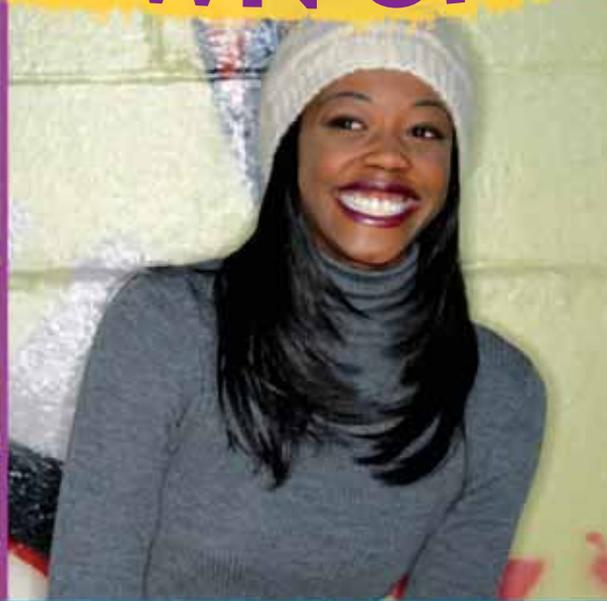




# ALL GROWN UP

Special  
Information  
About Puberty  
and Adolescence



The Reading Hospital  
and Medical Center

**Growing up takes time.** You're starting to look and feel more like a woman, but you won't become one right away. **Your body needs a few years to develop.** This booklet contains information to help you learn more about what you are going through.

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## GROWIN' UP

Puberty is the time when your body begins to change from a girl into a young woman. All girls go through this stage of life. If you are between the ages of 8 and 14, you are probably starting puberty.

 During puberty your body will change. You will start having periods. And your feelings, at times, may seem out of control.

 Your body will grow in spurts. One week your favorite pair of jeans fits, the next week they're too short for you. Your hands and feet will get bigger, too! And some parts of your body will grow faster than others.

All of these changes can be confusing. You'll wonder what is happening to you. When you want answers, turn to someone you trust – your mother, your aunt, or your doctor. They'll be able to answer your questions and help you to better understand what you're going through.



## STRANGE CHANGES



As you become a young adult, your body will change. These changes are normal, and are experienced by all young women. Here are four things that many girls notice when growing up:

-  Your hips will become fuller, and your breasts will grow. To feel more comfortable, you may want to ask your mother to help you buy a bra that fits correctly. Don't worry if both breasts aren't growing at the same rate. In time, they will become more even.
-  Hair will begin to grow under your arms, on your legs, and even around your private parts. This pubic hair will be more coarse and curlier than the hair on your head.
-  You will sweat more under your arms. To help stay dry and avoid odor, use an antiperspirant or deodorant on your underarms. And don't forget to wash well every day.
-  Pimples may break out on your skin. To help control breakouts, keep your skin clean, and use acne products from the store. If your pimples really bother you, visit your doctor.

## EMOTIONS IN MOTION

As you become a young adult, you will also experience feelings that you never had before. Here are four things that many girls feel when growing up:

🌸 You may think everyone is watching you. You may think you're too curvy or too big. Try focusing on something else – like school, friends, hobbies, or sports.

🌸 You may feel different because you see physical changes in your friends, but not you. Try not to worry. All of us grow at different rates.

🌸 You may feel sad or lonely. Most girls are extra-sensitive at your age. Try listening to music, talking with friends, or playing with a pet.

🌸 People may annoy you. You may argue with your parents about curfews or allowances. Gossip may get between you and your friends. Before you get angry, take a few deep breaths and remain calm. Think things through. Then, try to work them out.



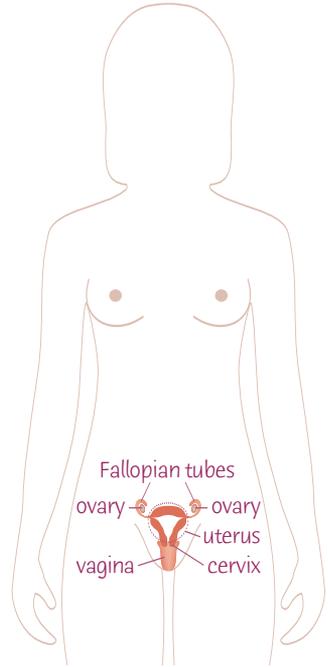
# YOUR BODY

Getting to know your body and understanding how each part works are important. Learn what makes your body different from the body of a boy.

## The Inside

Your body has parts protected inside your body that cause menstrual periods. They also help to create and support a growing baby.

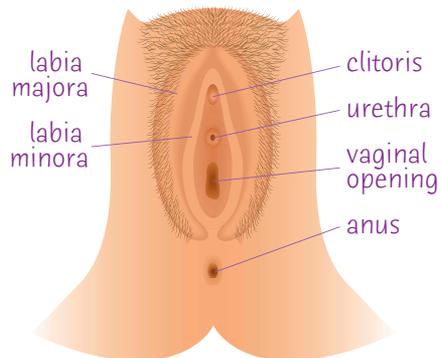
- ✿ The **ovaries** are where eggs are stored. You have two ovaries, and each one contains hundreds of tiny eggs.
- ✿ **Fallopian tubes** are what the eggs travel through to get to the uterus.
- ✿ The **uterus** is where a fertilized egg grows. When the lining of your uterus sheds, you have a period.
- ✿ The **cervix** connects the uterus to the vagina.
- ✿ The **vagina** is a tunnel that connects the cervix to the outside of your body.



## The Outside

Your reproductive parts on the outside are called genitals (or “private parts”).

- ✿ The **clitoris** is very small and sensitive to the touch.
- ✿ The **urethra** is the opening where urine leaves the body.
- ✿ The **vaginal opening** leads into the vagina.
- ✿ The **labia** are lips that protect the vaginal opening.
- ✿ The **anus** is where bowel movements leave the body.

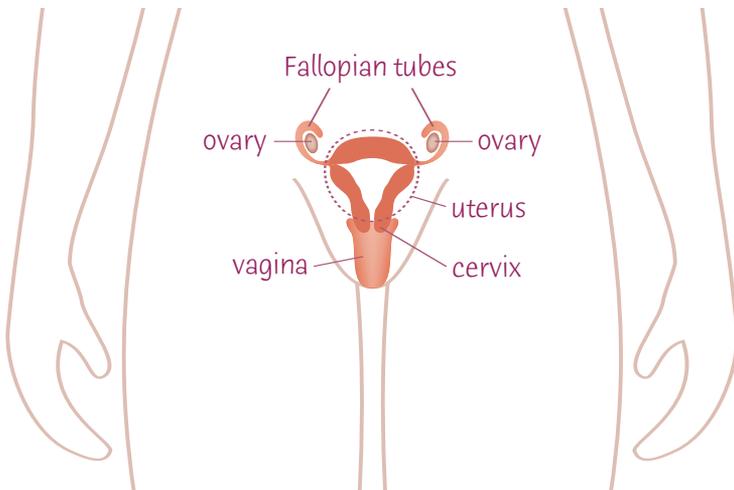


## WHAT'S A PERIOD?

Periods are a normal and healthy part of becoming and being a woman. A period is short for menstrual period – the amount of time each month when fluid containing blood flows from the uterus through the vagina. A period is the result of the menstrual cycle. The menstrual cycle makes it possible for women to have babies. The menstrual cycle begins when you ovulate, the time when an egg is released and begins its journey through your body.

### How Does The Menstrual Cycle Work?

- ✿ At the beginning of the menstrual cycle, one egg grows and is released from an ovary, in a process called ovulation. The egg works its way to the fallopian tube.
- ✿ The egg moves through the fallopian tube toward the uterus. If the egg from a woman and a sperm cell from a man meet here, the woman becomes pregnant.
- ✿ In preparation for feeding a growing baby during pregnancy, the lining of the uterus grows thicker. The lining consists of blood, tissue, and fluid.
- ✿ About once a month, if there is no pregnancy, the egg and the lining of the uterus are shed through the vagina. This is called a period. (Women who are pregnant do not have a period because the egg becomes fertilized by the sperm cell.)



# QUESTIONS ABOUT PERIODS

## How long is each menstrual cycle?

The menstrual cycle typically takes 20 to 36 days. The time between your periods may be more or less when you are young. By the time you're an adult, it will be about 28 days from the first day of one period to the first day of the next.



## How long does each period last?

Every girl is different, but a period usually lasts two to eight days. If your period lasts longer than this, talk with your mother or your doctor.



## What does a period look like?

The color of your period may be pink, red, or brown. The flow can be thick, lumpy, or runny. Both the color and flow can change from period to period.

## How much will I bleed?

The amount of flow for an entire period is only four to six tablespoons. But expect the flow to be light on some days and heavy on others.

## Should I keep track of my periods?

Yes, you should. Use a monthly calendar or diary. After awhile, your cycle should become regular enough for you to figure out when to expect your period.

## How do I keep track of my periods?

Mark the day your period starts and days you have flow. As time goes on, your menstrual cycle should become more regular, and you can watch your own pattern appear. Then you'll know when to expect your next period.



## When will I get my first period?

Many girls have their first period about two years after they begin puberty. If you are growing breasts and pubic hair, your period may start within a year. You'll start having periods when your body is ready.

*continued ...*

## QUESTIONS ABOUT PERIODS

### Will I know when my period is coming?

You may notice signs that your period is coming a week or two before it starts. Most of these go away after each period begins. However, you may not have any signs. Every girl is different.

### What are some signs that my period is coming?

-  You may feel worn out or tired. You may also get headaches. Try to get enough sleep or catch a nap if you need one.
-  Your breasts may swell and hurt. Try to hug a heating pad or soak in a warm bath. You may also want to wear a firm bra that fits when your breasts are swollen.
-  You may feel pain or cramps in your abdomen or lower back. This happens because the muscles of the uterus contract to shed its lining. Try using a heating pad or soak in a warm bath. Relax with gentle exercise; or sip a warm drink. If your cramps get in the way of your normal life, talk with your mother or doctor. There is medicine at the drug store that can help you.

Together, these signs are often called Premenstrual Syndrome, or PMS for short. PMS is not a disease or illness. It's just a part of your menstrual cycle. PMS is caused by hormones – chemicals that are released in your body at this time.



# PADS AND TAMPONS

During your period, you'll need to absorb the flow, and protect your clothing from stains. Sanitary pads and tampons can do this. There are a lot of pads and tampons to choose from. Read the package instructions and check with an adult to learn how each one is used. If your period catches you by surprise, most public restrooms have pad or tampon machines; or you can ask to borrow a pad or tampon from a friend or teacher.

## What is a pad?

Pads or sanitary pads are made of soft material, and lined with plastic to help prevent leaks. Pads fit into the crotch of your underpants and collect blood as it leaves your body. Most pads also have a sticky strip that clings to your panties. Pads may be shaped like an oval or a rectangle. They may be thick or thin. Some pads come wrapped individually. These are easy to tuck in a purse, backpack, or locker.

## What is a tampon?

Tampons are inserted into the vagina, and absorb blood before it leaves your body. Many have cardboard or plastic tubes to help you insert them. Once inside, the muscles of your vagina hold the tampon in place. Each tampon also has a string to help you pull it out later.

## How often should I change a pad or tampon?

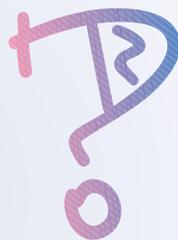
Change your pad or tampon every two to four hours to avoid leaks and odors. Never leave a tampon in all day. You could get a serious infection called Toxic Shock Syndrome.

## How do I dispose of used pads or tampons?

Always wrap a used pad in toilet paper and throw it in the nearest wastebasket. **Never** flush pads down the toilet. Some public restrooms have a bin in each stall for this purpose. Some tampons and their tubes are flushable. Check to see if the box says "flushable applicators." If not, wrap the applicator in toilet paper and throw it in the special bin or wastebasket.

## What should I wear at night?

You can wear a pad, a tampon, or both at night, whatever is most comfortable. While you should change tampons every two to four hours, it is safe to leave them in for up to eight hours while you sleep.



## OTHER COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

You're going through some big changes. It's normal to have questions. Here are some commonly asked questions from girls just like you. If you have questions that aren't answered here, talk with your mom or someone else you trust.

### **What if I get my period and it doesn't come back?**

If your period skips a month sometimes, don't worry. As long as your cycles slowly become more regular, there is no need to worry.

### **Can I bleed too much?**

If you soak a new pad in one hour or less, tell your mom. Otherwise, bleeding can look like more than it really is.

### **Can I go swimming when I have my period?**

Yes, but don't wear a pad. It will swell up like an inflatable raft. If you want to swim, you should wear a tampon.



### **Can I take a bath when I have my period?**

Yes. In fact, a bath or shower is really important at this time to keep you clean and to fight off any odors.

### **Will others know that I'm having my period?**

No. You will not look different to other people. Just take a look in the mirror.

### **What if my friends get their period and I don't?**

Try not to compare yourself to them. Each of you will get your period when it is right for your body.

### **Will my dad and brothers understand what's happening to me?**

Your father knows all about periods. If your brother knows about them, he won't know when you are having yours.

### **Do boys have anything like this?**

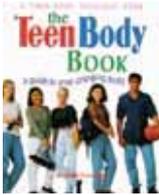
No. Boys don't get periods, but they do go through puberty. They grow body hair, get pimples, and have their voices change very suddenly.

### **A girl in school is pregnant. Can that happen to me?**

Having periods means that your body is able to create a baby. But you can only get pregnant if your egg meets with a sperm from a boy during sex. Sex is something you should talk with your parents about. You are still growing. Getting pregnant now would not be good for your health or the health of your baby.

# RESOURCES

Some great reading for moms and daughters (available at Borders in the young adult section or from amazon.com).



**The Teen Body Book**  
Judie Lewellen



**The Girls' Guide to Life**  
Catherine Dee



**Every Girl's Life Guide**  
Dr. Miriam Stoppard



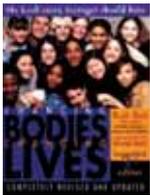
**Growing and Changing**  
Kathy McCoy  
& Charles Wibblesman



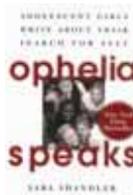
**Girl Talk**  
Carol Weston



**The Seventeen Guide To Sex and Your Body**  
Sabrina Solin



**Changing Bodies, Changing Lives**  
Ruth Bell



**Ophelia Speaks**  
Sara Shandler



**Sex Ed**  
Dr. Miriam Stoppard



**Deal With It**  
Ester Drill, et al.



**Why Can't We Talk?**  
Michelle L. Trujillo

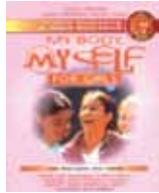


**Protect This Girl's Journal**  
Zoe Stern

# RESOURCES



**Private & Personal**  
Carol Weston



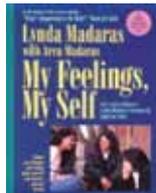
**My Body, Myself** (for girls)  
Lynda Madaras  
& Area Madaras



**The Care & Keeping of You**  
Valorie Schaefer



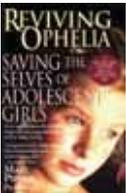
**What Do You Stand For? A Kid's Guide to Building Character**  
by Barbara A. Lewis



**My Feelings, Myself**  
Lynda Madaras



**Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret**  
Judy Blume



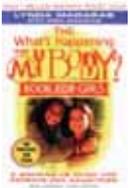
**Reviving Ophelia**  
Mary Pipher



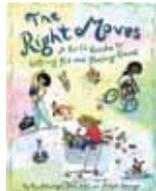
**Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul**  
Jack Canfield, et al.



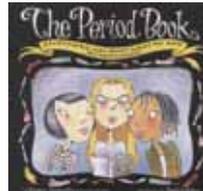
**Before She Gets Her Period**  
Jessica B. Gillooly



**What's Happening to My Body? (for girls)**  
Lynda Madaras, et al.



**The Right Moves**  
Tina Schwager, et al.



**The Period Book**  
Karen Gravelle  
& Jennifer Gravelle

You may also want to learn more about getting your first period by visiting the following web sites: [www.kotex.com](http://www.kotex.com), [www.playtextampons.com](http://www.playtextampons.com), [www.tampax.com](http://www.tampax.com), or [www.always.com](http://www.always.com).



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