawing that represents you.

So, I already introduced myself...
now it's your turn!

My name is

I am years old

I like

I hate

My favorite song is

My favorite book is

My favorite food is

My favorite color is

My best female friend is

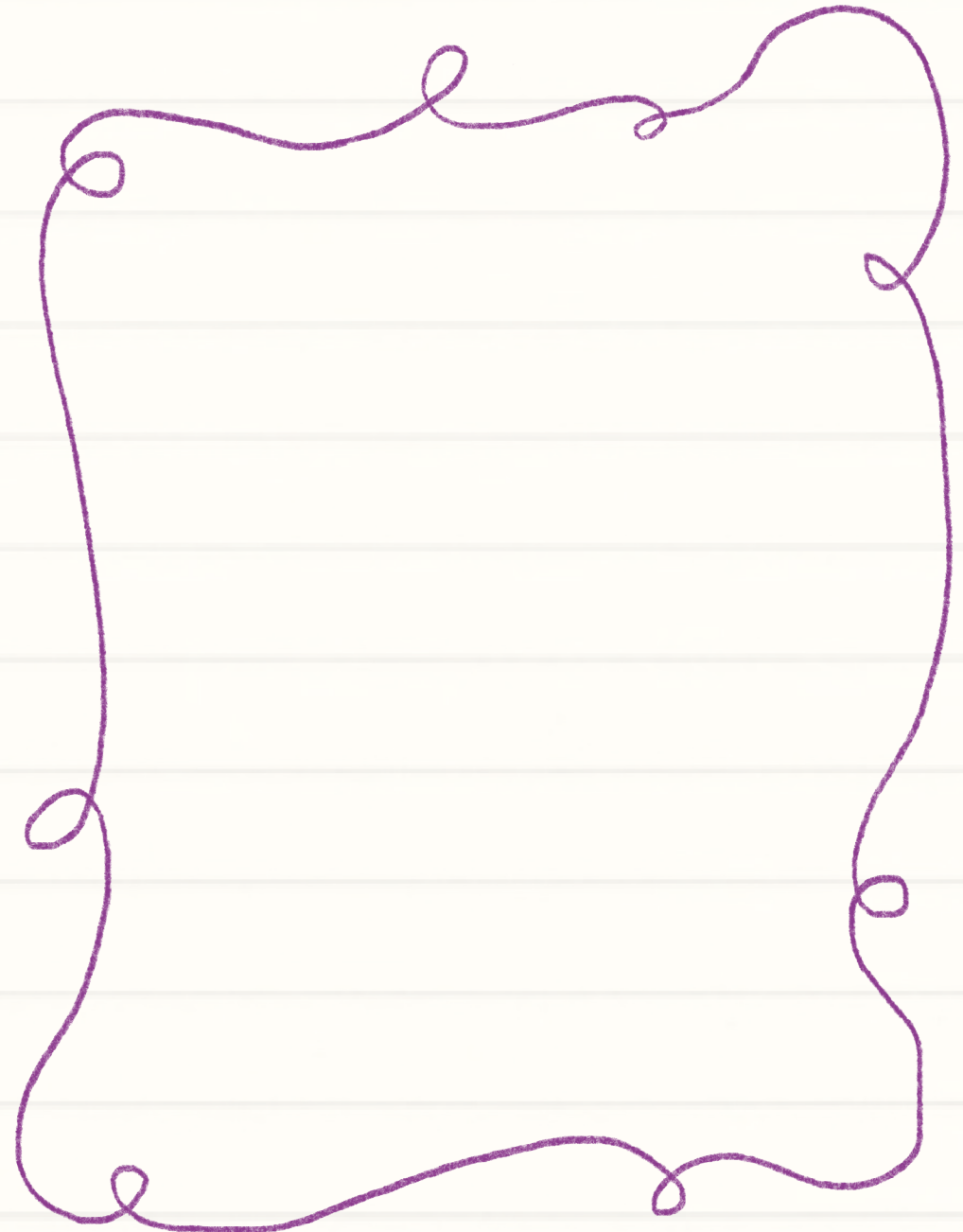
My best male friend is

A secret you want to share only with me

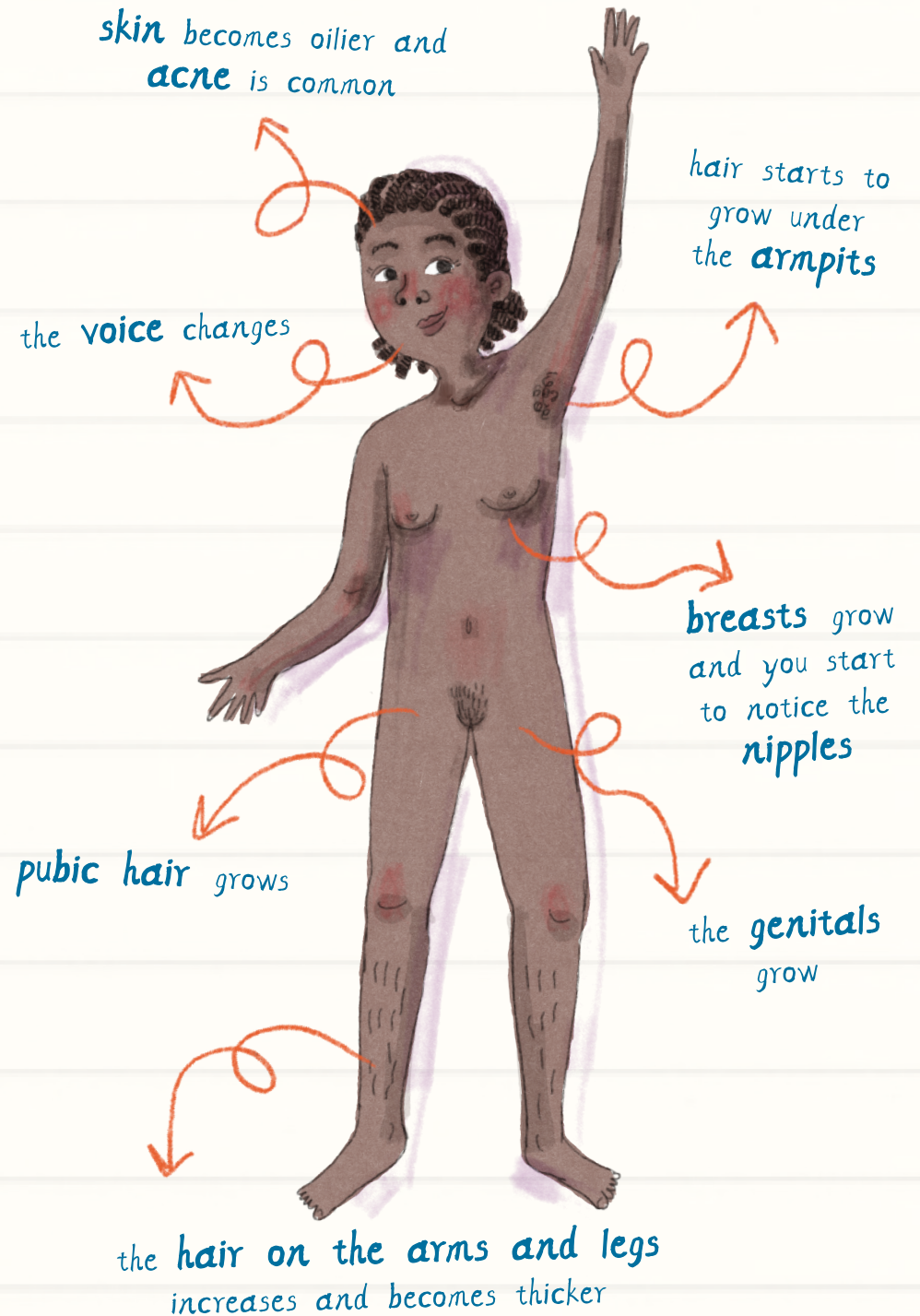
(I will not tell it to anyone, I promise!)

.....

.....



I prepared this simple drawing
to show you how
adolescence changes our bodies:
oily skin, hair everywhere,
breasts growing...
we're off to a great start!





But if there's one thing that really changes us forever, it's **the start of menstruation.**

Some of us wait for it eagerly, while others dread it.

To be honest, **I didn't know** what to expect.

The girls who had already gotten it weren't very close to me and didn't talk much about it, and **I was too embarrassed** to discuss it with my mom.



How about you? How are you experiencing it?
Or how did you experience it?

Would you like to tell me?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

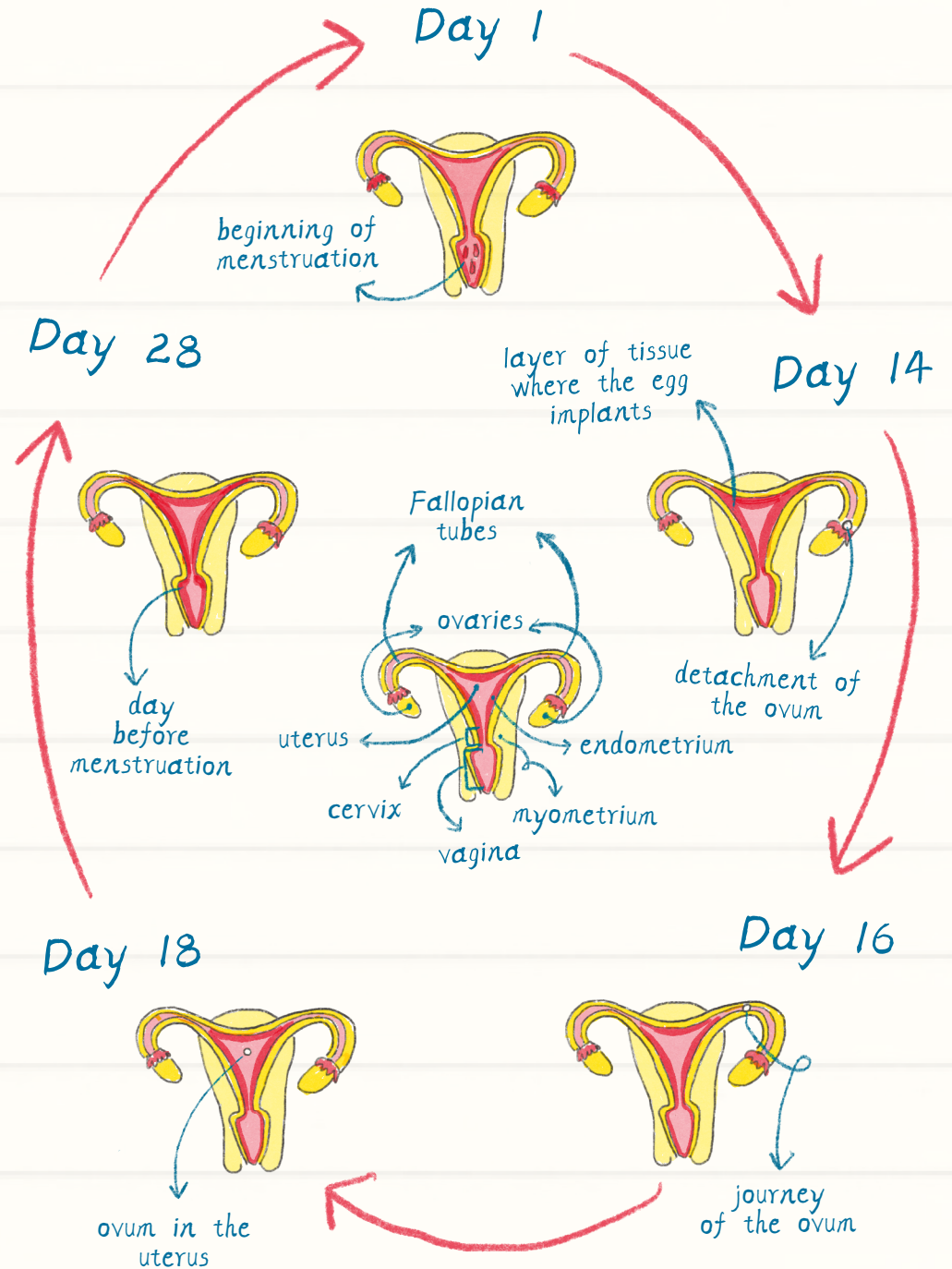
.....



Do you know what I realized?

That **only a few of us truly understand what happens** to our bodies during the menstrual cycle, so I prepared a little summary ;)

But first, **I'll draw how our reproductive system works** and the journey our blood takes... just to start from the basics!



And now here we are with the explanation of the **four phases of the cycle**. They seem complicated, I know, but think about it: the same thing happens to all women around the world. Isn't that incredible?



Menstruation

The internal lining of the uterus leaves the body through the vagina as a reddish fluid containing blood. This is the cycle—also called menstruation—and it will last from three to seven days. For example, mine lasts six. The first day we lose blood is the first day of the cycle = red cross on the calendar!

Pre-ovulation

In our reproductive system, as you saw, there are two ovaries that contain thousands of eggs. During pre-ovulation, some hormones stimulate the development of the eggs; at the same time, the internal lining of the uterus (called the endometrium), where the fetus can develop, begins to thicken.

Ovulation

Ovulation is when a mature egg is released from the ovary. After release, the egg slides down the fallopian tubes to the thickened lining of the uterus, which is covered in tissue and blood. If the egg is fertilized, there will be a pregnancy. If not, the cycle will resume. And so it will be in our case, otherwise it would be a mess! Generally, ovulation occurs between the 10th and 16th day before the next cycle.

Pre-menstruation

After ovulation, your body continues to produce tissue to cover the internal lining of the uterus. During this time, the egg travels to the uterus, and since we've ruled out the possibility of pregnancy, the unfertilized egg along with everything that lines the uterus will be expelled. And here comes the menstruation! :)

When talking about menstruation,
I don't know if you've noticed,
metaphors and sayings abound.

How many times have you heard,
“The red visitor is here?” Or “Aunt Flo
is in town”, as if menstruation was
an unwanted relative who visits us
regularly?
Me, a million times.

Many people see them as a **symbol
of fertility** because they are
necessary to have children. Here,
as in other countries, it is believed
that when menstruation begins, you
are no longer a girl but **become a
woman.**

However, **this is not true**, as
menstruation can start as early as
around ten years old, which does not
take away a child's right to live their
childhood.



It is important to know the rhythm of our menstruation to know if they are regular or not.

I thought to make a page with a **calendar** so we can mark the days of our menstruation and see what rhythm they have.

If you mark the days of your cycle with an X and do this every month, you'll start to predict the timing of your menstruations and know if they're regular or not.

The normal period of a cycle varies **from 25 to 35 days**.

Remember: if it's too irregular or if a month is skipped, it's **best to see a doctor** and get her opinion.



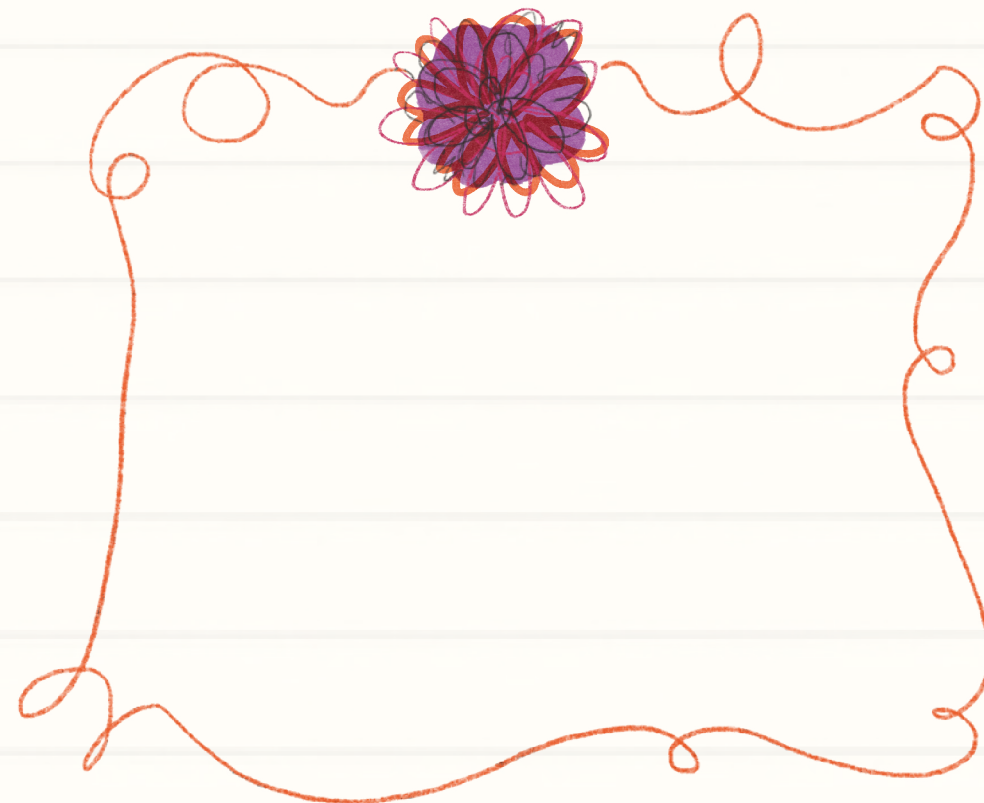
MY PERIOD CALENDAR

	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
JANUARY																															
FEBRUARY																															
MARCH																															
APRIL																															
MAY																															
JUNE																															
JULY																															
AUGUST																															
SEPTEMBER																															
OCTOBER																															
NOVEMBER																															
DECEMBER																															

Another thing that makes me laugh, or rather annoys me, when it comes to menstruation, is that everyone seems to know how we feel "during those days." Usually, they think we're moody, sad, low on energy. But how do we really feel "during those days"?

For me, it depends. Sometimes I genuinely feel down, but other times I want to run on the beach, dive into the sea, and swim out to the buoy.

How about you?



Can you tell me
how you feel during your cycle?

(if you want you can draw it above)



I'm leaving you some blank pages
in the diary, and I'll finally be quiet
because I want you to tell me about yourself.

I'm sure each page will be different,
just like our feelings.



Today was a beautiful day
because...

A series of ten horizontal dotted lines for writing, starting below the text 'because...' and extending across the width of the page.





Today, on the other hand, was
a terrible day
because...

A series of ten horizontal dotted lines for writing.



And today?
How did it go?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

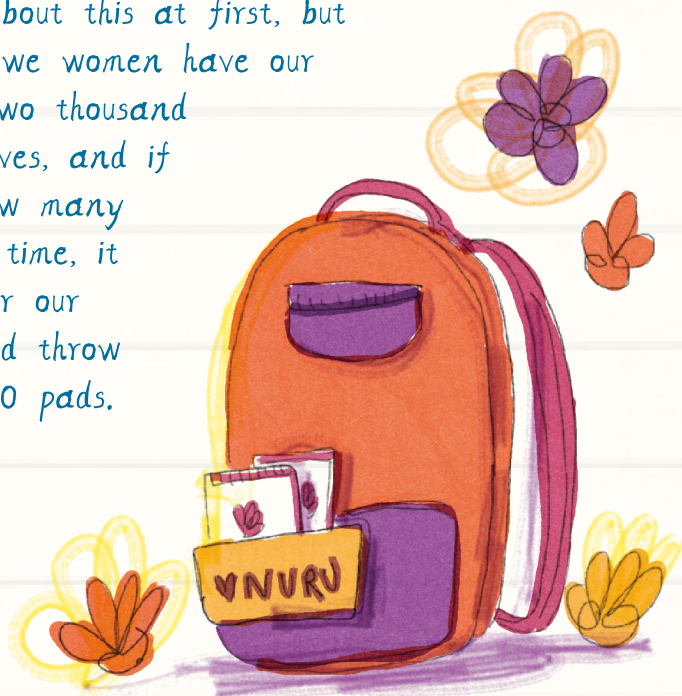
.....

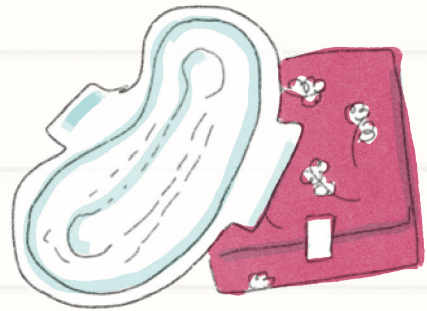
Another piece of advice, based on real-life experience: if you keep a menstrual calendar like I do, you'll know roughly when your cycle will come, but if you're as forgetful as my friend Neema, your period might catch you by surprise!

That's why it's always better to carry **an emergency kit** in your backpack or bag. I use cotton pads with wings, but I have friends who use washable pads, and menstrual underwear. I've never tried them, but I've heard they're super comfortable.

The important thing, since we know how much traditional pads pollute, is to look for **an alternative** that doesn't harm the planet too much!

I hadn't thought about this at first, but then I read that we women have our periods for over two thousand days (!!!) in our lives, and if we think about how many pads we use each time, it turns out that over our lifetime we use and throw away almost 11,000 pads.





Cotton pads

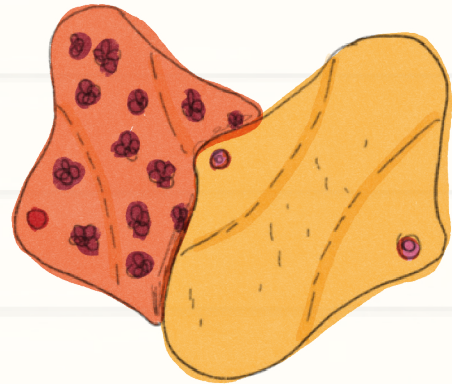
Cotton pads

Perfect for those of us who are still getting used to pads, but I want to switch soon because they are still disposable. They are made of organic cotton and have not been treated with bleach, toxic substances, or potentially allergenic products, and they can go straight into compost!

Reusable cloth pads

They are used like regular external pads, with the advantage of being washable and usable for at least 3 years. And if you're out and need to change? Easy: just bring a waterproof bag.

Reusable cloth pads



Menstrual underwear

They look like regular underwear but are washable, reusable, and made from a material that can absorb even the heaviest flows. They cost a bit and you need at least 5 pairs to cover your entire cycle, but they last two to three years and come in many brands, colors, and styles.



Menstrual underwear

And you?
What do you use?

.....
.....



And now here we are again with
“Aunt Nuru’s advice” :)

Make sure you **change your sanitary pads often** and remember to **always wash your hands** before and after changing, even if you’re in a hurry. It helps avoid a lot of infections and annoyances.

Always demand **clean bathrooms** where you can. In public places, it can be hard, but at least at school!



Have you ever had an infection?
How did you solve it?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

How are the bathrooms at your school?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Let's **always stick together** with other girls, help each other in delicate moments, and stand united if someone teases us.

And **above all**, let's make sure we're never the ones teasing others!



Have you ever been teased about your period?

Has it happened to any of your friends?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

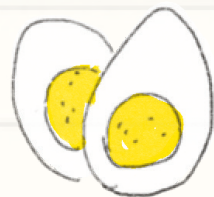
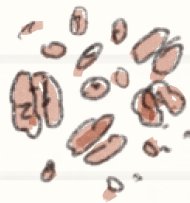
.....

.....

.....

During our cycle, it's good to eat **foods containing iron**, like **leafy greens** like spinach or **legumes** like lentils.

Here's **my favorite super quick recipe** for a delicious salad!



Recipe

Ingredients for one serving (yours!) :)

100g Cooked beans 50g Fresh Spinach
1 Boiled Egg Some nuts

Now: Arrange the spinach in a bowl and add the lentils. Then decorate with slices of the boiled egg and a sprinkling of nuts on top. How delicious!

Sometimes it can happen that we experience a lot of **pain** during menstruation, especially in the abdomen, but sometimes our breasts hurt too. In these cases, don't force yourself to be a superhero: rest, read a good book, put a hot water bottle on your belly, and take medication if the doctor says so.

Or, if the pain is bearable but you still need some pampering: make yourself **a nice herbal tea!**

I love studying medicinal plants and have discovered that many flowers seem to be made just for us girls to feel better.

Here are a few!



Cucurbita maxima/ Pumpkin/Malenge: it is used to reduce menstrual bleeding and regulate blood during period. The leaves are boiled, the fruits are eaten.



Zingiber officinale/Ginger/ Tangawizi: it alleviates menstrual cramps and reduces nausea. Can be added with honey for sweetening and flavor.

Curcuma Longa/Turmeric/ Manjano: it has anti-inflammatory and analgesic properties that help to alleviate menstrual discomfort cramps.



Carica papaya/Papaya/ Papai: enzymes in papaya help to reduce menstrual cramps and regulate blood flow.

And you, how do you relax when you have your period? What are your remedies for stomach pain?


.....

.....

Aside from the days we feel OFF, always remember that **having your period shouldn't stop you from doing anything** you want or feel like doing.

There's a song I really like, called "**Flores Rojas**" (which means "red flowers"), that says like this:





Mi sangre no es sucia
Mi sangre no es ninguna
enfermedad
No es ningún secreto,
no es pa' tener vergüenza
No me vuelvo impura, no huelo mal
Puedo ir en bicicleta, puedo bailar
Puedo tocar mis plantas y cocinar
Puedo cortarme el pelo, meterme al
mar
Puedo subirme a un árbol, puedo
cantar
Escribo en mi diario para recordar
Lo que mis emociones vienen a
enseñar

My blood is not dirty
My blood is not a disease
It's not a secret,
it's not to be ashamed of
I don't become impure, I don't
smell bad
I can ride a bike, I can dance
I can touch my plants and cook
I can cut my hair, go into the
sea
I can climb a tree, I can sing
I write in my diary to
remember
What my emotions come to
teach me

Did you like it? It says a lot of true things that all the girls in the world should know so they don't become victims of taboos and prejudices.

Maybe there's someone among your friends who sees their cycle as a problem, who stays home from school on those days, or avoids doing certain things?

Pay attention and **help her feel like us:** wonderful and fragrant red flowers!



Do you know any unfounded beliefs about menstruation?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Is there a friend of yours who has a hard time during her cycle?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Bye my new lovely friend!

I hope you enjoyed this shared diary and that it helped you, at least a little, during this exciting and chaotic time we're experiencing.

Love,
Nuru.



A little space
for your thoughts

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

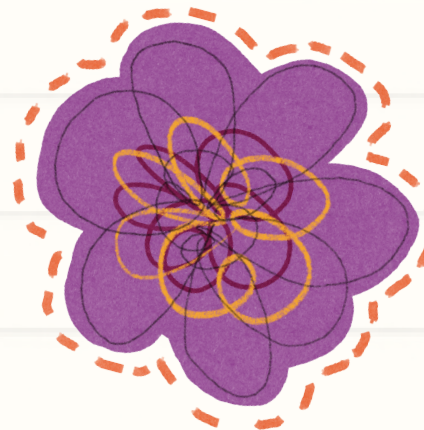
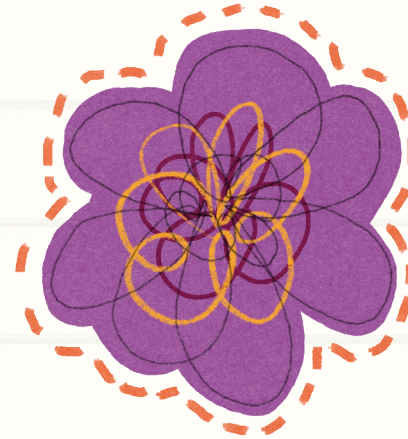
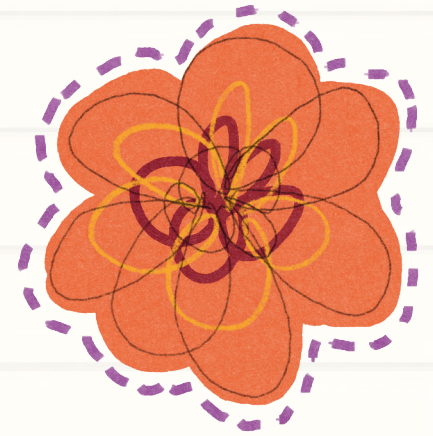
.....

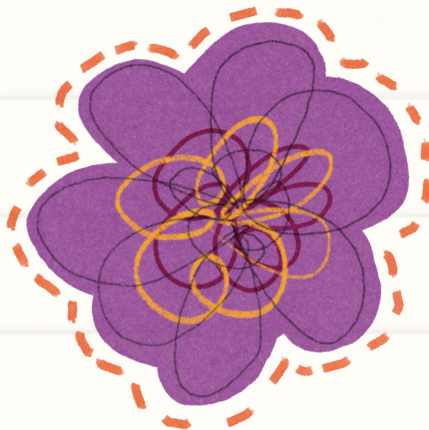
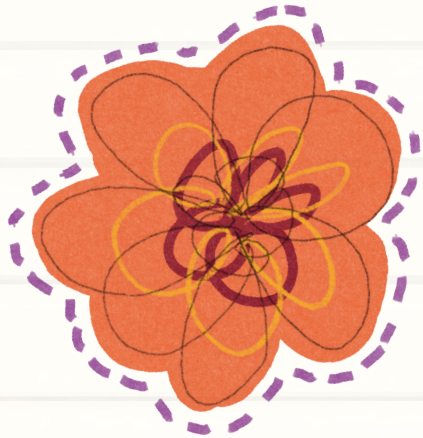
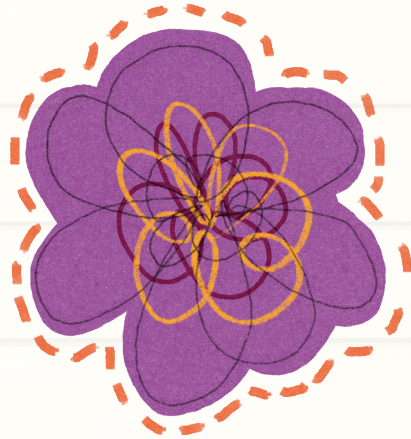
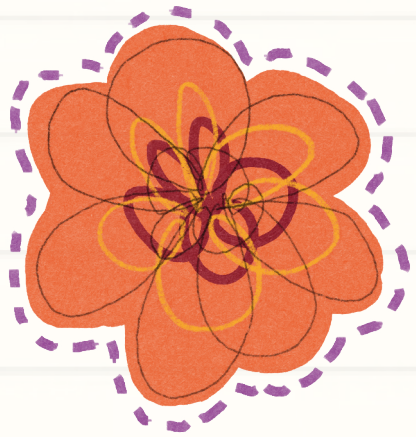
.....

.....

.....

Cut out these flowers
and give them
to your best friends





WeWorld

WeWorld is an independent Italian organization active for over 50 years in development cooperation and humanitarian aid projects that aim to guarantee people's rights, especially among the most vulnerable communities. WeWorld stands with people on the margins, geographical or social, so they can be at the center. Its projects - 179 in 26 countries including Italy - promote human and economic development, so that people can become active agents of their own change.

With more than 9,7 million direct beneficiaries and 49 million indirect beneficiaries, WeWorld focuses on human rights, humanitarian aid, food security, water, health and hygiene, education, socio-economic development and environmental protection, global citizenship education and international volunteering.

Mission

We work for girls, boys, women and youth, actors of change in every community for a fairer and more inclusive world. We support people overcoming emergencies and we guarantee a life with dignity, opportunities and a better future through human and economic development programs (in the framework of the 2030 Agenda).

Vision

We strive for a better world where everyone, especially women and children, must have equal opportunities and rights, access to resources, to health, to education and to decent work. A world in which the environment is a common good to be respected and preserved; in which war, violence and exploitation are banned. A world where nobody is left behind.



WEWORLD

VIA SERIO 6, - 20139 MILANO - IT
T. +39 02 55231193 - F. +39 02 56816484

VIA BARACCA 3, - 40133 BOLOGNA - IT
T. +39 051 585604 - F. +39 051 582225

www.weworld.it