

Tracks to Transition: Helping Your Teen with Her Period

Having a period (menstruation) is normal and healthy for women. Girls with ID (intellectual disability) are often able to take care of their own periods. The amount of help they need will depend on how easy it is for them to learn.

What to Expect

- Girls with ID usually start their period at the same age as other girls.
 - Most of the time a girl's first period starts about age 12 or 13, but it may start as young as age 10.
 - Some early signs that she may start her period for the first time are breast "buds", body hair, and body odor.
 - Start talking to your daughter to help her know what to expect a long time before her first period starts.
- Periods may not be regular for the first year.
- Before her period starts, she may have headaches, sore breasts, pimples (acne), moodiness, food cravings, swelling, weight gain, or cramps.
 - There is medicine that you can buy at the drug store that may help. Ask your child's doctor.

Pads and Tampons

- If your teen can go to the toilet without help, she can likely also change her own pads.
- She may need someone to remind her when it is time to do this.
- You might let her practice by wearing a mini-pad before she starts having periods so that she can practice changing it when she goes to the bathroom.
- Your teen may also want to learn to use tampons. Let her decide which one to use.
- She may need to try different brands until she finds the one that is right for her. Another female living in the house can teach her how use them.

Below are some tips to help your teen with her period

- Go to the store and choose pads and/or tampons with her.
- Make an emergency kit with pads, wipes, and clean underwear and put it in a small bag or box. Ask her to keep this in her purse, backpack, or school locker in case her period comes suddenly, so that she will be ready.
- Tell your daughter's school nurse, teacher, or aide about the kit.

Keep a Calendar

Your teen should also learn to keep a calendar so she will know when to expect her next period.

- Hang a 1-month calendar in her room or keep a small calendar in her purse.
- Mark the first day of her period and then mark a day about 4 weeks from that time so she will know when her next period might come.
- Tell her that her next period may come before or after the date you mark.

Possible Problems from Periods

- If your teen has heavy bleeding, cysts, or other medical problems, she may need medicines to make the bleeding lighter.
- These may be daily hormone pills or injections. Your child's doctor will talk with you and your child to help decide what is best.

Educational Resources

Changes in You for Girls Paperback by [Peggy C. Siegel](#) (Author)

<http://www.amazon.com/Changes-You-Girls-Peggy-Siegel/dp/0962868701>

The Care & Keeping of You - The Body Book for Girls (American Girl series)

<http://store.americangirl.com/agshop/html/item/id/165179>

Center for Young Women's Health

<http://www.youngwomenshealth.org/>