

## LESSON 2: THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

**Overview:** Using handouts, pupils learn about the menstrual cycle and female anatomy

**Great For:** Covering the basic biology of menstruation

Age 11+

<b>Resources Needed:</b>	My Period cards; Bingo worksheets; Menstrual Cycle and Body Part Worksheets; Red Felt tip Pens
<b>Prep Time Needed:</b>	5 mins
<b>Works best in:</b>	Classroom
<b>Number of participants:</b>	Full Class
<b>Time Needed:</b>	50 minutes
<b>Set Up:</b>	Print enough Bingo, Menstrual Cycle and Female Anatomy worksheets for each pupil (pages 4 & 5 and Period Bingo PDF)

### Learning Outcomes:

Pupils understand and can describe what the menstrual cycle is and how periods fit within it.

**Who is this for:** Students should have a good working knowledge of puberty before taking part in this lesson. It follows on well from **Lesson 1: What have you heard?** It may be that this content is covered in your school's biology lessons – in which case, feel free to skip this lesson in favour of something more hands on like **Lesson 3 – Period Product Testing**. Older pupils should use Lesson 5: *Living with a Menstrual Cycle* to replace this one.

IT LASTS  
ANYWHERE  
FROM 25 TO 35  
DAYS

# LESSON 2: THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

**Introduction** Introduce the topic to the class  
5 minutes Establish ground rules  
Remind the class that periods can be a sensitive topic

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**Starter Activity** We recommend you play a game of *Period Bingo* as the starter – see *Activity 2 PDF*  
15 minutes Alternatively, if My Period cards are not available, try Activity 1 or 3.

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**Main Activity** Explain that today we will be looking at the menstrual cycle.

25 minutes

Show this video clip explaining the menstrual cycle:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXrQ\\_FhZmos](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXrQ_FhZmos)

**NB** Although this video states the menstrual cycle lasts 28 days, it's important to remind the class that everyone is different, the cycle can last between 25 and 35 days, and it is completely normal for someone to have a longer or more irregular cycle for at least two years after starting their periods.

Give each pupil a blank menstrual cycle worksheet and a red felt tip pen. Ask them to colour in the diagram of the uterus for each phase of the cycle. They will be adding the blood and uterine lining with their red pens. Finally, ask pupils to write below each image describing what is happening.

Next hand each pupil a Female Anatomy worksheet. Ask pupils to label the body parts of female internal organs, and female genitalia. They might struggle to label everything, which is ok, encourage them to do what they can. Ask the class to use scientific/ anatomical labels please, rather than slang words.

Ask pupils to share their diagrams with their neighbour and check any misconceptions. Then, as a class, go through the answers. Explain the four phases of the menstrual cycle, and show pupils a correctly labelled body parts worksheets (see answers sheets and extra info below – page 6-8). Make it clear that female bodies have three holes between their legs.

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**Plenary** Remind the class that although the menstrual cycle should last approximately the same amount of time each cycle, individual cycle lengths can vary (between 25-35 days).  
5 minutes It can take a few years after starting periods for someone's menstrual cycle to settle into a predictable rhythm.

Point out different situations where the menstrual cycle could be affected – could make the cycle longer or shorter, or stop it altogether (see list below). Stress the importance of self-care, and make sure the class know that if anyone is concerned about their health or wellbeing to talk to an adult they trust. You could ask the class for some examples of such adults (e.g. doctor, teacher, parent, aunt, neighbour, social worker)

## LESSON 2: THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

### KEY POINT

People's experience of periods differ across their lives. Most women will have periods fairly regularly from menarche (first period) to menopause (last period). However, there are many factors that can affect the menstrual cycle and cause periods to stop or become irregular. These include:

- Pregnancy and breast feeding
- Stress and poor health
- Some medical conditions
- Some contraceptives
- Being overweight or underweight
- Prescription drugs
- Illegal drugs
- Having a hysterectomy (which is where your womb is surgically removed)

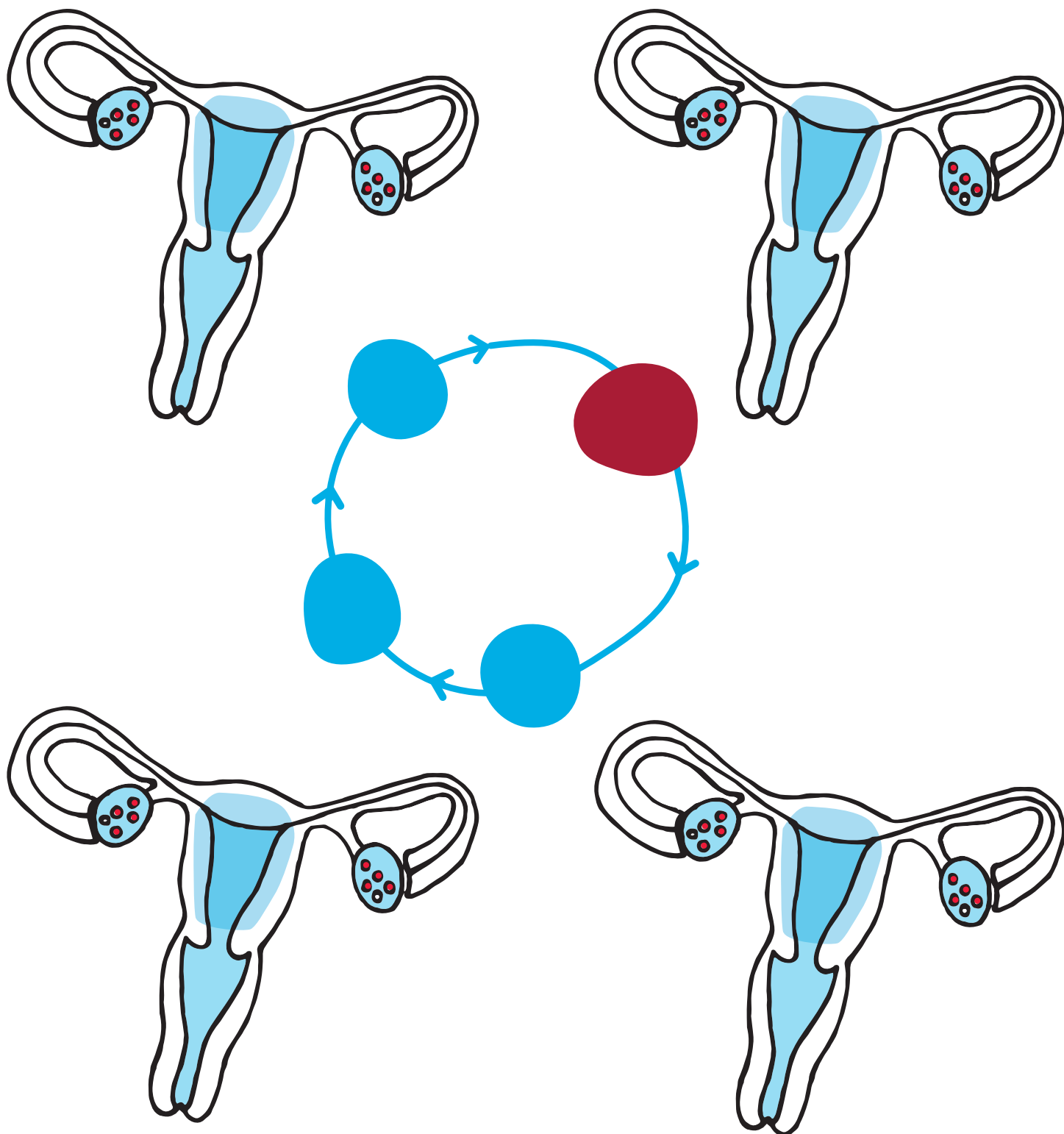
HUMAN  
EGGS ARE  
NOT LIKE  
CHICKEN  
EGGS

THEY ARE ABOUT  
THE SIZE OF A  
FULL STOP.

## LESSON 2: WORKSHEET 1

# THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

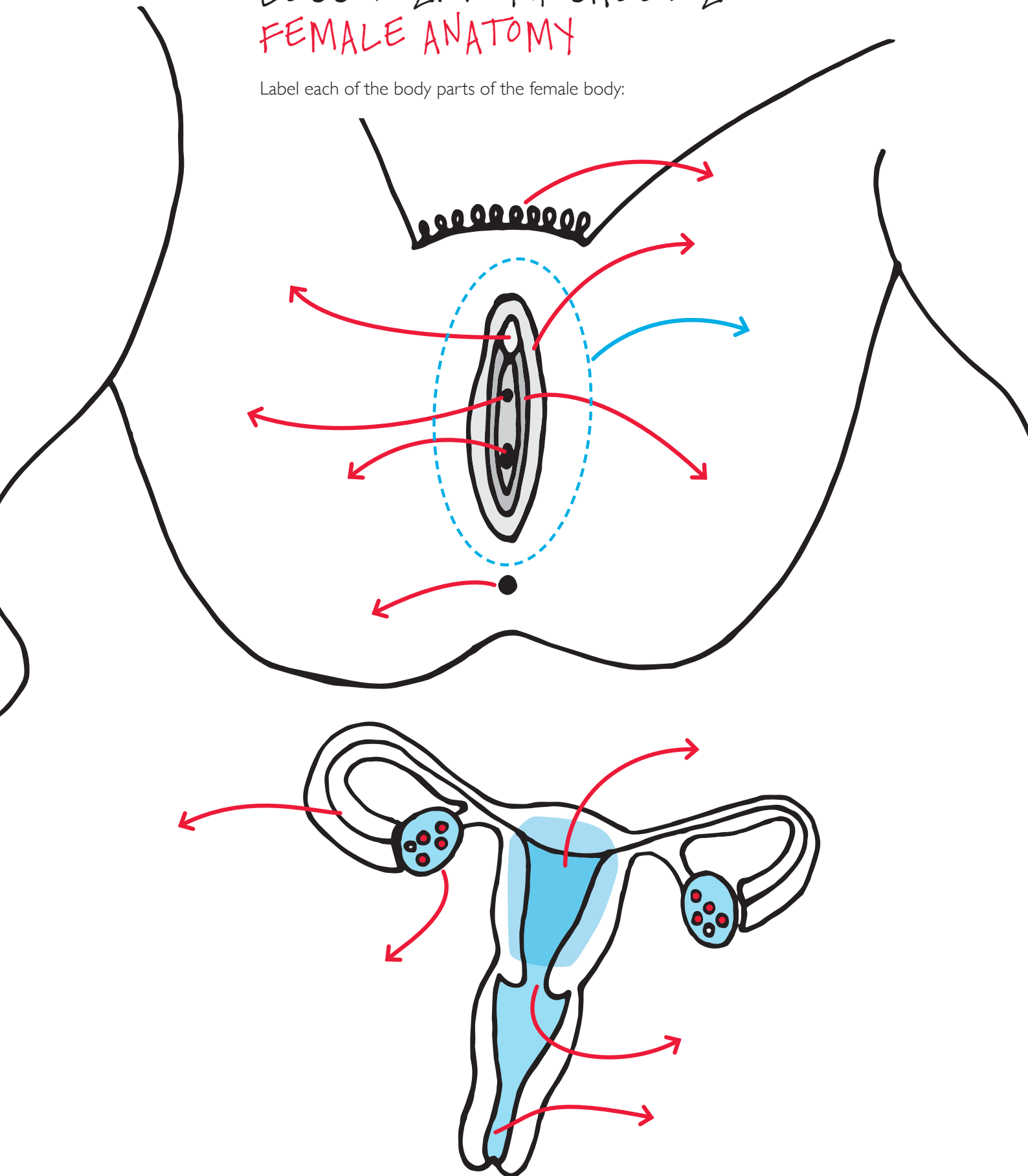
Using a red pen, colour in each diagram to represent the four stages of the menstrual cycle.  
Explain what is happening below.



## LESSON 2: WORKSHEET 2

### FEMALE ANATOMY

Label each of the body parts of the female body:



# LESSON 2: WORKSHEET 1 ANSWERS

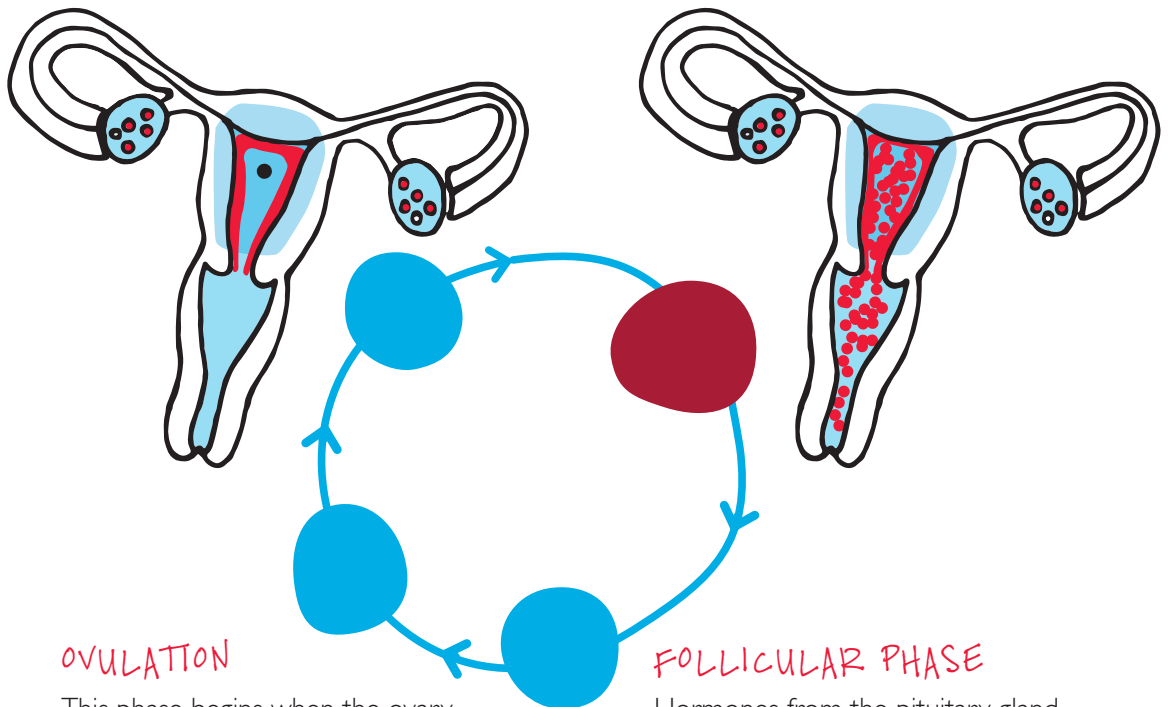
## THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

### LUTEAL PHASE

High levels of oestrogen and progesterone mean the womb prepares everything needed by a growing embryo. Without fertilisation, oestrogen and progesterone levels fall, and the womb starts to shed its lining as the next menstrual period

### MENSTRUATION

This is the period, when the womb lining breaks away and flows out through the vagina. Menstrual bleeding normally lasts between 3 and 7 days, brought about by low levels of oestrogen and progesterone

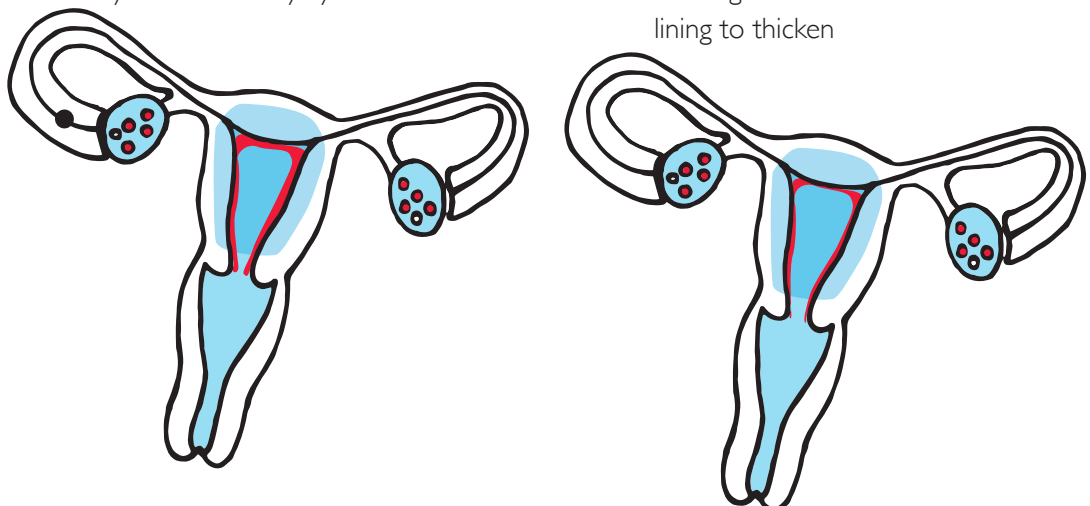


### OVULATION

This phase begins when the ovary releases its egg. The egg stays viable once it is released for about 12 hours. Ovulation happens randomly between the two ovaries, and if one ovary is removed or missing then the remaining ovary ovulates every cycle

### FOLLICULAR PHASE

Hormones from the pituitary gland stimulate eggs in the ovaries to start developing. Several develop at once, but eventually only the strongest egg is left growing. Its follicle (the fluid filled sac that protects it) starts to release oestrogen which causes the womb lining to thicken

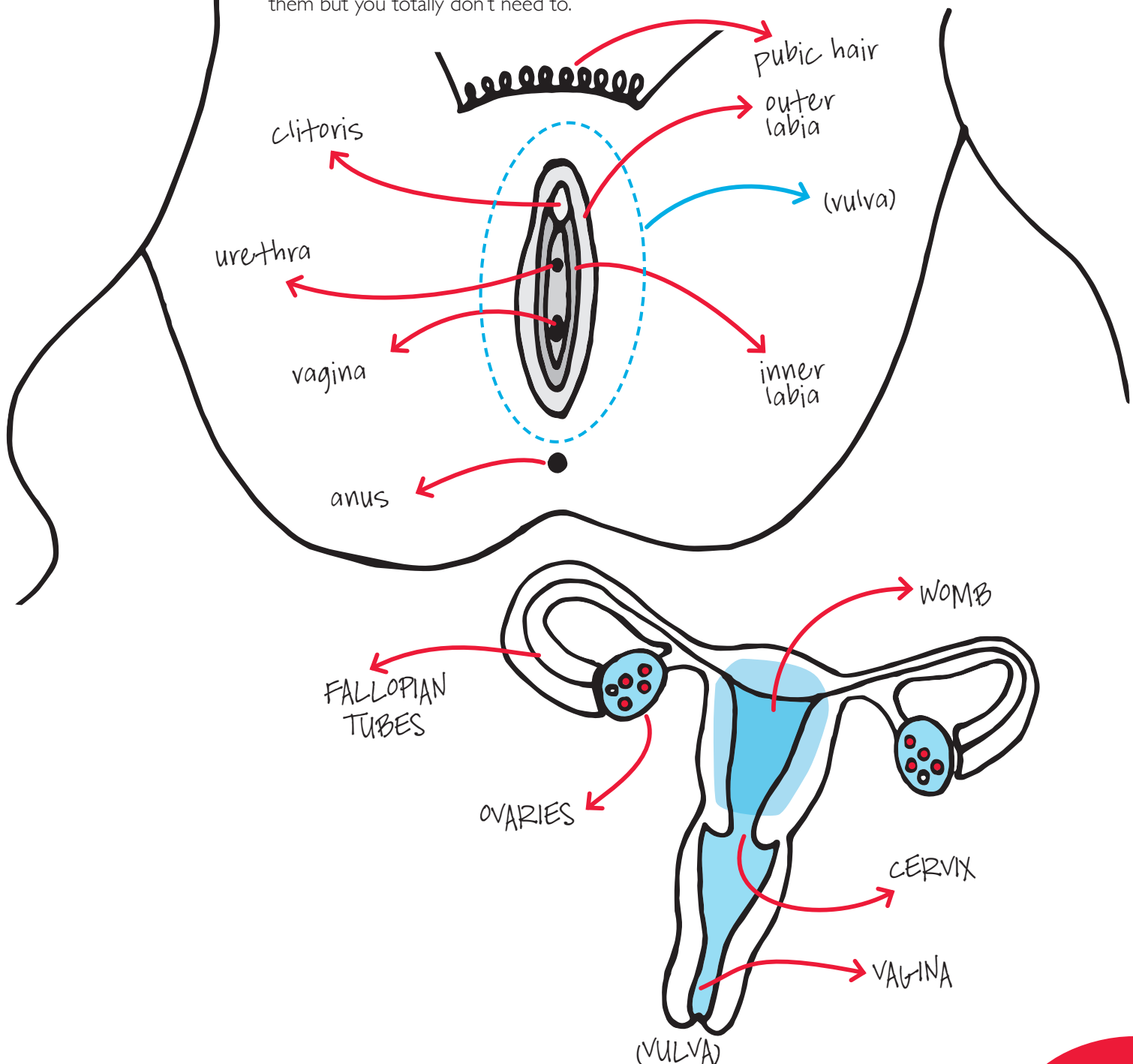


# LESSON 2: WORKSHEET 2 ANSWERS

## FEMALE ANATOMY

### KEY POINT

Every human body is different. Because we don't see people's private parts very often it is common to feel worried about whether you are 'normal'. Reassure pupils that there is no normal. Certainly, what you see in porn is not normal. Everyone's labia look different (they can be large or small, hanging down or tucked up, bigger on one side than the other, and dark or light in colour). Everyone's pubes are different too – some people choose to style them but you totally don't need to.





# INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

## FEMALE ANATOMY

Many people are unfamiliar with their own anatomy. Female genitalia are difficult to see without a mirror which makes them more mysterious. (Encourage people to take a look)

**FALLOPIAN TUBES:** These two thin tubes lead from the uterus to the ovaries. They have sensitive finger-like ends which sit around each ovary and are able to feel when an egg is released and guide it to the uterus.

**CERVIX:** A thick muscle band at the base of the uterus that acts as a passageway to the vagina. It produces mucus that changes throughout the menstrual cycle – commonly known as discharge.

**VAGINA:** The vagina is stretchy and leads from the cervix and womb to the outside of the body. It is sensitive and self-cleaning - no sprays, perfumes or lotions needed.

**URETHRA:** This tube has a tiny opening that can be hard to see, and is where urine leaves the body from the bladder.

**ANUS:** The opening at the end of the bowel, where faeces leaves the body.

**LABIA MINORA & MAJORA:** (also called the inner and outer labia) Two delicate folds of skin that protect the entrance to the vagina.

**PUBIC HAIR:** Thick, curly hair that grows over the whole pubic area and protects the vulva.

**CLITORIS:** The external part of the clitoris is about the size of a pea, and is located above the urethra. The clitoris has many thousands of nerve endings and is the primary source of female sexual pleasure.

**OVARIES:** There are two ovaries, each one an oval shape and 3 to 5cm in length. They contain many thousands of immature eggs, as well as producing the hormones responsible for the menstrual cycle.

**UTERUS (womb):** The stretchy and muscular outer walls of the uterus are strong enough to push out a baby in childbirth, and also to push out blood during a period. The inner lining (endometrium) builds up a layer of soft, nutritious, blood rich tissue each month during the menstrual cycle. If someone gets pregnant, this is where the fertilised egg will grow.

**VULVA:** The term for the external area – including the opening of the vagina, the labia the urethra and the clitoris.

**HYMEN:** A thin stretchy membrane that lies just inside the vagina. It can stretch or tear during physical activity, as well as - for some people - when they first have sex.