

Always' Puberty & Confidence Guide

for parents & carers



Dear parents and carers,

Going through puberty and starting to have periods is a big milestone for you and your child.

This booklet will help you to talk openly about the changes they'll experience, answer any questions they may have and help them build their confidence.

Yours,

The Always Team

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Changes during puberty

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

Here's a quick refresher of the changes young people with female sex organs go through during puberty.

Physical changes

- Breasts start to grow
- Body hair grows: pubic, legs, armpits
- Skin can get oilier and pimples may appear
- Sweating increases, body develops own unique odour
- Vaginal discharge begins
- Hips and thighs may change shape
- Weight may change
- Labia may become fuller
- Periods start

Emotional changes

- Brain development alters the way they think and understand
- Emotions and feelings may seem stronger and expressed more easily
- May experience mood swings
- May become more self-conscious & compare themselves to others
- New feelings of attraction may begin



Reassure your child that puberty and all the related changes are just part of growing up. They happen to all of us - so no need to be worried.

Most young people will get their period between the ages of 11 and 13 and about 2 to 3 years after their breasts start to grow. If they haven't got theirs by 16, it is still likely to be fine but encourage them to talk to their doctor.

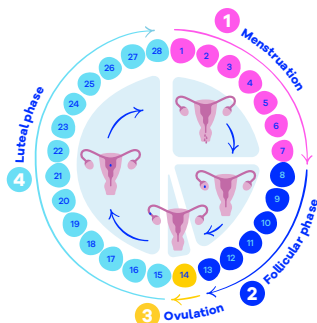
The menstrual cycle & periods

What is the menstrual cycle?

It's the sequence of events that occur within a person with female sex organs' body as it prepares for the possibility of pregnancy each month.

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.



What happens?

How your child may feel?

What to eat?

What exercise to do?

1

Menstruation

The period exits the uterus through the cervix and the vagina.



- Low energy
- Cramps

- Iron rich foods such as beans, leafy greens, lean meat and eggs
- Avoid fatty and salty foods



2

Follicular phase
Pre-ovulation

Hormones cause an ovary to produce a mature egg and the lining of the uterus (endometrium) thickens.



- Increased energy and brainpower
- A good time to study

- Foods high in vitamin E, such as sweet potatoes and leafy greens to nourish the ovaries



3

Ovulation

The egg travels along the fallopian tube to the uterus, ready for fertilisation by a sperm. If a sperm fertilises the egg, a pregnancy begins to form.



- Increased confidence
- Try new activities

- Oily fish to help nourish the body and brain



4

Luteal phase
Pre-menstrual

If the egg is not fertilised, the endometrium starts to break down.



- Less energy
- PMS & cramps
- Time for self care

- High fibre foods such as berries, beans and nuts
- Avoid processed foods and fizzy drinks as they can make PMS & cramps worse



walk



yoga



run



high intensity



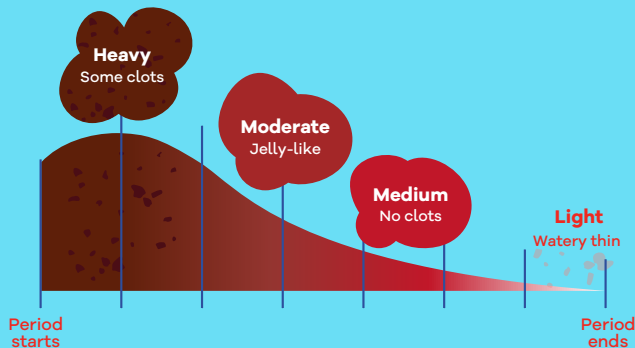
strength

What a period can look like

The average person loses about 4 to 12 teaspoons of menstrual fluid during a period. But only a small amount of that is blood. Since our bodies contain more than 4 litres of blood, it doesn't miss the little bit lost during a period!



A period leaves the body gradually, over 3-7 days. The flow might be slightly heavier at the beginning and lighter towards the end.



The menstrual fluid colour can vary throughout the cycle, from one cycle to the next and from person to person. It can be red, brown or pink depending on the stage of their cycle. If your child is worried, encourage them to check with a doctor.



Bright red

Newest and heaviest blood.



Dark red/brown

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



Pink

Usually on lighter days and spotting.



Orange

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



Black or grey

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

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 recommend your child to see a doctor if they are big or frequent.

Spotting

Light vaginal bleeding, or spotting, just before or after a period is normal. If it's happening often or unpredictably, encourage your child to check with a doctor.

Your child's period

FAQs

What should I do if I get my period at school?

You can help them prepare for it:

- Provide period products to put in their schoolbag, purse or locker.
- Reassure them that they can ask a friend, school nurse or trusted adult for a period product.
- They can also use folded up toilet paper until it's possible to get a period product.

I feel moody, what can I do?

Mood changes are one of the symptoms of **Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)**, which can happen before the start of a period. To help your child you can help them identify their emotions and manage them in healthy ways, like talking about them or writing a diary.

What are cramps?

Cramps can be felt just before or during a period when the muscle of the uterus contracts to make its lining leave the vagina as menstrual flow.

How can I manage my cramps?

Encourage them to:



Try gentle exercise.



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



Use a **hot water bottle**, take a **warm bath**. If they want to use **mild pain medication**, check in with a health care provider.



Take time for themselves, **rest and relax**.

What do I do if my period products fall out of my bag in public?

Reassure them that this can happen and it's nothing to be embarrassed about. Tell your child to just pick up the products and put them back in their bag. If they feel the need to comment, they can just say "Whoops!" while picking them up.

What do I say if someone asks me if I'm on my period?

Let your child know that there shouldn't be any pressure to share something just because somebody asks. They can feel free to say "yes", "no", or "it's none of your business".

Is it OK to talk openly about periods?

Yes! Remind your child that periods are natural and nothing to be ashamed of. Acknowledge that some people feel uncomfortable talking about periods, but the more we learn and talk about them, the more normal it will become.

What if I get stains?

Reassure them that period accidents happen to everyone and it's not a big deal. Help your child get prepared:

- Advise them to always carry a period product.
- Teach them how to track their period so they know when to expect it. You can encourage them to use the Always period calculator [here](#).
- Encourage them to wear a pantyliner in the days prior to their period.
- If they do get a stain at school they can tie a jumper around their waist until it's possible to change.

Can people smell my period?

Period blood has an odour but it isn't noticeable to others. Just remind your child to practice good hygiene, such as changing their pad or tampon every 4 – 8 hours and washing every day. If they are worried encourage them to talk to a 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 try using a tampon. Click [here](#) to find out more info about tampons.

How should I wash my vulva and vagina?

Natural discharge keeps the vagina clean, so there is no need for them to wash inside.

What if I'm the first of my friends to start my period, or the last?

Reassure your child that everyone is different and that's OK! If they are the first, they can decide if they want to tell their friends or not. They can be the expert their friends turn to when they get their period.

If they are the last, that is also OK. Remind them that if their period starts a little later, they will be well prepared and can benefit from the advice of their friends.



What period protection should they use?

Help your child get familiar with the different types of period products available - and encourage them to try different ones to find out what they like.



Most people start by using pads as they're so easy to use!



Picking the right pad helps prevent leaks. You and your child can use the chart below to find the right pad for their flow and body shape.

FIND YOUR SIZE	S M L		
			
			
			
			
			

Pads FAQs

What is the difference between ultra and thick pads?

Unlike thick pads, ultra pads like Always Ultra or Platinum, contain a super absorbent material that turns menstrual fluid into gel, preventing leaks. Ultra pads are also much thinner, so they can hardly be felt.

What is the advantage of pads with wings?

Many people like wings because they help the pad stay in place.

Should my child use day and night pads?

Yes! Always night pads have a wider back, so leaks are less likely, no matter how much they toss and turn.

How to use a pad

Tip: Wash hands before and after.



1. Open wrapper.



2. Detach pad and remove paper strip covering wings.



3. Stick pad inside knickers and wrap wings around.

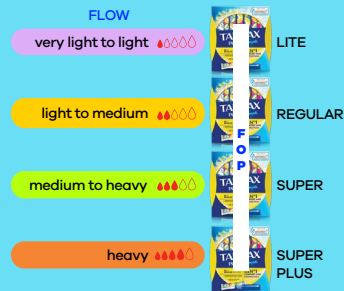
Tampons FAQs

Can my child use tampons?

Tampons can be used safely by anyone on their period. They're particularly useful during swimming and water-based activities. Using a tampon won't damage or rupture their hymen or cause them to lose their virginity.

How to choose the right tampon absorbency?

- Tampons come in different levels of absorbencies as everyone's flow is different and changes during their period.
- Use the smallest size tampon available for your first trial, such as lite or regular.



- TAMPAX Pearl Compak Regular is a good option to start with. On top of offering great protection, it has a smooth applicator with a rounded tip for easy insertion and it fits in a pocket, making it easy to carry around at school.
- If the tampon is difficult to remove after 4 to 8 hours and it still has some white parts on it, a lower absorbency should be used.

How to insert a tampon

Tip: Wash hands before and after.



1. Unwrap it and find a comfy position.



2. If using a compact tampon, like Tampax Pearl Compak, pull applicator out until it clicks.



3. Hold grip marks on applicator with thumb and middle finger. With string hanging down, insert plastic tube into vagina at a slight upward angle.



4. Gently slide applicator inside vagina until fingers touch body and with pointer finger, push smaller plastic tube all the way in.



5. To remove applicator, pull down gently on grip marks, leaving tampon inside and string hanging down.



Can my child use a tampon at night?

Yes. They can insert a new tampon before they go to bed and replace it when they wake up. If they sleep for more than 8 hours, it's better to use a pad instead.

Do tampons hurt?

No, they shouldn't feel a thing! If it's uncomfortable, they probably didn't insert it far enough. Advise them to use their finger to push it in a little further, or gently pull it out and try inserting a new one.

Are tampons easy to take out?

Yes. The removal string is sewn on tight, so they just need to pull it in order to remove the tampon. If they feel a strong resistance, the tampon might not be full yet. Advise them to switch to a lower absorbency tampon next time.

What if they can't find the string?

Usually it's just tucked under a labia! If they can't find it then it may have got tucked inside their vagina with the tampon. To get it out, advise your child

to wash their hands & stick their finger in their vagina to find the string. Once they have it, they can pull it out smoothly. If they're having difficulties, they can try bearing down as if they're pooping, as this will push the tampon lower in the vaginal canal and make it easier to find the string.

Can the tampon disappear inside their body?

The tampon is placed in the vagina, which is connected to the uterus by the cervix. The tampon can't go through the cervix, so it will always remain in the vaginal canal.

Can they pee while wearing a tampon?

Tampons go in the vagina (not in the urethra) so they can still pee while wearing one.

Do they need to wear a pad and a tampon?

No. Tampons are designed to work on their own. But while they're getting used to tampons, they can use a pantyliner for extra reassurance.

Are Always pads and Tampax tampons ingredients safe?

Yes! The safety of the millions of Always and Tampax users around the world is our number-one priority, so all ingredients go through rigorous safety evaluations and our products are reviewed by independent experts including physicians, scientists and health authorities. You can learn more about the rigorous testing and see our pad components [here](#) and our tampon components [here](#).

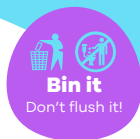


Caring for the environment

At Always and Tampax we're working to limit our impact on the environment by reducing the waste of our packaging and products through innovations and new partnerships.

How to dispose of pads and tampons?

Flushing pads or tampons can cause the toilet, or other parts of the system, to clog up. Teach your child to wrap used pads, tampons and tampon applicators in toilet paper and put them in the bin.



Menstrual cups

Unlike tampons or pads which absorb blood, a menstrual cup collects it. They can also reuse it again and again.

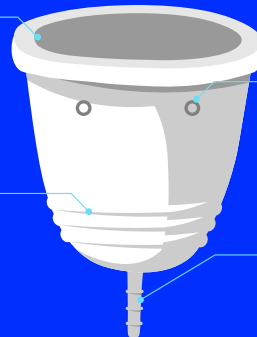
Different parts of a menstrual cup:

Rim - Opens easily after insertion to hold cup in place.

Airholes - Allow them to more easily remove their cup.

Grip Rings - For easier removal.

Stem - Used to check if the cup is in-place securely and to locate it for removal.



How to use a menstrual cup:

Tip: Wash hands before and after.

1. Fold menstrual cup using chosen method.
2. Insert cup into vagina where it will open up to collect menstrual fluid. If placed correctly, the seal should prevent leaks.
3. To remove cup simply pinch to break seal, remove and pour contents away.
4. Clean the cup with water and a gentle soap between uses.



To sanitise the cup, boil in water for 5-8 minutes before and after each cycle.



Toxic shock syndrome

What's TSS?

Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) is a rare but serious infection, that can be fatal, so it's important to know the signs. With early diagnosis it can be successfully treated. It's associated with tampon and menstrual cup use, but can occur in anyone - not just people with periods.

The symptoms:

- Sudden high fever (usually over 39°C)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Sunburn-like rash
- Dizziness
- Muscle ache
- Fainting/near fainting when standing

If your child has one or more of these warning signs, ensure they remove the tampon immediately and contact a health care provider, telling them they think they might have TSS.

How can I reduce the risk of my child getting TSS?

Although TSS is rare, you can encourage them to:

- Alternate tampon use with pads.
- Use a tampon with the minimum absorbency needed for their menstrual flow.
- Wash hands before and after inserting a tampon.
- Consult a doctor before using tampons again if they've had TSS warning signs in the past.



- Encourage your child to change their tampon every 4 to 8 hours. If your child sleeps longer than that, it's better to wear a pad.
- To help them remember when to change their tampon, encourage them to set an alarm or write down when it was inserted.

Discharge & pantyliners

During puberty, people with female sex organs will probably start to notice that their underwear sometimes gets stained with discharge - a creamy white/yellowish fluid. This is perfectly normal and healthy; it helps to reduce bacteria and keeps the vagina healthy.

How much discharge will my child get?

The amount of vaginal discharge can vary during the menstrual cycle due to hormonal changes. If their discharge is significantly different than usual, has a bad smell or if they experience itching in or around their vulva, encourage them to see a doctor, as it could be a sign of an infection.

Should they use pantyliners?

To stay feeling fresh, pantyliners can be worn to absorb vaginal discharge, as a back up for tampons or just before their period starts. They simply stick to the inside of underwear.



Period talk top tips



It's important for all young people to understand about puberty and periods from an early age, to prepare them for the changes they, or someone they know, will experience. As they get older, you can go into more detail.

1. **Understand what your child already knows** and adapt accordingly.
2. **Look for natural moments to bring up the discussion.**
Perhaps when you see an advert for period products, or when you see them in the supermarket.
3. **Make it a dialogue, not just a one-off discussion.**
Encourage them to come to you whenever they want to talk about periods or any other aspect of puberty.
4. **Use accurate words – not euphemisms!**
 - Phrases like “aunt flow” or “shark week” can imply that periods are something to be ashamed of.
 - Use words like “period products” instead of “sanitary products”, as the latter can imply that there is something unsanitary or unhygienic about periods, which of course there isn't!
5. **Be honest.** Going through puberty can be challenging – so don't feel like you need to sugarcoat everything.
6. **Reassure them that the changes they are going through are normal** and they shouldn't stop doing the things they enjoy. And remind them - everyone is different, and so are their menstrual cycles!



Crystal's story:

'I felt so unprepared when I had my first period so I wanted my daughter's experience to be different. I started by creating a period pack and we talked about what she knew already and any questions she had. Anything I didn't know or was unsure how to explain, we looked up together. **It was a real bonding experience!**'

Parent and carer

FAQs

Should I celebrate their first period?

Ask your child whether they want to celebrate it or not.

How do I create a first period kit?

Consider adding a period guide, some period products, spare underwear, hand sanitiser and a thoughtful note. Encourage them to carry the kit in their schoolbag so they're always prepared.

Do they need to see a doctor when they get their first period?

Normally, no. However, encourage them to speak to their doctor if there are any problems - like severe pain or excessive bleeding.

Should I tell other people in the family about my child's period?

No, it's up to them if they want to tell others about their periods; doing it for them encroaches their privacy. But you can help them to understand that periods are completely natural, and talking about them is too.



Helping them stay healthy during puberty & beyond

Encourage your child to:

Personal hygiene

- Wash and use deodorant daily.
- Wash their hair regularly.
- Brush & floss their 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 regularly to boost energy & stay healthy.
- Try new activities to boost confidence.
- Choose fun activities rather than just competitive ones.
- Participate in group or team sports to develop teamwork and communication skills.



Manage acne

- Wash using unscented soap.
- Avoid oil-based products.
- Remove make-up before bed.
- Resist squeezing or picking pimples to avoid scarring.
- See a doctor if they are concerned.



Seek advice

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



Understand the risks of drugs and alcohol

- Be informed about the negative impact legal and illegal substances can have on the body and brain.



Helping them stay confident

As young people go through puberty, it isn't just their bodies that change - they may also develop new emotions and become more aware of what those around them do and think.

To help them stay confident, you can encourage them to develop a growth mindset.

A **growth mindset** is the belief that skills and abilities can grow with effort, whilst a **fixed mindset** assumes that abilities and intelligence are fixed traits that we have no control over. Explain to your child that the brain is like a muscle - it grows with exercise, practice and challenges.

Growth mindset tips



Set positive and realistic expectations with your child.



Support them through challenges, but don't solve their problems for them.



Encourage them to see failures as opportunities to learn and improve.



Remind them of their strengths & achievements to boost their confidence.



Try to be a good role model. Show them how you take risks and how you overcome failures.



Praise them for their efforts, as well as their achievements. For example 'You did really well on your test, your hard work & determination paid off.' vs. 'You did really well on your test, you're so smart!'



Stephen's story:

'As a family, we try to boost our daughters's confidence and support her to develop a growth mindset. Helping her break challenges down into smaller steps enables her to experience achievements faster and motivates her to keep going. Changing the words we all use really helps too, so instead of 'I can't do it', we say 'I can't do it yet, but I will!' And if any one of us experiences a failure, we try to actively reflect on what we can learn from it & what we can do differently next time. **As a family, we are embracing a growth mindset which, is great for all of us!**

Helping them build positive friendships

Ask them about their friends and how they make them feel.

Encourage them to meet new people.

Reassure them it's normal to feel anxious about fitting in – but it's important to be themselves.

Share your own experiences.

Give tips on how to navigate relationship conflicts, such as, avoiding the use of insults, and trying to understand things from others' perspectives.

Encourage them to write down and reflect on what they're experiencing, and talk to a trusted adult if they have concerns.

Remind them that the best way to make a good friend is to be one!

Helping them understand sexual feelings

The hormones the body produces during puberty can cause young people to experience new feelings, so it is natural if they're curious about their sexuality and start having crushes on others. Take the time to discuss this with them.

Personal intimacy

Wanting to explore parts of their body, like the genital area is normal and healthy! You can remind your child that it's personal and should be done in private.

Intimate feelings towards others

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



Romantic relationships

First romantic relationships can be exciting and overwhelming. Remind your child to:

- Take it slow! Enjoy getting to know each other.
- Continue seeing friends and doing the things they enjoy – they are important too.
- Never feel pressured into doing anything they are not comfortable with.
- Encourage them to speak to a trusted adult if they have any concerns.



Dealing with heartbreak

Mae's story:

'My daughter was heartbroken when her relationship ended. They hadn't been together for long but to her it was a big deal. We comforted her when she cried and were there for her to talk when she needed us. Encouraging her to see her friends really helped and they were a great support to her too.'



Helping them navigate gender

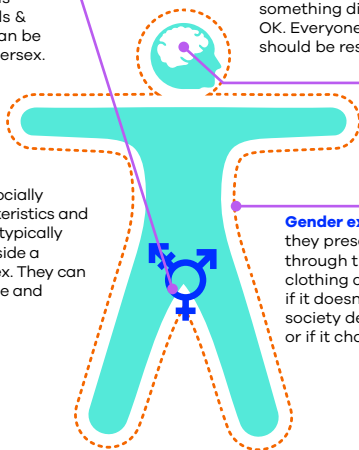
As your child grows up, they may start questioning their gender. This is OK and to better understand it, it's helpful to understand the following definitions:

Assigned sex at birth (sometimes called, biological sex): This is based on genitals & chromosomes. It can be male, female or intersex.

Gender identity: This is who they feel themselves to be. People may identify as male or female, or they may identify as something different - and that's OK. Everyone's gender identity should be respected.

Gender roles: The socially constructed characteristics and behaviours that are typically thought to go alongside a person's assigned sex. They can be used to stereotype and limit individuals.

Gender expression: The way they present their gender through their actions, clothing and more. It's OK if it doesn't match what society defines as 'normal', or if it changes.



How you can help:

If your child is questioning their gender, you can help by:

- Simply observing and accepting that finding your identity is a natural part of growing up.
- Reminding them that their assigned sex doesn't define what they can and can't do - they can do and achieve anything!
- Encouraging your child to be proud of their uniqueness, and focused on staying healthy & happy, and supportive of those around them.

For further advice and support contact one of the organisations below:
(local organisations to be added)

Helping them stay safe

Social media

Whilst acknowledging that this can be a great way to connect with others, it's important to remind young people to use it safely and responsibly.



Learn more from June's story:

'I was concerned my daughter was spending too much time on social media and she was becoming very critical of her appearance and her lifestyle. We talked about it together and I reminded her that social media isn't always an accurate portrayal of real life and that people often use filters to alter images. I also reminded her that what goes online stays there forever and to think very carefully about what she shares - especially intimate pictures or gossip! **Together, we came up with some rules for her social media use, and we often talk about what she sees and how it makes her feel!**



Bullying

There are many forms of bullying, for example:

- Name-calling
- Threatening and intimidating
- Excluding
- Spreading rumours
- Physical abuse
- Cyberbullying - online or by phone

Warning signs to look out for:

- Visible bruises or injuries
- More anxious or moodier than usual
- Becoming withdrawn
- Avoiding certain situations

What to do if your child tells you they're being bullied:

- Listen and praise them for telling you
- Be there for them
- Explain they are not to blame
- Build them up, boost their confidence
- Speak up - tell the school, club or the bully's parents



Let them know that if they're being bullied—or see it happening to someone else — it's important to talk to someone about it, whether that's with you, another adult or an older sibling.

Harmful sexual behaviour

Unwanted, abusive or harmful sexual behaviours can be perpetrated by adults or by other children.

Help your child to understand the difference between consensual, age-appropriate sexual behaviour, and sexual harassment, sexual violence, sexting (sending, receiving or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photos or videos) and upskirting (taking a photo under another person's clothing without their knowledge).

Be supportive and understanding, to encourage them to be open and honest with you.



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