

All about you!



Girls, girls, girls.



Growing up and out

Puberty starts when a gland just beneath your brain, the pituitary gland, sends a signal for your body to start making a special chemical. These chemicals, or hormones, are called **oestrogen** and **progesterone** and they are responsible for most of the changes you notice about yourself. Only females have this special hormone; males have a different one that is responsible for most of the body changes called testosterone.

You know you are starting to go through puberty when you suddenly start to notice body changes. Don't worry if your friends seem to be growing more quickly than you. You'll soon catch up.

Girls go through many changes during puberty.

The main ones are:

- Your body grows taller
- Your body grows broader (hips in particular grow wider)
- Your breasts start to grow
- Your body may sweat more, and you may develop body odour
- Your hair may become more greasy
- Skin may become greasier and spots develop
- Hair starts to grow under your arms, on your legs and in the pubic area between your legs
- Periods start
- Emotional changes



Don't worry: Some of these don't sound like a great deal of fun—who wants wider hips, greasy hair and spots? But they are all normal, and they are often not as bad as you think they're going to be.

Periods - what are they?

A period is when you lose some fluid, including blood, from your vagina (one of the openings between your legs). This is a sign of a normal and healthy body and is nothing to worry about. It happens to most women each month.

Most girls start having periods between the ages of 9 and 16. There is no “right” time: your periods will start when your body is ready.

A period lasts for a few days—usually somewhere between 3 and 7 days.

Most women have a period each month. The average time between the first day of one period and the first day of the next period is about 28 days, but for some women it can be less and for some it can be more. Anywhere between 21 and 35 days is normal.

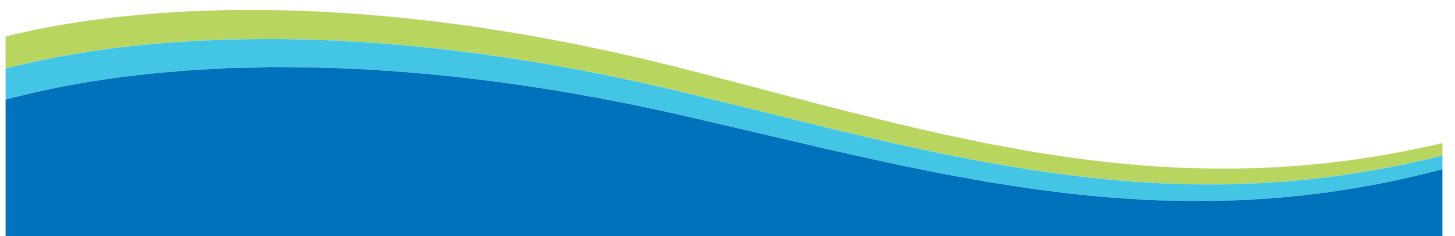
When you first start to have periods, they may not be very regular. After the first period, the next one might be two or three months later, and it might last one day or more. Your body will take a while to settle down into a regular cycle this may take two years or more again this is normal.

As a rough guide your periods will probably start:

- About two years after your breasts start to develop.
- Soon after you grow pubic hair.
- After you start to notice some vaginal discharge.

Some girls and women hardly notice any discomfort during a period. Others might have what we call cramps for a day or so they may also experience:

- An ache or cramp in the lower part of their tummy.
- Back ache.
- Ache along their inner thighs.



Ways to ease period cramps:

- Rub your tummy gently with your hand to make it feel warm.
- Soak for a while in a warm bath.
- Hold a hot water bottle against your tummy.
- Do some gentle exercises.

Periods - why do we have them?

Only women have periods - not men. A period is part of the natural cycle called the menstrual cycle that the female body goes through.

A woman's menstrual cycle lasts from the first day of one period until the beginning of the next.

Many countries around the world have myths and taboos about periods. Here are a few **remember they're not true!**

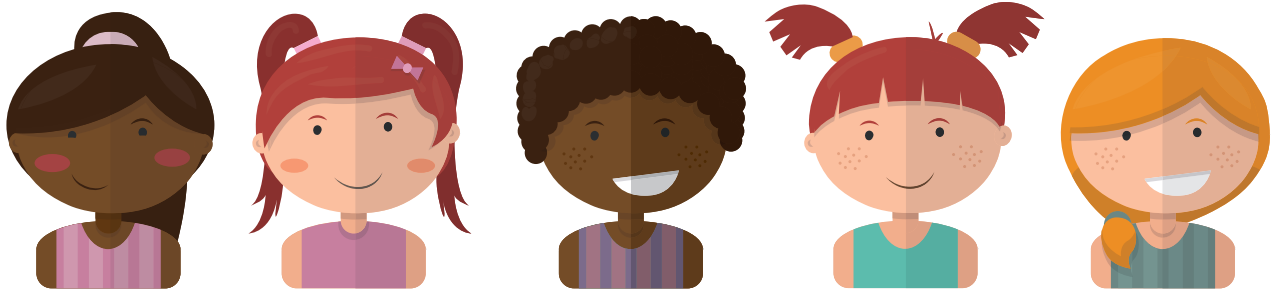
When I have my period:

- I can't wash my hair.
- I can't eat ice cream.
- I can't see my friends.
- I can't do any exercise.
- I can't eat my meals with others.
- I can't ride my bike.
- I can't go swimming.

Feminine protection

Pads

Pads come in different shapes and sizes because each girl is different and so are her periods and the level of protection she needs during the different days of her period.



There are thick pads, thin pads, normal and long length pads and pads with or without wings. With today's technology thin pads offer just as much protection as thick pads.

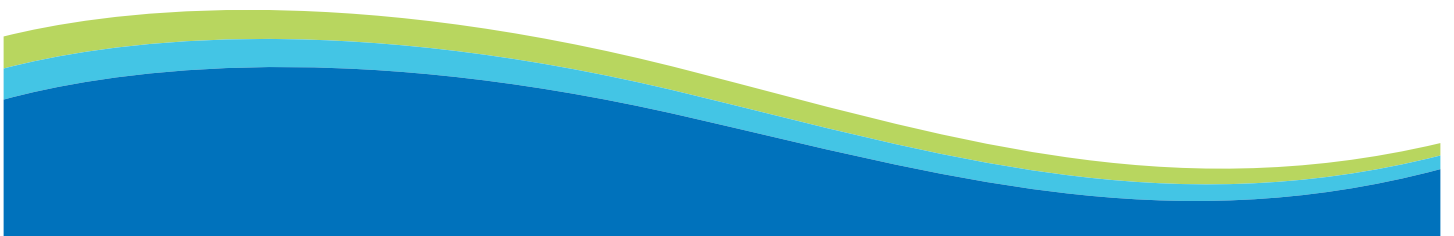
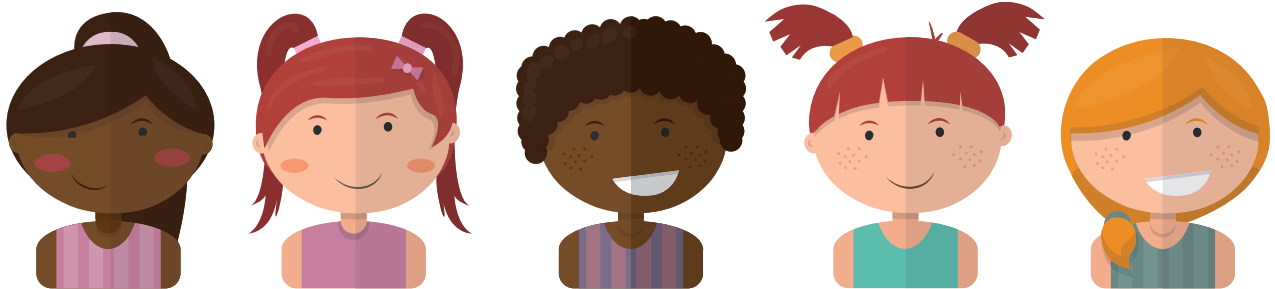
For those days and situations when you need a high level of protection it's best to choose a pad with wings. These wings wrap around the sides of your underwear to help the pads stay in place and protect it, but you must make sure you choose pads with long enough wings. For those days when you need a little bit less protection it's fine to use a shorter length pad without wings.

You might need more protection at night as you are lying down and may move around in your sleep and because you probably wear a pad for longer than you would during the day. There are pads especially for night-time and usually last the night.

How often you change your pads depends on how heavy your flow is and the kind of pad you are using. As you get older, near the beginning of your period when the flow is heaviest you may need to change your pad more regularly. You need to change them regularly to keep yourself fresh and clean. Also, they may start to leak if you wear them for too long. Remember to wash your hands before and after changing your pad. Remember when you first start your periods, they will be very light, but you still need to change your pad regularly.

How to use a pad:

- Start with washing your hands with soap.
- Remove the pad from the wrapper.
- Peel the pad off the wrapper and remove the paper strip that covers the sticky part of the pad. Put the wrapper and strip in the bin.
- Press the sticky side of the pad into the centre of your underwear. If your pad has wings, wrap those around the sides of your panties.
- Stick the pad in your underwear using the sticky strip on the back.
- Change your pad every few hours, or when it's soaked with blood.
- Wrap used pads in the wrapper or toilet paper and throw them in the trash.



How to get rid of a pad:

- Fold it up.
- Wrap it in tissue or toilet paper.
- Put it in the bin. There are special sanitary bins in the girls toilets at school.
- Don't flush pads down the toilet because they can block it.
- Some pads come individually wrapped in handed disposable wrappers just put the used pad in the wrapper of the new one and put it in the bin provided.

Another form of protection comes in the form of a tampon. However early on with your periods it is advised to use sanitary towels until your periods have settled into more of a regular cycle please ask your parent, guardian or trusted person about tampons and the use of them.

Breasts why do we have them?

The first sign of breast growth happens when the breasts first start forming breast buds, small mounds of tissue underneath the nipples, like little berry-sized bumps. Breast buds can make your areola, the dark skin around your nipple, appear raised and puffy.

The development of breast buds is one of the first signs of puberty starting. Breast buds tend to make their first appearance between the ages of 8 and 13. Don't worry if you develop later, girls start to develop breasts at different times.

The breasts primary function is to produce milk for nutrition for a baby. Your breasts may grow quickly or slowly. You may notice that your nipples become darker in colour and that they become tender when you touch them. Don't worry if one breast starts to grow more than the other this is quite normal. Ask your trusted adult about training bras and having a bra fitting as you develop more.



Up and down

Puberty can have its confusing and difficult moments. There are so many changes going on with your body sometimes you can't wait to be an adult and at the other times you may still want to stay a child.

Classmates can sometimes be unkind and tease others about the way their bodies look and change during puberty. The only thing to remember at times like this is that everyone is special and is going through a very important stage in their life, and that everybody will go through this stage at some point. Puberty starts at different times for different people only your body can decide when it is right time for you.

Why do I sometimes get upset and angry very easily?

It is perfectly normal to feel like this at times during puberty. You may also have some worries about the way your body is changing. Also, the hormones which caused the physical changes in your body also affect your moods. This is partly why you can sometimes get really upset about something would not usually worry you. You may find you can be tearful or cross in the days before your period. This is because of the changing level of hormones in your body. Don't worry you're not alone this happens to lots of girls and women. It is always good to let your parents, carers or trusted adult know how you are feeling as it is good to talk and not keep it all inside.

Do you find that you argue more these days?

Well it's not surprising you're growing up and becoming more independent. This often means that you disagree or argue more particularly with your parents, guardians and friends. This is a normal part of growing up, but it can cause problems. Many parents, carers and guardians, take time to adjust to the grown up person that you are becoming. A bit of patience and understanding by everyone helps to keep things calm. Remember talking about how you are feeling is positive.



Feeling great inside and out

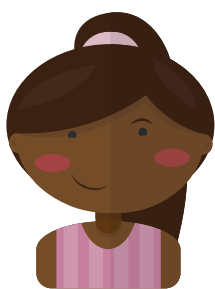
Your body is very special and needs to be looked after. There are lots of ways you can help to keep yourself clean and healthy so that you look and feel your best. Remember when you feel clean all over you look great all over! And when you look great you feel great!

You grow more during puberty than at any other time in your life except for when you are a baby. To grow like this, you need lots of energy and you get your energy from the food you eat. This is why it is very important to make sure you eat a healthy well balanced diet and drink plenty of water based drinks.

You need to eat a wide range of foods to make sure you are getting all the goodness you need. Try to eat plenty of protein found in fish, meat, cheese, milk, eggs and beans. You also need carbohydrates found in bread pasta and cereals and plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables ideally 5 portions a day.

Do you want to look good? Do you want to feel good? Do you want to have more energy? Then get active! Sport and exercise are great ways of keeping your body healthy they helped make you strong and supple and they make your heart and lungs work better to and keep you emotionally happy also. There are lots of things you can do either with your friends or by yourself the secret is to find someone think you enjoy and keep at it. Here are some ideas for getting active. Maybe the best thing about them is that you'll hardly notice you're working out!

- Go rollerblading skating cycling hiking or swimming with friends or with family.
- Walk or cycle to school instead of taking the bus and don't forget your safety helmet.
- Walk up the stairs instead of using the lift.
- Take a younger sibling to the park or playground and play some ball games with parent permission.
- When you are talking on the phone do some exercises such as tightening and relaxing your stomach muscles. No one will know you're chatting and exercising at the same time!
- Dancing is a great way to keep fit and have some fun so turn your iTunes up and get moving!



Questions and answers

What if I have my first period when I'm at school?

Virtually all girls are taken by surprise when they get their first period even if they are quite well informed so don't worry. Ask a friend and a teacher to help you no one will mind and nobody else will know. All schools keep some spare pads for times just like this. Also, you could make a little bag or old pencil case with a spare pair of knickers, two or three pads and a little tissue paper and keep it in your own school bag in case it happens at school.

Remember it's something that all female teachers go through as well and all male teachers know about so don't be embarrassed, they will help you.

Will anyone notice I have my periods?

Not unless you tell them!

How will I tell my parent or carer when my period comes?

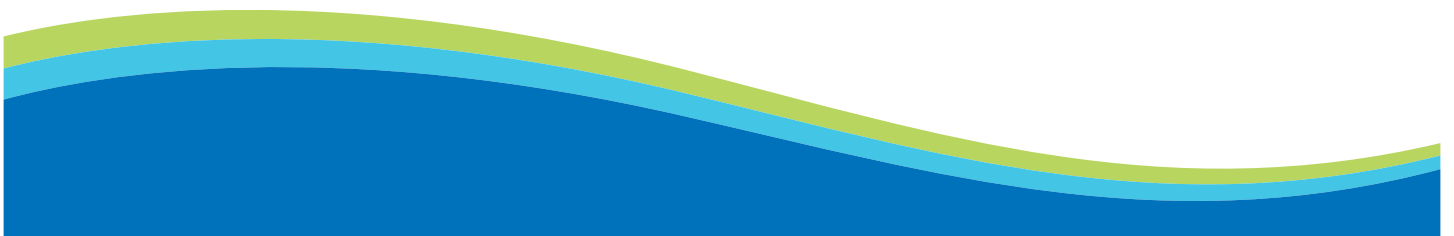
Don't be embarrassed remember all mums and older sisters also have periods and will know all about what to do and how to help you. Also, dads and male carers will understand and can support you also. You will need to tell them so that they can give you some pads to absorb the flow. Just don't worry what is happening to you as it happens to all women around the world and will happen to all your friends also.

Is there anything I will not be able to do when I'm on my periods?

No having a period is a normal healthy part of being a woman it doesn't have to stop you doing the things you usually do and shouldn't.

Is it OK to have a bath or shower when I have my period?

Definitely during your period is the most important time to keep yourself fresh and clean.



Feeling good in your skin

Prevention

Prevention is always better than cure. You could try washing your skin daily with an antibacterial lotion or face wash to remove the grease bacteria and dead skin cells that cause spots. Although normal soaps are quite good at removing dirt from the skin, they may dry it out or leave a residue behind which may block the pores. Warm water and unperfumed soap will remove all the daily dirt and grease from your skin. So, it's important to wash your face with a clean flannel morning and night.

Medicated face washes

These are washes for cleansing your skin as they remove spot causing bacteria more effectively and avoid over drying. Most are developed for the more delicate skin on your face.

Medicated lotions

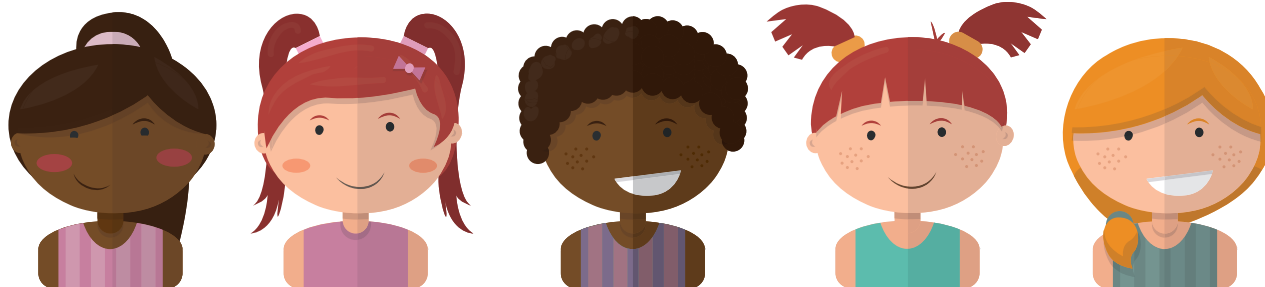
These serve as a good substitute for regular lotions as they contain antibacterial ingredients. They can unclog pores by removing the daily build-up of grease under your skin.

Medicated pads

These are convenient cleansing alternatives. They are usually pads that are pre-soaked in antibacterial solutions. Not only do they cleanse the paws they leave behind anti spot ingredients to help prevent new spots appearing.

Even if you follow a good cleaning routine there may be times when you get the odd spot. If this happens use one of the range of products at treat spots.

Don't worry if you do develop spots don't let this knock your confidence or self-esteem. Other people don't notice them half as much as you do! If they get bigger and sore speak with your parent, carer or guardian and they can make an appointment with your doctor as this may be a condition called **acne** and they can prescribe appropriate medication and advise you.



No Sweat

Just as some glands produce more oil your sweat glands produce more sweat which is called perspiration. Perspiration is normal and important it helps your body regulate its temperature.

You have two different kinds of sweat glands. The first type are called eccrine glands which produced perspiration that is clear and odourless. These glands start working as soon as you are born. The second type called apocrine glands and only become active when you start puberty. They produce a different kind of perspiration which can smell unpleasant when it comes into contact with bacteria on the skin. This smell is known as BO or body odour so it is important to shower or wash daily.

A lot of apocrine glands are located under your arms so many people use underarm deodorants or antiperspirants to control the smell. There are two different kinds of product you can buy.

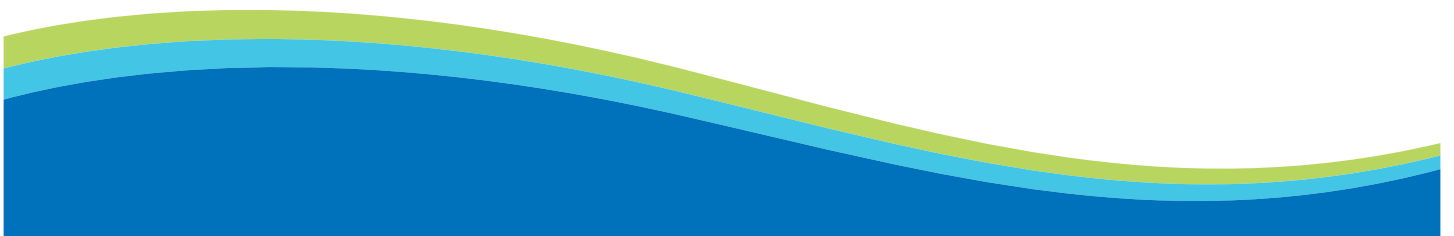
Deodorants

These are basically perfume's which mainly mask or cover up body odour. Body sprays are a type of deodorant.

Antiperspirants

This helps stop body odour from developing by reducing underarm wetness and main cause of underarm body odour and are the best deodorants to use especially before and after physical activity.

Deodorants and antiperspirants come in sprays and roll on's try them out and select the one that works best for you. But remember that you skin is sensitive, and it is probably best to use a non-fragranced antiperspirant only an antiperspirant will actually reduce the sweat. So, if you want to feel dry and smell good all day you could use an antiperspirant every day after you bath or shower and before and after physical activity.



Remember

The first step to keeping clean is to wash! Daily showers and washes get rid of the dirt and oil on your skin and reduces the bacteria that can lead to odour. If you can't have a daily bath or shower it is okay to have a wash standing up at the wash basin using a clean flannel and towel. Your clothes can absorb body odour as well so take a shower after physical activity and make sure you change into clean clothes.

Don't forget you're not on your own there is lots of help and support through family, teachers, the school nurse and friends, it's always good to talk to your trusted adult first-hand and just remember everybody in your class will go through puberty at some point. Boys also go through lots of changes although they do not have periods or develop breasts. Boys will go through physical changes such as growing taller and broader, grow facial and body hair and also emotional changes. So, it's just to be mindful that if one of your friends in your class is feeling a little bit quiet, sad or angry, they may just need a friend. You will learn lots more about you and your body when you start high school through PHSE lessons.

Remember you've got this!



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