



Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

IT'S ALL GOOD!

RESOURCE #1.

How Would you Talk to Young People about Periods?

RESOURCE #2.

What does Ikura Mean to Young People?

RESOURCE #3.

Helping Young People Through PMS

RESOURCE #4.

Daily Life During Ikura

RESOURCE #5.

Using Period Products

Ikura

Manaakitia te whare tangata
Period Products in Schools



HOW WOULD YOU TALK TO YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT PERIODS?

Ikura, or a period, is a natural part of growing up. Young people just starting this journey often need support from the adults in their lives to feel comfortable and get the facts they need. If you've just read [Marama's story](#) and are wondering whether it's nearly time to talk about ikura with young people in your life, then this is for you.



1) TALK OPENLY.

Periods shouldn't be a secret. The key is finding the right time to start this conversation, like when young people see adults buying pads or tampons in the shops, or when someone else has their ikura.

2) TALK EARLY.

Talking to young people before they start their first ikura can help them feel more prepared and understand what's happening when they see those first spots of blood. The first ikura usually starts between 9 and 15 years old, so these conversations might happen earlier than you think.

3) KNOW WHERE TO GET PERIOD PRODUCTS.

Most schools and kura have free period products available—pads and tampons, which young people can take home. Having a supply of products at home will make the first few days easier, and young people can take as much as they need for their full menstrual cycle.

4) TALK ABOUT IKURA WITH ALL CHILDREN.

Whether they menstruate or not, it's important that all young people learn about ikura so that they can support their friends and family, like Marama's friends Bella and Zac in *It's All Good!*



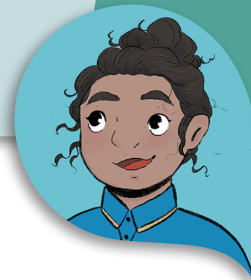
STILL NOT SURE WHERE TO BEGIN?

What do you wish someone had said to you the first time that you learned about this? That's a great place to start.

WHAT IS IKURA?

Ikura is a traditional name that links back to Māori creation stories. The name is derived from the saying "Mai-i-kurawaka", which literally means 'menstrual blood'. Ikura is a symbol of life.

The celebration of ikura is a part of New Zealand's history that is being reclaimed to help young people feel empowered, positive and connected by restoring the mana of ikura and destigmatising menstruation.



WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

theperiodplace.co.nz/educational-resources—Free online information for people who menstruate.

healthnavigator.org.nz—Search for 'menstruation' to get all the facts about this topic.

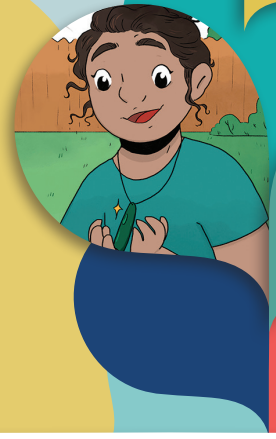
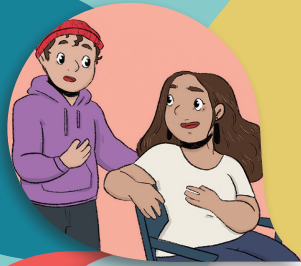
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[Find out more about the Ikura initiative at the Ministry of Education website.](#)



WHAT DOES IKURA MEAN TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

Starting their first ikura (period) can be a big moment for a young person, and different families acknowledge that moment in different ways. You can read the story of how Marama's family did this in episode #2 of the [It's All Good!](#) comic series. The comic shows how one family follows their own traditions on the arrival of 11-year-old Marama's first ikura.



HOLDING A CELEBRATION FOR IKURA

has been a part of Māori cultural tradition for a long time. These traditions emphasised the importance of ikura as something beautiful and powerful, which linked Māori back to their **atua** (traditional deities).

AFTER EUROPEAN CONTACT, many Māori were not able to carry on their traditions. Colonial Europeans brought their own beliefs about menstruation with them. We can learn about pre-European Māori traditions thanks to scholars like Dr Ngahuia Murphy, whose work is the inspiration for this episode. The work of researchers such as Dr Murphy, and other advocates, is helping to educate people on traditional Māori customs around acknowledging and celebrating ikura.

Did reading the comic and hearing about the history of ikura change how you think about this topic?

You might already have a family or cultural tradition for this time in a person's life. If you're thinking about starting a new tradition, talk to the young people in your family to see what they would like to do. **Some ideas are making an ikura self-care kit, going out for a special meal, or anything that feels right.**



DR NGAHUIA MURPHY

Dr Ngahuia Murphy is a mana wahine scholar committed to recovering customary Māori knowledge related to Māori women. Her work has influenced the revitalisation of Māori menstruation ceremonies and supported other Indigenous peoples wellbeing initiatives.



WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

See if your local library has a copy of **Waiwhero: A Celebration of Womanhood** by Dr Ngahuia Murphy to read more about the history and celebrations around ikura. **Te Awa Atua: Menstruation in the pre-Colonial Māori World** by the same author covers these topics in more depth for adults.

awwaperiodcare.com/blogs/reconnecting-you-to-your-cycle—Read more information about how Māori acknowledge ikura.

Nuku podcast (Episode O66)—Listen to Dr Ngahuia Murphy talk about her research.

teawaatua.com—Read more of Dr Ngahuia Murphy's current work.

The Period Place podcast (Periods and te Ao Māori" episode)—Listen to the podcast.

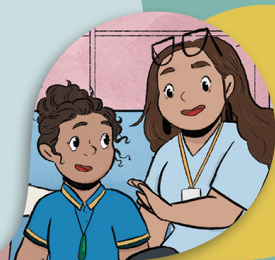
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HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH PMS

Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) affects many people leading up to the first day of their ikura (period) each cycle. If you've ever had PMS or been around someone who has, then you'll know that it can be uncomfortable and emotionally draining. **So what can an adult do to help a young person with PMS?**



IF YOU KNOW A YOUNG PERSON WHO STRUGGLES WITH PMS,

you could read episode #3 of [It's All Good!](#) with them. Young people in particular might need your help managing their PMS. PMS is common and doesn't usually

last long, but that doesn't mean it should be ignored. It can still be upsetting and hard to deal with, especially for those just starting out. They might not even realise what they're feeling if they don't know what PMS is.

Encouraging young people to talk to you if they feel unwell at any time can help them feel secure, and give them the information they need about what is happening.

WHAT IF PMS GETS REALLY BAD?

While having a slightly irregular ikura or some mild PMS can be annoying, there is a difference between that and a condition that gets in the way of a person living their daily life. Some people have a medical condition that causes problems around the time of their ikura.

These problems can include **very heavy or long periods, painful periods, bleeding between periods** (called "spotting") and **very light or skipped periods** without pregnancy. Supporting young people through these issues might mean talking to a GP, nurse, or Womens' Health specialist to find out how to help someone whose life is being seriously affected by their ikura.

Endometriosis causes very painful periods which can interfere with daily life. It affects young people, and can start at any time after a persons' first period. According to the Ministry of Health, up to 1 in 10 people who menstruate in New Zealand suffer from endometriosis.

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) can cause irregular periods, hormonal issues, changes to hair, skin and body shape, and difficulty becoming pregnant. It affects about 8-13% of people who have a period.

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) is an extreme type of PMS with very severe psychological symptoms which have a negative effect on a persons' life. It can lead to suicidal tendencies in extreme cases. If you think that someone you know is at risk, talk to a medical professional immediately.



WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

healthnavigator.org.nz—Search Health Navigator for 'PMS', 'endometriosis' or 'PCOS' for more information about medical conditions.

insightendometriosis.org.nz—Read about Insight Endometriosis, a national charity that supports teenagers with Endometriosis.

endowarriorsaotearoa.com—Read about Endo Warriors Aotearoa, a charity helping teenagers to get medical support for endometriosis.

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DAILY LIFE DURING IKURA

Most people can carry on their daily lives as usual during the days of their ikura (period), if that's what they want to do. If you're not sure how having their ikura might impact a young person's daily life, you could read episode #4 of the [It's All Good!](#) comic series with them.

In the comic, 11-year-old Marama talks to her teacher about taking part in activities when she starts her ikura during school camp.



SOMETIMES, YOUNG PEOPLE DO GET THEIR PERIOD WHILE THEY'RE DOING SCHOOL ACTIVITIES.

When that happens, schools and kura have free pads and tampons for them to use and take home.

It's important that young people can attend school throughout their ikura. Having enough period products can help young people to engage at school and choose what they want to do with their free time, whether that's hanging out with their mates, playing sports, or anything else.

TRACKING MENSTRUAL CYCLES

Tracking their cycle can help young people feel more connected to their bodies and take charge of their own wellbeing. If you know a young person who might like to record their cycle, you could suggest a journal, calendar, or an app on a device.

It's easy to do—just note when the first day of each ikura is, how long each cycle lasts, and when the next one might be.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

temahau.govt.nz/all-in-for-learning—

Find out why keeping students in school is important for their health and wellbeing.

healthnavigator.org.nz/apps/p/period-menstrual-cycle-tracking-apps—Browse

recommendations for good period tracking apps from Health Navigator.

thespinoff.co.nz/atea/20-07-2022/

[the-moon-is-a-period-tracker-using-the-maramataka-to-understand-my-ikura](#)—

Read this article from The Spinoff about how the maramataka can be used as a period tracker.



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Ikura

Manaakitia te whare tangata
Period Products in Schools



USING PERIOD PRODUCTS

Pads and tampons are now free for all students in schools and kura throughout New Zealand. Young people might need some guidance before using period products for the first time, or trying a different type of product. If that sounds like someone you know, you could show them episode #5 of the [Its All Good!](#) comic series.

The comic and fact sheet have some child-friendly information about the types of pads and tampons that their schools have available.



SCHOOLS WILL HAVE DISPOSABLE PADS & TAMPONS

available for their students to use, both at school and at home. Students can take home as many as they like to help them plan their whole cycle and next ikura.

TALKING TO YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT PADS AND TAMPONS

Talking about pads and tampons with young people is an important conversation to have. Young people need straight-forward, honest information about how to use period products so they understand what is happening in their bodies.

There are other types of period products available to buy, like reusable underwear, cups, and cloth pads. These products are not free in schools, but might be something that you and your family want to explore if you feel they are right for you.

TO HELP A YOUNG PERSON DECIDE HOW TO USE PERIOD PRODUCTS, here are a few things to think about:

- **How many products will they need for each day, including overnight?** Remember that they can take as many products as they need from school.

- **How heavy is their bleeding, and how often will they need to change the pad or tampon?** Some pads and tampons can hold more blood than others. Those are for days when the flow of blood is heavier. Check the packaging for information about how long to leave a pad or tampon in place.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

healthnavigator.org.nz/healthy-living/p/periods-how-to-talk-to-kids—Read more about how to talk to young people about periods at Health Navigator.

familyplanning.org.nz/advice/periods/period-products—Find out more about period products from Family Planning New Zealand.



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