

Supporting your child through periods:

A guide for Parents and Caregivers

This factsheet provides parents and carers with information that can help them talk to their children about periods. The information has been simplified for talking to young people with an Intellectual Disability, but it will also be useful for talking to younger children.



When should I start discussing periods?

Puberty can begin between 8-16 years of age, so it is a good idea to start talking about periods (or menstruation) before age 8. It is never too early to talk about periods. Remember, it is also important to talk about the possibility of pregnancy once menstruation occurs, and to include discussion about sexuality, and reproduction.

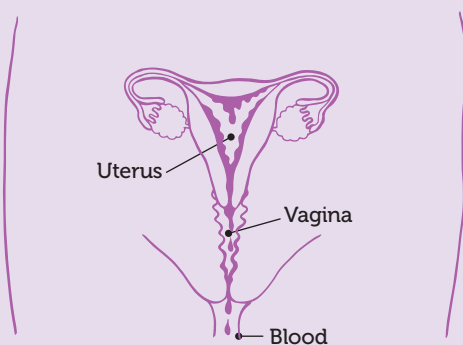
How do I talk about periods?

While everyone is different it can be helpful to keep the following in mind:

- use simple language
- be positive – encourage and praise
- teach ways of keeping track of when the next period is due
- help to prepare a period pack

General information about periods - a script

- Getting periods is a healthy, natural part of growing up. Most females start their periods between 8-16 years.
- Most females stop having periods when they are about 50.
- You can tell a trusted adult at home or school when you see blood on your pants for the first time.
- Periods are private. You can talk about them with people you know and trust.
- Everybody is different, so everyone's experience of periods is going to be different.



Blood leaves the uterus and exits through the vagina (between the legs)

What is a period?

A period means that blood comes from inside the body, from the uterus. It comes through an opening between the legs called the vagina.

The blood that comes out is healthy and expected. It doesn't mean you have been hurt.

Other body changes may be happening when you start your period. Breasts get bigger and hair starts to grow under arms around the vulva.

Periods happen about once a month and last 3-7 days.

Period products



About pads

Pads stick into your pants to collect the period blood. They should be changed around every four hours, or more often if needed (except when sleeping). Check your pad when you go to the toilet to see if it needs to be changed. Change your pad in the toilet.

About tampons

A tampon is put inside the vagina. It can take a bit of time to get used to using a tampon. Tampons should be changed every 3-4 hours. It is not a good idea to use a tampon all night. Tampons can be a good option for swimming, but period swimmers are also available.



Note:

Tampons are not recommended for individuals who cannot comfortably manage physically inserting/removing the tampon themselves.

About period undies

Period undies can be worn over several hours (depending on blood-flow) but it is important to know that they can leak, or smell if worn for too long. Thicker period undies can be worn overnight. Period undies need to be washed after every use. Pads and period undies can be used together. E.g. a pad in the period undies, then remove and just use the undies.



Do periods hurt?

Some people can get period pain or Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) before and/or during their period. Symptoms can include:

- irritability
- fatigue
- sore breasts
- bloating
- cramps and/or back pain
- increase in seizures for people with epilepsy.

A hot water bottle/wheat pack, or a warm bath/shower can help ease some symptoms. Medication and natural therapies are available for pain relief. If period pain interferes with day-to-day activities, consult a health professional.

How do I explain about changing a pad or a tampon?

This is a step-by-step explanation you could use to explain how to change a pad or tampon.

1. Wash your hands.
2. Take a clean pad or tampon.
3. Go to the toilet and shut the door. Pull down your underpants and sit on the toilet.
4. Take off the used pad or remove tampon. Wrap the used pad or tampon in toilet paper and put in the bin beside the toilet. Do not put pads or tampons down the toilet.
5. Take a new pad or tampon and unwrap it. Peel strip off the pad and stick it down onto your underpants or insert the tampon onto your vagina.
6. Wipe between your legs with toilet paper, flush the toilet, pull your underpants back up, tidy your clothes.
7. Wash your hands.

Where can I go for further information?

[True.org/LAMP](https://www.true.org/LAMP) – Looking After Me Program (LAMP) for 1-1 education about periods. You can also visit a GP or True clinic for help with sexual health care and contraceptive advice. Visit our website for our locations and opening hours.

[How to support children and young people through puberty](#)

[Communicating about sexuality with children](#)

www.unicef.org/parenting/health/talking-about-periods-at-home

[Planet Puberty](#) – disability focus

[Amaze.org](#) – puberty and period videos for young people