



# Puberty FAQ

## **Puberty**

Do your students have questions about puberty? If so, you might find answers here. We did our best to cover the basics.

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**What should I use for menstrual protection?**

**What should I do if I get cramps?**

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**For more answers to sensitive questions, ask the experts on [BeingGirl.com](http://BeingGirl.com)**

## Puberty

### How will I know when my period will start?

Although most girls get their period between 11 to 14 years old, you could start your period anywhere from 8 to 17.

You could narrow that down by taking clues from your body. During puberty, when your body becomes sexually mature, you'll have some of these changes that show your period's on its way. (By the way, these changes may happen in a different order than listed here.)

- \* **Developing Breasts.** First, you'll get breast "buds." (Your breasts then can take up to three to four years to fully develop.) Generally, you will get your period two to three years after your breasts start developing.
- \* **Growing Pubic Hair.** Right after your breasts start to form, you'll start developing pubic hair. It will be soft and thin at first, then gradually become coarser. Your period usually arrives around one to two years after the hair development.
- \* **Discharge.** This is the big sign. You'll start to experience vaginal discharge that will be either white or yellowish. Your period should start around 6-12 (but up to 18) months after the start of discharge.

There's one more way to figure out when you'll start menstruating: Ask your mom. You'll probably get your period within a year or so of when she got hers.

### What should I use for menstrual protection?

Choose feminine protection products based on the amount of your flow. If you have light to moderate flow, Always® Slender (pink color) fits the best. For moderate flow, use Always Regular (yellow); for moderate to heavy flow, use Always Super (green); and for heavy flow, use Always Maxi (red). Always also offers Always Overnight (orange) for your overnight protection. Some women use pantliners at the beginning and end of their period when their flow is light, or for added protection when using a tampon.



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### What should I do if I get cramps?

Pain killers with ibuprofen seem to work the best on menstrual cramps. Keep a menstrual calendar and try to predict when your period will come. (This can be a difficult task for the first year or so.) Then start taking the pain killer the night before you get your period. If the cramps stop you from participating in your life, ask your mom to take you to see a gynecologist.

You may also want to try [ThermaCare® Menstrual HeatPatches](#). Use ThermaCare Menstrual HeatPatches at an early stage of pain (and use them almost anywhere). Combined with exercise, this can help keep menstrual pain under control. For tips about how to use exercise to combat cramps, visit [ThermaCare](#).

### How can I change my pad at school?

Every girl needs to deal with this awkward situation, and like other girls, you'll find the best way for you. When you change your pad, wrap it with toilet tissue and put it in the appropriate trash container. If you are using tampons and the applicator is biodegradable and not plastic, you can flush everything in the toilet. Plastic applicators need to be disposed of in a trash container, not flushed.

### How can I bring my protection to school?

As a rule of thumb, it's always a good idea to always carry a purse, fanny pack or backpack with you so that every time you go to the bathroom, you always have your comb, tissues, makeup, etc. with you. That way, when you're carrying your feminine protection, it won't look obvious. If you aren't sure when your period is due, wear a pantiliner daily to avoid any accidents.

Also, check out the location in your school where emergency menstrual products are kept. Sometimes it is the school nurse, the health/physical education teacher or even the school secretary.

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### When will my breasts start growing?

One of the first signs of puberty is when your breasts start developing. Many girls start to get "breast buds" (mounds or bumps around or under the nipple) at 11, but that's average. If you're a few years younger or older than 11 when you develop breast buds, that's totally normal, too.

Next, your entire breast will start to get larger. Your nipple and areola (the area around the nipple) will get darker and form a separate, small mound. This whole process, from "flat" to "finish" takes from two to three years. Some girls develop more quickly than others, and it's not unusual for one breast to grow faster than the other. Sometimes it can take a while for things to "even out." But even some adult women have one breast that's bigger than the other.

Breasts get a lot of attention during puberty because they're new and not everyone gets them at the same time. Remember that everyone's breasts are different. What's important is the way you feel about your breasts and that, whatever their shape or size, you come to accept them as another unique and beautiful part of you.

### What is that white discharge? How do I deal with it? When will it stop?

It is normal to get a daily vaginal discharge. It begins a year or so before you start to menstruate and lasts for most of your adult life. Some days during your cycle the discharge is wet and liquidy, other days it is thick and rope-like. If you don't like the way it feels or you want to protect your undies, you might want to wear an [Always Pantiliner](#) each day. The pantiliner will absorb the vaginal discharge and help you feel fresh and dry.

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### **How can I keep this a secret?**

Perspiration or secreted or excreted fluid may create an odor when in contact with bacteria on your skin. You can use an antiperspirant if the odor occurs under your arms, and you can use antibacterial wipes, Always Feminine Wipes, or wash your pubic area with soap and water if you detect a vaginal odor. Scented menstrual/sanitary pads help disguise the menstrual odor. You can use tampons to reduce menstrual odor too. Since tampons collect menstrual discharge before it leaves your body, there is very little odor.

Some odors are related to vaginal infections. If you have a discolored discharge and any itching or burning associated with this odor, ask your mom to take you to see a gynecologist.

### **How can I ask the teacher to let me change my pad?**

It is best to change menstrual protection before or after lunch to avoid this problem. Most teachers are aware of your need to change your menstrual protection during class time. If you find the rules of the school do not allow you to use the bathroom during class, have your mom write a letter to your school principal and your classroom teachers that asks permission for you to use the bathroom when you feel it is necessary. The letter can indicate that you have need to use the bathroom for normal personal hygiene.

### **Can I take a bath or shower when I'm on my period?**

It is very important to continue to shower or bathe regularly (daily) when you are menstruating. In the shower, any discharge will go down the drain with the running water. This is not a problem.

### **Can I still play sports?**

You can certainly continue to participate in sports. As a matter of fact, you'll probably feel better if you are active during your period. If your sport is very active or involves swimming, you may want to consider using tampons as a menstrual protection.

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### Why are my first periods irregular?

Periods can be quite irregular during the first couple of years, and you can relax about this. Being extremely lean can affect your period. Chances are you will gain weight now that you are menstruating and your body is getting a fuller shape. Your periods will change over the next couple of years and become longer and on a regular cycle. The average period lasts three to seven days. Keep a menstrual calendar and you will be able to see when your periods become regular.

### What are the signs that a girl will start having periods?

As a rough guide, a girl's periods will probably start:

- \* About two years after her breasts start to develop
- \* Soon after she grows pubic hair
- \* After she starts to notice some vaginal discharge

### What is acne?

Acne (or "pimples") is a natural occurrence. It starts when the skin's pores become blocked with dead skin cells and sebum, which slows down the flow of sebum to the skin surface. Bacteria can then develop in the clogged pore, causing a pimple.

### How do I stop body odor?

The best ways to prevent body odor are to shower or take a bath daily, making sure you pay attention to your underarms also, wear clothes that breathe like cotton, and use a deodorant or antiperspirant.

Deodorants will not stop the sweat; they just partially cover up the smell. Antiperspirants help stop the sweat before it starts with a chemical called aluminum chlorohydrate. It actually stops the perspiration process.

Deodorants work best when they go on after you have showered and the skin under your armpits is slightly damp. It's a personal choice. To find out what works best for you, try the [Secret® Website](#).