

# Always Changing & Growing Up

FOR PARENT/  
GUARDIAN



How to best support your  
child during puberty

*always*

## Dear parent,

You and your child are approaching a big milestone and the difference you can make at this point in their life is huge! You can support their journey into adolescence by talking about it openly and being prepared with the facts.

This guide gives you lots of practical tips, from how to be healthy and confident during puberty to how to answer their questions and help them choose the right period products (for those with female sex organs) - and so much more!

If you're receiving this guide because your child has just gone through a Puberty Education session at their school, you have a unique opportunity to continue the conversation and go over the information they would have received. If they haven't had a session yet – don't worry – this guide will give you plenty of tips on how and when to start the conversation with them.

In either case – by starting the conversation today – you'll be helping to kick off their journey towards becoming a strong, healthy, and confident adult.

Yours,

*The Always Team*

## Table of contents

### Menstruation (periods)

Preparing for your child's period	4
Period FAQs	6
What protection should they use?	9
Pad FAQs	10
Tampon FAQs	12
Discharge & daily liners	14
Parent FAQs	15
Caring for the environment	15

### Helping them stay confident and healthy during puberty

The growth mindset	16
Confidence building tips	17
Helping them speak up	18
Helping them understand sexual feelings	18
Helping them navigate friendships	19
Helping them navigate sex and gender	20
Helping them stay healthy	21
The importance of physical activity	21
Helping them stay safe	23

## Menstruation (periods)

### Preparing for your child's period

Most children with female sex organs will get their period between the ages of 11 and 13 and about 2 to 3 years after their breasts start to grow. If they haven't got it by the age of 16, encourage them to talk with their doctor.

Whenever it happens, their first period may bring a variety of differing emotions, depending on the child. You can help them develop confidence and learn how to care for their body by giving them the information they need.

Start by reviewing the changes that will occur to them. This will help you feel ready and knowledgeable to begin the conversation with them.

### A quick refresher of the changes they will see during puberty: physical changes:

- They will develop breasts and vaginal discharge
- They will start to have body odour
- They will grow underarm, leg and pubic hair
- They may develop oilier skin and hair
- They will typically start their period about 2-3 years after puberty starts

### Emotional changes:

- They may express their feelings more easily (good and bad)
- They may become more self-conscious
- They may start to compare themselves to others

For more information, check out [always.com](https://www.always.com) and [tampax.com](https://www.tampax.com)

## Tips for talking about periods

- **Start talking about puberty & periods from an early age** – even before they get their period – so they feel prepared. As they get older you can go in to more detail.
- **Understand what they already know.** Ask them questions, listen, and adapt accordingly.
- **Look for natural moments to bring up the discussion.** For example, when you're out shopping for period products or when you see an ad on TV.
- **Do your best to create an open-door policy.** If you don't have time to talk at that moment, tell them you're happy they came to you, and find another time to have the conversation.
- **Don't just make it a one-off discussion, or hand them a book!** Encourage an open dialogue so that they know they can come to you whenever they want.
- **Use accurate words – not euphemisms!** Phrases like "aunt flow" or "shark week" imply that their period is something to be hidden and ashamed of.
- **Be honest.** Going through puberty can be challenging for all children, so don't feel like you need to sugarcoat everything.
- While these changes can be scary, **help reassure them it's natural and they shouldn't stop doing what they like.** For example, you can reassure them that they can still go swimming if they use period swimwear or a form of internal period protection like tampons or cups.
- **Share your own experience** to help show them that you've been through this, or know someone that has.
- **Recognize that everyone is different** – and so are their menstrual cycles! However, if your child is concerned about their cycle, encourage them to speak to a doctor.
- It's ok to say **"I don't know"** – just make sure you go back to them once you have the information.

## Period FAQs

### Am I normal?

Yes! You can reassure them and tell them that getting your period is natural and happens to everyone with female sex organs – so they shouldn't be worried about all the changes they're going through.

### Why do I get periods?

Explain to your child that periods are a healthy sign of their body maturing and preparing for a possible pregnancy each month (if that's what they choose to do one day). A period happens because of changing hormones in the body. Hormones are chemical messengers. The ovaries release hormones causing the lining of the uterus (endometrium) to build up. The built-up lining is ready for a fertilized egg to implant and start developing. If there is no fertilized egg, the lining breaks down and leaves the vagina as a period. This cycle takes about a month – which is why most people get their periods once a month.

### What is vaginal discharge and how do I deal with it?

Vaginal discharge is a natural fluid produced by their body that helps prevent the vagina from drying out and protects it from infections. If they choose, they can use daily liners to absorb the discharge.

### What do I do if I get my period at school?

You can help them prepare for it. Give them some period products that they can put in their schoolbag, purse or leave in their locker. Reassure them – if they do get caught off guard, they can talk with a teacher, school staff or other trusted adult to see if they have period products available, or they can make a makeshift pad out of toilet paper until they're able to get a proper period product.

### What if I get stains?

Reassure them that period accidents happen and it's not a big deal. Then, help them get prepared. You can advise them to always carry a period product with them, teach them how to track their period so they know when to expect it, and encourage them to wear a daily liner – at least in the days running up to their period. If they do get a stain at school, and feel self-conscious, a great tip is to tie their sweater or hoodie around their waist until they can change their clothes.

### How long will my period last?

It differs from one to another. For most, it usually lasts between 3 to 7 days.

### What if my period is irregular?

Reassure your child that when they first start menstruating, irregular periods can be considered regular. While the average menstrual cycle is 28 days, it can take up to 2 years for their period to become regular. So having a period that comes every 21 to 45 days is totally regular too. As they get older, the regular cycle length will be around 21 to 35 days.

### How much blood will I shed?

The average person loses about 4 to 12 teaspoons of menstrual fluid during their period. But only a small amount of that is blood. Since the body contains more than 4 litres of blood, it doesn't miss the little bit lost during a period.

### Does it all come out at once?

No! Tell them that their period will leave their body over a 3 to 7 day period, so only a little bit comes out at a time. They might find that their flow is slightly heavier at the beginning of their period – but reassure them it's not going to all come at once.

### What is spotting?

Spotting is light vaginal bleeding that happens between periods. If it happens regularly around the usual period (before or after), it can be normal. If it's happening often or unpredictably, you can consider having them check with their doctor.

## What blood colour is normal?

Red, brown, pink...period blood colour varies a lot from one person to another and from one day of their period to another - so there is no normal colour.

## I feel moody, what can I do?

This may be because of Pre-Menstrual Syndrome (PMS).

You can help them deal with PMS by:

- Encouraging moderate exercise and stretching
- Reducing processed foods and ensuring they have a healthy diet
- Ensuring they get adequate sleep
- Helping them learn deep breathing and relaxation techniques
- Helping them identify emotions and manage them in healthy ways, like talking or journaling

## Can I use tampons?

Tampons can be used safely by anyone with female sex organs. They're particularly useful for those who like to hit the water during their period. If you need to, you can reassure your child that using a tampon will not hurt if inserted correctly, nor will it mean they will lose their virginity. If they want to try a tampon, most find starting with an applicator tampon best - as they can often be easier to insert.



*Many children lose confidence at puberty,  
but together we can change that!*

## What protection should they use?

It's common for children to be anxious about their first period. Helping them get familiar with the different types of period products available, how they work and how to use them will help them feel much more at ease and prepared.

There are many forms of period protection and new product innovations come out fairly regularly. One thing to remember is that what *you* use may or may not be the right protection for your child. It's important to allow them to experiment and find the product that best suits their needs.

**Here is a quick overview of the most used forms of period protection:**

**Pads:** They are worn on the inside of their underwear and are the form of protection that most use when they first get their periods - as they are so easy to use. Some come with wings to help hold the pad securely in place inside the underwear.



**Tampons:** They are an internal form of protection that many choose to first use when they want to go swimming, for example. Most tampon beginners find using an applicator tampon, like Tampax, best - as the applicator can make it easier and more comfortable to insert.



**Menstrual cups:** They are an internal form of protection. They are also good if your child wants to go swimming. Menstrual cups are reusable.



**Menstrual underwear:** They are worn outside the body and are reusable.



## Pad FAQs

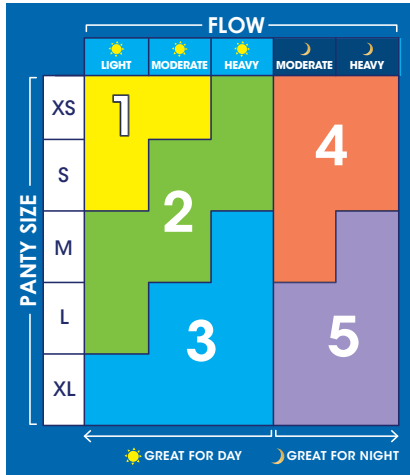
### Why use thin pads instead of thick pads?

Unlike thick pads, Always FlexFoam pads contain super absorbent material. This material is a “liquid locking gel” that turns menstrual fluid into gel – and gel can’t leak. Always FlexFoam pads are also much thinner, so your child will hardly feel them and they won’t be visible when they wear them.

### What size is right for them?

Many people experience leaks during their periods because they are wearing the wrong size pad. At Always, we have developed a wide range of sizes so everyone can find one that fits them best. **The better a pad fits, the better it protects.**

To help your child find the right size, use the Always My Fit chart on the top of every Always pack. It shows what size is right for them based on their flow and underwear size. Other brands have similar size charts.



### Should they use day and night pads?

Yes! It’s a great idea to let them try day and night pads – so they can start experimenting with different forms of protection at different times. Always overnight pads have a wider back, so they’re less likely to experience leaks no matter how much they toss and turn throughout the night.



### How do I know Always pads are safe?

The safety of the those who use our pads is the foundation of everything we do. The components we use have been extensively reviewed by physicians, scientists and health authorities around the world and determined to be safe. You can learn more about the rigorous testing of our pads and see our pad components on the Always website.



# Tampon FAQs






## Which tampon should they start with?

We recommend Tampax Radiant to start with because it is easy to use and offers great protection! To make insertion easy, it has a smooth applicator with a rounded tip and it's compact so it's easy to carry around at school.



## How to choose the right absorbency

For comfort with their first tampon insertion, they may want to try a smaller, lower absorbency tampon like Tampax Radiant regular.

-  LIGHT: If the tampon is difficult to remove after 4-8 hours and it still has some white parts remaining, they should switch to a lower absorbency.
-  REGULAR: If they find they have to change it more frequently, they'll want to try a higher absorbency.
-  SUPER: They will most likely need different absorbencies for different days of their period.
-  SUPER PLUS
-  ULTRA

## How to use a tampon

If you've never used a tampon and wonder how it works, you'll find detailed guidance in all brands' packaging. You can also refer to your child's Always Changing Guide or go to [tampax.com](http://tampax.com).

## How to dispose of tampons

Too many people still believe tampons can be flushed in the toilet. But they can't! Flushing tampons down the toilet can cause the toilet, or other parts of the system, to clog up. You can help by teaching your child not to flush tampons. They can simply wrap used tampons in toilet paper and put them in the garbage instead.



## Are tampons safe?

Tampax tampons are designed to make periods easier to manage and have been trusted by millions since 1936. We use safe, reliable materials and extensively test our products to meet the strict tampon safety requirements of all the relevant health authorities around the world. More details of all our product components used can be found at [tampax.com](http://tampax.com).

## TSS

### What is TSS?

Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) is a rare but serious illness that can be fatal. It can develop rapidly in anyone. With early diagnosis TSS can be successfully treated.

### What are the warning signs of TSS?

Sudden high fever, usually over 39°C / Vomiting / Diarrhea / Sunburn-like rash / Dizziness / Muscle aches / Fainting / Near fainting.

If your child has one or more of these warning signs, they should remove their tampon and contact a doctor.

### Although TSS is rare, it is recommended that your child:

- Alternates tampon use with pads.
- Uses a tampon with the minimum absorbency needed for their menstrual flow.
- Consults a doctor before they use tampons again if they have had TSS warning signs in the past.
- Washes their hands before and after inserting a tampon.

**Remember:** your child should never wear a tampon for more than 8 hours. If they sleep longer than that, they should wear a pad.

To help them remember when to change it, you can encourage them to set an alarm, or simply write down when they inserted it.



## Discharge & daily liners

### Discharge

During puberty your child will probably start to notice that their underwear sometimes gets stained with discharge - a creamy whitish fluid. This is perfectly normal & healthy; it helps prevent the vagina from drying out and protects it from infections.

The amount of vaginal discharge can vary during the menstrual cycle as hormone levels in the body change. But if your child's discharge is significantly different than usual, has a bad smell or if they experience itching in their vaginal area they should see a doctor.

### Daily liners

While vaginal discharge is normal and healthy, it might make your child feel less fresh or uncomfortable. That's where a daily liner can help! It's an absorbent liner that they simply stick on the inside of their underwear. Unlike pads (which are designed to be used only during your period) daily liners are designed to be worn every day.

### Daily liners like Always Radiant Daily are perfect for:

- Keeping underwear clean
- Absorbing vaginal discharge
- Absorbing perspiration
- Extra protection while they're getting used to tampons
- Protection for light period days or spotting



## Parent FAQs

### Should I celebrate their first period?

Ask your child whether they want to celebrate it or let it go by as just another day.

### How to create a first period kit

You know their tastes the best, so let your creativity shine! Consider adding a puberty guide, a few period products, spare underwear, hand sanitizer, wipes, and a thoughtful note. Encourage them to carry the kit in their schoolbag so they're always prepared.

### Do they need to see a doctor when they get their first period?

Usually, no. However, encourage them to speak to their doctor if there are any problems - like severe pain or excessive bleeding.

### Should I tell other people in the family about my child's period?

It's up to your child whether or not they tell others about their period; doing it on their behalf violates their privacy. However, you can encourage them by helping them understand that periods are completely natural, and talking about them is too.

## Caring for the environment

At Always and Tampax, we are committed to **environmental sustainability** and we believe we have a role to play in reducing waste.

Our production sites are **zero manufacturing waste to landfill**, which means instead of sending waste to landfill we recycle, re-use or re-purpose it. When designing our products, we carefully choose our materials and manufacturing practices to minimize our environmental impact and **reduce waste**.

Around the world, we're also launching new projects to help **recycle** the period products we create. We also educate the people that use our products on the need to dispose of them in a garbage, instead of flushing them in the toilet.



## Helping them stay confident and healthy during puberty

As all young people go through puberty – it isn't just their body that changes – they may also develop new emotions and become more aware of what those around them do and think. By providing your child with the information they need, and paying close attention to what you do, you can help make sure those changes don't cause them to lose confidence.

### Encourage them to embrace the growth mindset.

The growth mindset is the belief that you can grow your ability with effort, whilst the fixed mindset assumes that basic qualities like our intelligence and talents are fixed traits that we have no control over. To explain the growth mindset to your child you can tell them that the brain is like a muscle – it gets stronger with exercise, practice and challenges. Use the table below to help them develop a growth mindset.

	CHALLENGE YOURSELF	FACING CRITICISM	OVERCOMING OBSTACLES	WHEN OTHERS SUCCEED
GROWTH MINDSET	Embrace challenges	Learn from feedback	A misstep is a step forward	Find inspiration in their performance
FIXED MINDSET	Avoid opportunities	Ignore useful feedback	A misstep is a reason to give up	Feel threatened and upset

## Follow these tips!

- **Set positive and realistic expectations with your child.** Doing so can positively influence their growth and development.
- **Encourage them to try new things.** If they're afraid – try and help them break down something big and scary into smaller steps.
- **Support them when they fail.** Experiencing failure, and then working out how to deal with it, is crucial to building confidence.
- **Be there to support them through challenges, but don't solve their problems for them!** Encourage them to reflect on what went wrong, what they learned, and what they can do differently next time.
- **Be mindful how you praise them.** Try to praise them for their efforts, not just their accomplishments. For example, you could say: "Well done for doing so well in that test – your hard work and determination really paid off" vs. "Well done for doing so well in that test – you're so clever."
- **Work to be a good role model.** If you show them how you take risks, and don't give up after your own missteps, you'll be encouraging them to do the same.



## Helping them speak up

When they hit puberty, many begin to question themselves and stop advocating for their needs. But you can make a difference! Here are some ways to help:

- **Encourage them to speak up!** Tell them that their voice deserves to be heard and their opinion is valid.
- **Encourage them to be assertive.** Many start apologizing before they even give their opinion. Instead of “Sorry for saying this, but...” suggest they start with “This is what I think”.
- **Encourage positive self talk.** Tell them it’s not necessary to put themselves down right after they give their thoughts. Examples to watch out for: “I’m probably wrong” or “I know I’m being dumb”.
- **Role model positive self-talk!** Avoid negative self-statements and insulting yourself.

## Helping them understand sexual feelings

The hormones the body produces during puberty may cause your child to experience new feelings, so it’s natural if they’re curious about their sexuality. You can help by taking the time to discuss this with them.

The words below can **inspire your talk**:

- **Honesty:** being truthful about facts and feelings
- **Kindness:** treating people with care
- **Respect:** showing other people matter, they have worth
- **Empathy:** caring about how others feel
- **Consent:** ensuring that they understand the need for it to be given
- **Accountability:** understanding that what they do has consequences

As a result of these hormone changes and new feelings, they may also begin to explore parts of their body, especially the genital area. This is not wrong, but you can remind them that it’s personal and should be done in private.

## Helping them navigate friendships

When people go through puberty, peer relationships become paramount. They are often worried about what their friends think and that starts to affect how they think about themselves.

Your child might start questioning how they look and dress, wondering whether their friends are talking behind their back, and suppressing feelings to keep peace. All of that can be a powerful drain on their confidence.

**To help, you can:**

- **Ask about their friends** and how they’re feeling about them.
- **Encourage them to make new friends** and meet new people if their friends are making them sad or simply to help them broaden their horizons.
- Let them know **it’s normal to feel anxious about fitting in** – but it’s important to be proud of standing out!
- **Share your own experiences** to help them see that these challenges are normal and can be resolved.
- **Give tips on how to navigate relationship conflicts.** For example, encourage them to avoid using insults and to try and understand things from others’ perspectives.
- Encourage them to **write down what they’re experiencing** - so they can reflect on it.
- Encourage them to **talk to a trusted adult**, instead of peers (especially on social media) as it helps prevent gossip from spreading.
- Remind them that **the best way to make a good friend is to be one.**



## Helping them navigate sex & gender

As your child grows up they may start questioning their gender identity and sexual orientation.

### **To help, let's first have a look at a few definitions:**

**Biological sex:** This is based on the genitals we're born with and the chromosomes we have. Most people are either assigned male at birth, or assigned female at birth.

**Gender identity:** This is about how we feel and how we think about ourselves when it comes to gender. It is our sense of being a female, male or being both or fluid - meaning the way they feel changes from day to day.

**Gender roles:** These are socially constructed – they relate to the characteristics and behaviors that are typically thought to go alongside a person's biological sex. They often serve to stereotype people – and can make them feel like they need to act or behave in certain ways.

### **How you can help:**

**Be there to support them:** If your child questions their gender identity or expresses that they identify differently from their assigned sex at birth, show them respect and support. Gender is a continuum and there is no wrong way to express it. You can help by accepting them and being available to provide, or find, further support if they need it.

**Don't let society limit them:** It's important to remind them that their biological sex doesn't define what they can and can't do. Help them realize that they can do and achieve anything. For example, remind them that anyone can play sports, be strong and be brave! Be careful not to inadvertently stereotype them, or others.

## Helping them stay healthy

### **Healthy nutrition**

During puberty, your child's body needs a lot of energy. It's important for them to have a healthy well-balanced diet that includes a variety of food that provide energy and nourishment to meet their daily needs.

### **Don't forget about iron**

The blood they lose during their period can cause them to lose iron, which can make them feel tired. They should try red beans and dark leafy vegetables (like spinach or anything else high in iron), along with oranges (or anything high in vitamin C), as this helps the iron absorb into their body more efficiently.

### **Sleeping well**

Getting enough sleep is an essential part of staying healthy and happy. On average children need between 8 to 10 hours per night.

### **Here are a few tips to share with your child:**

- Stick to a regular sleep schedule.
- Avoid using screens (e.g. TV, phone) at least one hour before going to bed.
- Use a comfortable mattress and pillow.
- Exercise daily.

## The importance of physical activity

Physical activity helps children feel better about themselves! Learning a new skill gives them a sense of accomplishment, playing with others gives them a feeling of belonging and the ability to see their body as an asset are just some of the benefits physical activity can offer.

As parents, you play a vital role in ensuring your child is physically active. Here are six top tips for encouraging physical activity.

## The importance of physical activity

### 1. Make it fun

Focus on the atmosphere first. When you set the right atmosphere, children want to be physically active. For example, you could choose to play at the park or let the child choose the activity.

### 2. Praise their process

Praise the steps they take – like training hard, never giving up after a game defeat and trying new things – rather than the outcome.

### 3. Foster friendships

The social aspects of physical activity is an essential aspect of participation. Encourage friendships and communicate that they are an important part of physical activity.

### 4. Encourage leadership opportunities

Providing opportunities for children and youth to lead during physical activity builds important life skills. Too often, adults are the only leaders during physical activity time.

### 5. Show up and cheer loudly!

To help show that you value them participating in physical activity, try to attend any games they may be participating in and be present as much as possible. Supporting them is one of the most important things you can do as a role model.

### 6. Help them notice their strengths

Each child is unique and has their own set of strengths, such as: integrity, perseverance, gratitude and fairness, that help them thrive. Set aside some time with them to reflect on their strengths.

## Helping them stay safe

Here are a few things you can start talking about with your child to help them stay safe.

**Self-worth:** one of the most important things you can do to help your child stay safe is to help them build their self-worth. When they value themselves, they are more likely to advocate for their needs and embrace positive vs. negative risk taking.

**Drugs and alcohol:** remind them that they affect the brain and can cause long-term damage. The effect of drugs and alcohol are much greater and long lasting in the young brain than in the adult brain.

**Internet and social media:** while acknowledging that these can be great ways to find out information and connect with others, it's important to remind your child to use them safely, responsibly and positively. Here are a few tips:

- **Encourage them to practice good habits** - like not spending too much time on it, or using it before bed time.
- Help them **think through the consequences of potential actions** - Talk with them about serious consequences and potential actions as a result of their choices on social media - such as sharing intimidate pictures online.
- Write a **list of rules for social media** together.
- Consider **keeping their account on your phone**, so you can help monitor their usage.
- **Talk to them** frequently about what they see.
- Help them understand the **"social media filter"** - what they see is not always real life, or at least it is not the complete picture.

Hopefully, you now feel prepared with the information you need to support your child during puberty.

Remember, there will be ups and downs, but by providing support, respect, and knowledge, you will help them develop the skills they need to make informed decisions.

