



With you through your  
**Private Life Changes**

# Everything About Starting your Period

**Answers To Common Questions**





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## What is puberty?

Puberty is the period during which you grow from a girl into a woman. You mature physically and emotionally.

You go through major changes during this phase of your life. Your body grows, your period begins and your emotions change. You may sometimes feel sad, confused, or may become very sensitive or moody.

Puberty usually takes place between the ages of 9 and 14 and lasts for up to 6 years.

## What causes the changes in my body?

Changes in your body are stimulated by different types of hormones released by your brain. Hormones that are responsible for the physical changes in your body are called growth hormones.

Your body organs grow larger. You become taller and gain weight. Growth hormones have a direct effect on bone growth. This growth surge is one of the major changes your body goes through during puberty.

## What happens to my body during puberty?

The time and pace of how you develop is unique to your body. Some of your friends may develop before or after you. But one thing is sure; you will all go through these changes during puberty:

**Body growth** is one of the first signs of puberty. You grow taller and gain weight. Your breasts begin to develop.

**Hair** grows in your pubic area and eventually under your arms and on your legs.

Your **body shape** becomes more defined as your hips and waist become curvier.

Your **period** begins. This is when you start using sanitary napkins for protection during your period.



You will also experience vaginal discharge. Panty liners, a thinner pad, are ideal for staying clean and fresh.

## Why do I get pimples?

During puberty, your skin becomes oilier due to increased hormonal activity. Your glands grow. The oil produced by these glands blocks your skin pores, which causes pimples or acne. Many teenagers get acne, but some cases are more severe than others.

## My breasts are not exactly alike. Am I normal?

It's perfectly normal if your breasts are not exactly the same size. During puberty, one breast usually develops before the other. For this reason, you will always have one breast slightly larger than the other. Don't worry! This difference is usually so small that it will never be noticed by others.



## BEFORE MY FIRST PERIOD

### What is Pre-Menstrual Syndrome (PMS)?

Pre-Menstrual Syndrome or PMS is a group of physical and emotional symptoms that you might experience a few days prior to your period. These symptoms are due to hormonal changes in your body and disappear as soon as your period is over. Common symptoms include:

- Sore breasts
- Acne
- Headaches
- Backaches
- Tiredness
- Stomach bloating
- Nausea
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Food cravings
- Loss of concentration
- Mood swings: you may feel sad, angry, emotional

Don't worry! PMS is not as scary as it seems. You might only experience one, few or none of the symptoms. The intensity of the symptoms will differ for each one of you. Some girls may feel their lives are disrupted by PMS, while others don't.

### Will my period hurt?

Most girls get cramps or back aches before or during their period. This is due to the contraction of the uterus. The pain is usually bearable, though uncomfortable. Consult your doctor for medication or strategies to reduce pain if your cramps are intense.



## AFTER MY PERIOD BEGINS



### I sometimes have a white pasty discharge on my panties. What is that?

Vaginal discharge is caused by old cells inside your vagina. It is usually clear or milky. The color and thickness of this discharge changes along your monthly cycle. It gets thicker when you ovulate, around two weeks prior to your period. Use panty liners for daily freshness and protection and to keep your panties clean.

### My period cycle is not always regular. Is there something wrong with me?

It is normal not to have a very regular cycle during the first two years of your period. It takes some time for your body to regulate. However, your cycle should always vary between 21 and 35 days. Delays might also occur due to illness, stress, or a change in diet.

### My period flow is very heavy. Is this normal?

It is normal to have a heavy flow during the first two days of your period. However, you should consult your doctor if you are losing more blood than usual and if the heavy flow is prolonged.

### Why do I get cramps during my period?

During your period, the muscles of your uterus start to contract to allow the discharge of the blood and tissue that were formed in preparation for a possible pregnancy. These contractions get stronger during your period and might cause menstrual cramps.

Regular exercise and a healthy diet are essential to help reduce cramps. Keeping warm and drinking hot beverages can also help. If you still experience painful cramps, consult your doctor.

## AFTER MY PERIOD BEGINS



### What can I do to minimize PMS effects?

Eating healthy food, exercising, and sleeping well are mostly important to help reduce uncomfortable PMS symptoms. You should regularly eat plenty of fruit, vegetables and whole grains and drink a lot of water.

Avoid large quantities of salt, coffee, nuts and sugar. A healthy diet is essential not only during your period but throughout your cycle. Regular exercise is also vital in reducing cramps and staying in shape. Make sure to get plenty of sleep to help you feel peaceful and relaxed.

If you still experience intense PMS symptoms, consult your doctor.



## MY EMOTIONS

### Why do I sometimes feel emotional during my period?

Emotional changes during or before your period are the result of hormonal changes in your body. Your hormones (estrogen and progesterone) are at their lowest level when your period starts. This causes you to feel down, moody, anxious or overly sensitive. These mood swings are part of the PMS symptoms that happen before your period.

### Why do I argue so much with my parents?

Arguing sometimes with your parents is normal, especially during your teenage years when you start developing your own identity. You start developing your own opinions and making your own decisions. Your parents might find it hard to adapt to this new situation.

In the meantime, communication is the most important aspect in your relationship with your parents. You may be able to reach compromises and avoid endless fighting.

You should also keep in mind that your parents want what's best for you, and this is why they are over-protective. They too were teenagers and most of the times can also relate to what you're going through.

### How can I overcome shyness?

The key to overcoming your shyness is to practice social behaviors and build confidence with the people you feel most comfortable around. Use eye contact and confident body language, smile, introduce yourself, ask questions. It might be useful to sometimes prepare beforehand what you want to talk about and rehearse in front of the mirror.

Focusing on your strengths is a major aspect that will help you build confidence. Think about your qualities and strengths. Ask people around you about your strengths and focus on them to build self-confidence. With a little effort from your side, you will overcome shyness before you know it.





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