

## Dear Auntie Stella

I am a girl of 17. I have always had very painful periods. When I have my period, it is so painful to walk that I can't go to school. I feel like vomiting and sometimes feel very hot or cold. This happens every month so all my friends know why when I miss school. It's so embarrassing.

When I do go to school I hate it because there is nowhere to put the used cotton wool. When I throw it down the toilet it won't go down and blocks it. I am so ashamed when people know I have a period, and everyone can laugh at me.

So please help me, auntie, as I am worrying that I miss a lot of school and I will do badly in exams.

**Agnes**



Adapted from a drawing by  
Mkhululi Khumalo

## TALKING POINTS

- Do some girls miss school when they are menstruating? Why? How could this affect their education?
- What can Agnes do about her painful periods? List all the remedies you know that may help her.
- How can Agnes and her friends make sure there's always a bin for used sanitary wear in the girls' toilet?
- Have you (boys or girls) or your friends ever laughed at a girl who has her period? Why?
- Why do you think Agnes is embarrassed if people know she's got her period? Do most girls feel like this? How do you and your friends (boys and girls) think of periods:
  - as dirty and shameful?
  - as a good and natural part of being a woman?
  - or something else?

Are these attitudes helpful or harmful to your lives?  
If they're harmful, how can you change them?