

# Learning About Puberty in Girls

## What is puberty?

Puberty is the time in your life when you start to grow and change into an adult. During this time, your body goes through a lot of changes.

For most girls, these changes start between the ages of 9 and 11. But every girl's body has its own timeline. For example, you may start to go through puberty before any of your friends do. This is normal. All girls and boys go through puberty at their own pace.

## What can you expect when you go through puberty?

As you go through puberty, your body will start to make a lot more estrogen. This is a hormone that helps you become and look like a woman.

During this time, you will see your body change in many places. For example:

- Your nipples will grow first, and then your breasts will start to grow.
- Your hips will get more rounded.
- You will grow taller and may gain some weight.
- You will grow hair between your legs and under your arms.
- You will get your first menstrual period. This is a time in your life when you can get pregnant if you have sex. As long as you are not pregnant, you will get periods and will bleed from your vagina. This is normal. Right after your period starts, it may not come every month in a regular pattern. It may take as long as 2 years before your period comes in a regular pattern. Most women will have a period about every 4 weeks. And your period can last 4 to 6 days. You will need to use pads or tampons when you have your period. To learn how to use these products, ask an adult you trust.
- You may get pimples and start to have body odor. This is because the hormone changes that are taking place in your body make your skin more oily and cause you to sweat more.

As you go through puberty, you may be worried or confused about all of the changes in your

body and how they may change the way you look, feel, and relate to others. At times, you may:

- Feel grouchy or moody for no reason.
- Feel a little awkward or clumsy in your growing body, or feel embarrassed about having periods or getting breasts.
- Become more curious about sex and begin to have sexual feelings toward another person.
- Feel more independent. You may want to do more things on your own or spend more time with your friends than with your family.

All these feelings are normal. Most girls feel this way at one time or another as they go through puberty. But if you feel discouraged or sad or have questions about what is happening to your body, talk to your parents or another adult you trust. They can help you get through this time. And they might even share what it was like when they went through similar changes.

## How can you make going through puberty easier?

Puberty is a normal part of growing up. There are some things you can do to treat your body well and make this an easier and exciting time in your life.

### Build healthy habits

- Get plenty of exercise every day. Go for a walk or jog, ride your bike, or play sports with friends.
- Eat healthy foods. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, and try to cut down on how much fast food and sweets you eat.
- Get plenty of sleep.

Hormone changes that are taking place in your body make your skin more oily and cause you to sweat more. Sometimes these changes can cause you to have body odor and get pimples.

- To help prevent body odor, you may need to bathe more often and use a deodorant or a deodorant with antiperspirant on your armpits to help keep your underarms dry.
- To help prevent pimples, wash your face once or twice a day using a mild soap. Try not to scrub, squeeze, or pick at your pimples. This can make them worse and cause scars.

### Find ways to reduce stress

- Spend time with your friends. Go to a movie, listen to music, or read a book.

- Be creative. Try something new, like painting, dancing, or doing arts and crafts.
- Share your feelings with a good friend, your parents or another adult you trust, or an older brother or sister.
- Go online or to the library to learn all you can about puberty.
- Keep a journal. Write down what is happening to your body and how those changes affect the way you look, feel, and relate to others.

## Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://kp.org/health>

Enter **E365** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Puberty in Girls**".

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