

always
first
period
guide



Puberty is a time full of changes to the way you look and feel. This can be exciting as well as confusing, but don't worry, the changes you'll go through are completely natural, although they may not always be easy.

Read on to find out everything you've always wanted to know about puberty, and tips to help you stay confident, there's something for everyone.

Yours,

The Always Team

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Puberty

What

Physical and emotional changes that happen to prepare the body and mind for adulthood.

When

Usually between 8 - 14 years old.

During puberty your body becomes able to reproduce, but that doesn't mean that you need to start thinking about having sexual relationships or becoming a parent.

Changes during puberty

What causes changes to happen?

Areas of the brain start making a lot more hormones. These chemicals send messages to the body to begin making some changes.



Physical changes

- You grow taller
- Body hair grows: pubic, legs, armpits, face & chest
- Skin can get oilier and pimples may appear
- Sweating increases, body develops own unique odour

Emotional changes

- Emotions and feelings may seem stronger
- Brain development alters the way you think and understand
- New feelings of attraction may begin

Key Physical Changes That Come With Puberty



- Breasts start to grow
- Vaginal discharge begins
- Hips and thighs begin to change shape
- Weight may change
- Labia may grow and become fuller
- Periods start



Scan to watch
a video about the
menstrual cycle

Understanding the menstrual cycle

Every month, the uterus prepares for pregnancy. If no pregnancy occurs, the lining of the uterus (endometrium) sheds, and endometrial tissue, blood and other fluids are passed through the vagina. This is a **period** and it's a **totally natural process**.

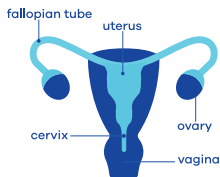
Cycle length

The time from the first day of a person's period in one cycle to the first day of their period in the next cycle.

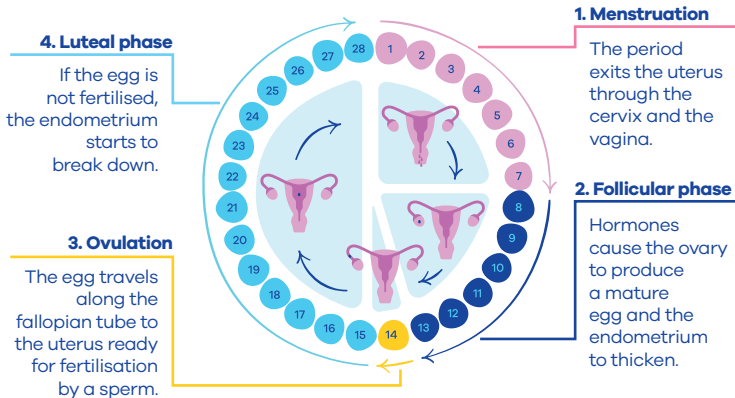
How long is it?

In the first 3-7 years, the menstrual cycle is usually 21-45 days. For adults, it's typically 28 days.

Internal genitals



Phases of the menstrual cycle



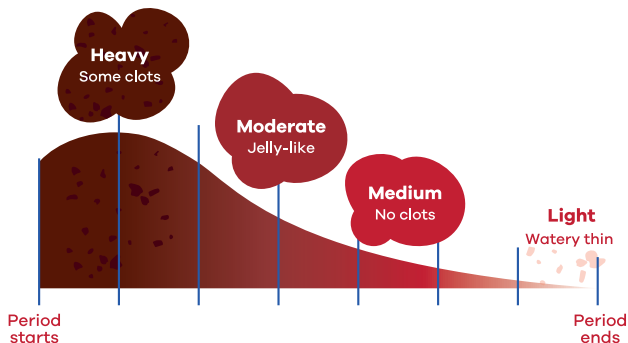
Periods

A period usually lasts between 3 - 7 days, with 5 days being the average. If you're worried about the length of your period, talk to a trusted adult or doctor.

On average a person loses about **4 to 12 teaspoons** of menstrual fluid during their period, but only a small amount of that is blood. Since the body contains 4 litres of blood on average, it's not a problem!



Menstrual fluid can change in consistency over the course of a period and from one period to the next. It's normal to pass some clots (lumps of blood) but see a doctor if they are big or frequent.



Period can also change in colour over time. Check out the below, and see a doctor if you're worried.



Newest and heaviest blood.



Older blood that's taken longer to leave the uterus.



Usually on lighter days and spotting.



Could be an infection, especially if it has an unpleasant smell - see a doctor.



PMS and cramps

Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) can happen before the start of a period. The symptoms are different for everyone, and there are lots of ways to manage them.

Common PMS symptoms:

- Feeling swollen or bloated
- Change in appetite & food cravings
- Abdominal cramps & feeling queasy
- Breast tenderness
- Acne or skin rash
- Headaches
- Mood changes: feeling sad, tearful, tired or irritable

How to manage PMS and cramps

Try gentle exercise.



Use a hot water bottle, take a bath, or if you're considering taking mild pain medication, check in with a health care provider.

Take time for yourself, rest and relax.



Eat healthily: look for foods high in fibre, low in sugar and fat.

Helping others deal with PMS and cramps

- Don't assume you know how they feel - it's different for everyone.
- If they're finding things tough, be supportive.
- Don't tease them by saying 'it's that time of the month'.
- Try not to take it personally if they're irritable.

Period

FAQs

What are the signs that my first period is coming?

A few things will happen:

- You grow taller
- You develop body hair on your legs or under your arms
- Your breasts start to grow
- You start getting a whitish or yellowish discharge from your vagina

These are all normal and nothing to worry or be embarrassed about.

I haven't started my period, am I late?

You're most likely to get your period between the ages of 8 and 16, and about 2 years after your breasts start to grow, but everyone is different. If you haven't started your period by 16 talk to a trusted adult or doctor.

Should I keep track of my cycle?

Yes. Keeping track of your cycle helps you understand how your body works and when your period will start. It can also be helpful information for a doctor if there's ever a problem.



Scan to use the **Always period calculator** to track your period.

What if my period is irregular?

Many people have unpredictable periods for the first few cycles. But once you've had a few periods, it should come between **every 21 to 45 days**. If you're worried, talk to a trusted adult or doctor.

Can I play sports when I'm on my period?

Yes absolutely! If you're going swimming or doing a water sport, you can use a tampon.

Is it normal to have light vaginal bleeding between periods?

This can be normal if it happens around your usual period (before or after) - it's called **spotting**.

If it's happening often or unpredictably, you should check with your doctor.

What if I get my period at school/away from home?

Don't panic, just be prepared!

- Keep a **pad or tampon** with you (e.g. in your purse, schoolbag, locker, pocket).
- Use a **panty liner** a few days before your period is meant to start.
- If you get caught off guard, use **folded toilet paper** until you can get a period product.



You can also **ask your school nurse, a friend or a trusted adult** if you don't have any products available.



How should I wash my vulva and vagina?

To clean your vulva (your external genitals) wash daily with water and an unscented soap. Natural discharge keeps your vagina clean - so there is no need to wash inside you.



Zara's period story:



'I was the first to start my period. I told a few friends and they were really supportive. At first I felt embarrassed, but soon I became the official expert and everyone had questions. In the end, I enjoyed being able to help them out!

In the beginning, I was worried people could smell my period but even though period blood does have an odour, nobody else can tell. Of course, I wash daily and change my pad or tampon every 4-8 hours, to keep as clean and fresh as possible.

I remember once I bled through my clothes when I was at school. I felt so embarrassed but my friend told me it's nothing to be ashamed of. It's true - and I'm sure it'll happen to everyone at some point. I just changed my pad and tied my jumper around my waist so nobody could see. Now I always carry spare underwear just in case.'



Aisha's period story:



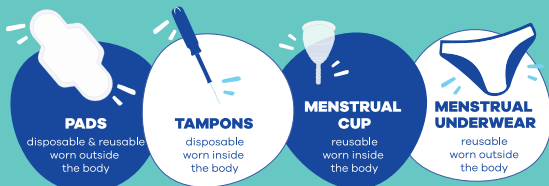
'I was worried as I was the last of my friends to start my period. I thought something was wrong with me so I decided to see my school nurse. They reassured me that everyone is different and it's normal to start a bit later. When mine did start I was totally ready with loads of advice from my friends.

Once my pads and tampons fell out of my bag at school. I felt a bit embarrassed but then I thought, why should I? It's nothing to feel ashamed of - so I just said 'whoops!' and picked them up.

Sometimes people ask if I'm on my period. Usually I'm happy to talk about it, but if I'm not I just say 'it's none of your business'. People usually respect that.'

Period protection

There are lots of different period products available - try different ones to find out what you like.



Pads

Most people start with pads as they're really easy to use.

Familiar shape? - That's because it's shaped to fit your body.

Where'd it go? - The absorbent core pulls fluid away from your body.

Wings - Help your pad stay in place and prevent side leaks, enabling you to move freely.

Super strong adhesive - for stay-put protection.



Choosing a pad

Always pads have different shapes, lengths and levels of absorbencies. Check out the table below to choose the one that best fits your shape and flow.

FIND YOUR SIZE	S			M			L		

Covering your daily routines

Knowing which pad to use when can feel a bit overwhelming. But Always has products that fit your days and cover your nights...



Always Day Pads
protect you when active

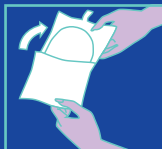


Always Night Pads
are longer and wider to
protect when lying down

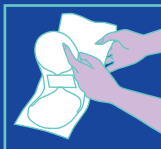
How to use a pad



1. Wash hands
before and
after.



2. Open wrapper.



3. Detach pad
and remove
paper strip
covering wings.



4. Stick pad
inside knickers
and wrap
wings around.



Change your pad **every 4 to 8 hours**, or more often if your flow is heavy. Use clean underwear every day and change them if they become dirty.

How to dispose of a pad

- 1.** Fold the pad up & wrap it in the wrapper from your new pad, or in toilet paper.
- 2.** Put the wrapped-up pad in the waste bin.



Bin it
Don't flush it!

Discharge & panty liners

What is discharge?

A creamy white/yellowish fluid that you might sometimes notice in your underwear.

Why does it happen?

Discharge helps to reduce bacteria, prevents infections and keeps your vagina healthy.

How much is normal?

Discharge can vary throughout the cycle. If it's different than usual, has a bad smell or you experience itching, see a doctor.



Scan to watch a video about vaginal discharge

Panty liners

Discharge is normal and healthy but you might want to wear a **panty liner** like Always Dailies Fresh & Protect. They absorb discharge and can help you feel fresh and dry. Panty liners can also be used if you are uncertain of when you will get your period and alongside a tampon during your period.

Unlike pads, which are designed to be used only during your period, panty liners are designed to be worn every day.

How do I dispose of it?

Treat it like a used pad, wrap it up and then put it in the bin, never in the toilet.



Bin it

Don't flush it!



Sustainability

At Always, we are focused on **reducing** our waste to help lessen the environmental impact of our products and packaging. These are some of the things we are currently doing:



Zero waste to landfill manufacturing sites

Our products are made at sites that send no manufacturing waste to landfill. Instead, we repurpose the waste or change it into energy.



Less materials, more protection

We're continually working to provide more protection with thinner pads – better for your comfort, and better for our planet.



Sustainable packaging solutions

We're reducing packaging waste by making our packaging more easily recyclable and testing new recycling solutions. We're also using more recycled plastic in our packaging.

You can help too! Bin it, don't flush it.

Did you know that disposing of your used period products correctly actually minimises their environmental impact?

We get it...the oh-so-tempting convenience of flushing a pad or liner down the toilet seems like the perfect, mess-free thing to do. But not only can that product cause blockages, it can also result in negative consequences for our planet. When it comes to most period products... bin it, don't flush it!



Staying healthy and confident

Top tips to stay healthy

Personal hygiene

- Wash and use deodorant daily.
- Wash & condition your hair regularly.
- Brush & floss your teeth twice daily.



Eat well

- Eat a balanced diet containing fruit & vegetables, carbohydrates and proteins.
- Limit fatty & processed foods, fizzy drinks and unhealthy snacks.



Sleep well

- Try to get 8 to 10 hours sleep a night.
- Avoid all screen time for 1 hour before bed.
- Stick to a regular sleep routine.



Be active

- Exercise keeps your body healthy and boosts energy.
- It helps you build confidence and develop teamwork & communication skills.



Manage acne

- Wash daily using unscented soap.
- Avoid oil-based products.
- Remove make-up before bed.
- Don't pick or squeeze.
- If concerned, see a doctor.



Seek advice

- Talk to a trusted adult and check in with a doctor if you have any concerns about your physical or mental health.



Understand the risks of drugs and alcohol

- Legal & illegal substances affect your body and brain.
- They can cause serious long-term damage and can even be life-threatening.



Staying confident

Self-confidence is a feeling of trust in ourselves, in our abilities and in our judgement. Developing your self-confidence can help you to cope with the different changes you will experience during puberty.



*Scan for more
tips to build
confidence*

One of the ways you can boost your self-confidence, is by developing a growth mindset. This means training your brain so that you can overcome obstacles and learn from them, building your skills and self-confidence. **Your brain is like a muscle** - it gets stronger with exercise!

Growth mindset goals:



See failures as **opportunities to learn and improve**.



Break big goals down into smaller, more manageable steps.



Remind yourself of **your achievements** (however small) to keep you feeling positive.



Focus on your strengths to boost your confidence and energy levels.

Positive language top tips:

Instead of...

I can't do it

Say this...

I can't do it, YET!

I give up

I'll use a different strategy

I can't make this any better

I can always improve



New feelings & relationships

While changes to your body are obvious there's a lot of changes happening to your brain, too! And, with all your new hormones, you'll probably start experiencing new feelings & that's totally normal.

Personal intimacy

You may want to start exploring parts of your body like your genital area. This is normal and healthy – but should be done in private.

New friendships

Does it feel like you have less in common with old friends? It's okay to make new friends as you explore new interests.

What makes a great friend?

- Trustworthy
- Supportive
- Good listener
- Understanding
- Fun
- Gets you!

Intimate feelings towards others

Developing new feelings towards others and seeing them as more than friends is totally normal. Just remember they may not feel the same as you and it's important to respect that.



Romantic relationships

- Take it slow! Enjoy getting to know each other.
- Don't forget your friends and the things you enjoy doing – they are also important!
- Never feel pressured into doing anything you are not comfortable with – speak to a trusted adult if you are concerned.



Sara's Story: Dealing with heartbreak

'I felt so upset when my first relationship ended. I really loved him! I didn't want to see my friends, but my mum encouraged me to talk to them. I'm glad I did as they were really supportive and it was good to talk about it. I guess relationships come and go - it's just part of growing up.



Where to get more info

Puberty can be overwhelming. If you're finding things difficult, take time out, try deep breathing, speak to friends, family & teachers - you don't have to go through it on your own.



For more information visit:

always.co.uk &
tampax.co.uk



Follow us on Instagram:

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& @tampax_uk



Subscribe to our YouTube Channels:

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Take action to end period stigma!



A global day of action to fight period stigma.

Get involved!

Make and wear a Menstruation Bracelet to show that periods are nothing to hide!

Find out more here



Scented Sanitary Pads and Pantyliners

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Procter & Gamble UK, Weybridge,
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