

# Growing Up Well

FOR GIRLS



Ministry of Education  
Republic of Maldives



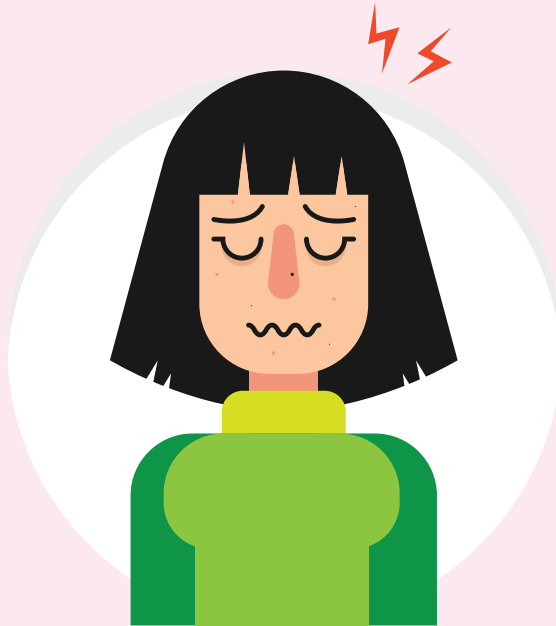
## HOW CAN I HELP?

I am filled with lots of information for school girls like you. I will tell you about the changes that naturally happen in your body as you start to grow from a child and eventually into a young woman. This can be a difficult time if you don't know what to expect and how to manage the changes that are happening. Read along to find out more!



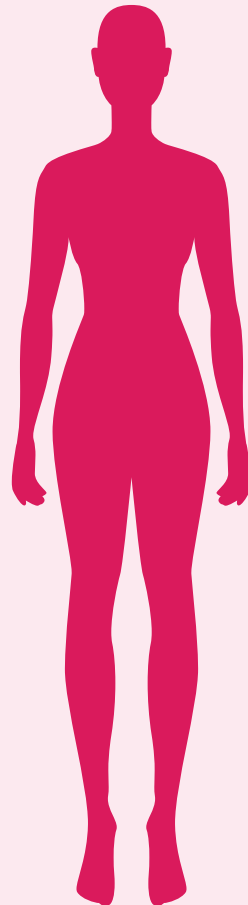
# PUBERTY

Puberty is a series of changes that your body goes through as you grow into a young woman. You start to produce hormones which will change your body and it can also affect your emotions. It can be difficult to get used to it but everyone must go through it including boys while they grow into young men. The changes are different for girls and boys and it should be respected. For girls, puberty usually happens between 8 and 16 years of age.



## What will happen to girls during puberty?

- You will grow taller and gain some weight
- Your breasts start to grow and hips widen
- Your muscles get stronger
- Your underarms and private area grow hair
- Sweat and oil glands becomes more active and you may get pimples and sweat more
- Your body odour changes
- Your reproductive system matures and you may get vaginal discharge
- Your periods will start
- You may experience mood changes



# MENSTRUATION

Menstruation is commonly called a period or menstrual periods and it happens to all girls during puberty. (It is the discharge of blood from the uterus through the vagina of girls and women every month.)

## **Will I know when my period is going to start?**

You may not always know when it will start, but you may start experiencing some body changes. You may grow hair on your underarms and private parts; your breast may start to grow; and you may start getting a vaginal discharge months or even a year before you get your first periods. This is normal.

## **What is discharge?**

During puberty, your vagina will start to produce a clear or white liquid which is called discharge. This is normal. This is how the vagina keeps itself clean. However, if the discharge is yellow or smells, or if your private parts are itchy, you should see a doctor to check if there is an infection. You may get a thicker discharge just before your period. This may stain your underwear so you can wear a panty liner if you want. You should change your underwear frequently as clean underwear is important to keep you healthy.

## **When is my period going to start?**

Usually girls get their first period between the ages 8 and 15, but some girls might start earlier or later than this. This is normal. During the period, there is flow of blood from the vagina and you may experience pain or "cramps". Sanitary pads are used to absorb the blood and stop staining your clothes.

## How much blood will I lose?

Don't worry because it is only 3-4 tablespoons of blood that you lose and it won't flow out all at once.

## How long will my first period be?

During the first few years of menstruation, periods may not occur regularly every month. This is normal. Your first period may not take very long as your body takes some time to settle into the new process. Once your body has picked up a regular pattern, you may have a period every 28 days (menstrual cycle) that last 3-7 days every time. The cycle and length of period may be shorter or longer for some. This is normal.

## Will other people know I am having my periods?

Relax! Although sometimes it feels like people can tell you are wearing a pad, nobody will know unless you tell them. It might feel uncomfortable at first, but you'll get the hang of it in no time.

## What do I do if I get blood on my clothes?

Help is all around. If you are at school, you can ask a friend or a female teacher or health officer for a pad. Soap and water will get rid of the stain. So, even if it were to happen, it's not as bad as you think it might be.



## TIPS

- Carry a sanitary pad with you when you go out to school or elsewhere if you are expecting or having your periods
- If you need a sanitary pad while you are at school, don't feel shy to talk to your health officer or a female teacher, they are used to being asked.
- Don't be embarrassed to talk to someone you trust about your periods like your parent/ guardian, sister or school health officer. Every girl goes through it!

## PERSONAL HYGIENE & GROOMING

- During your periods, you must make sure you wash your private parts frequently (every time you go to the toilet). This will reduce having bad body odour and infections. It is important you don't hold your pee as this can make you ill.
- It is important that you bathe at least once a day so your body is clean and does not smell
- Whenever you wash any part of your body, especially your private parts, it is important to pat yourself dry. Always wash or dry front front to back to avoid infections.
- You can use a deodorant or anti-perspirant on your underarm to get rid of body odour
- Now that your body creates more oil, you may have to wash your hair more often and you will need to pay more attention to washing your face well and keeping your hands clean! read along for acne tips
- You may get more hairs on your arms and legs and they may get thicker. You don't need to shave and there is no particular time to do so even if you choose to shave. Read along for shaving tips

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day (morning and before going to bed). Sugary foods and fizzy drinks can damage your teeth and gums, so it is best to limit them. You still have molars to grow. Bad oral health can lead to unsightly stains, bad breath and even missing teeth. Besides, a clean and healthy smile gives us so much confidence!
- Wear clean, washed clothes and underwear that are comfortable
- Cotton underwear works well in our warm climate and is great for the skin
- Wash your hands regularly. Refer to handwashing fact sheet
- Give your nails a good scrub every day and cut them once a week, nobody wants grubby hands and stinky feet
- Change your sanitary pad regularly every 4 hours (or more if periods are heavy)
- Changing pads infrequently or use of unclean pads can cause skin irritations and infections. If you get a rash or find your private parts are itchy, you should talk to a doctor or nurse.
- Always dispose of the used pad hygienically



## HOW TO USE A PAD

- Wash your hands before use
- Remove the pad from the packaging and remove the adhesive strip on the back of the pad
- Place the sticky side on the crotch area of your underpant (not too forward or too far behind)
- Roll up the used pad, wrap it in paper and put it in the bin (do not flush it down the toilet as this can block the toilet)
- Wash your hands after use

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## TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

- Drinking plenty of clean water is really important, especially in a tropical country like ours good diet helps to make your periods more manageable
- A hot water bottle laid on your tummy or back can help reduce the pain (be careful not to burn yourself with one that is too hot!)
- You may experience mood changes and irritability. Learning how to relax and manage it is part of growing up
- Deep breathing can help us relax and feel better
- Daily stretching of our muscles help our bodies relax and reduces pain and bloating during periods
- Proper rest and sleep is essential for you to grow, be healthy and feel good
- If cramps are so severe that you are missing school or other activities, you could also see a doctor, who can help you manage your periods better.



Green Veggies like Spinach are loaded with Iron and help you make new blood



Bananas contain Potassium that helps reduce your cramps



Calcium Rich Foods Milk & Yoghurt lessen Period Pains

## Do You Worry About How You Look?

- When your body is changing and growing, sometimes you might worry about how you look. This is normal. If it is affecting you too much, it is best to speak to someone you can trust about it such as your parent, school health officer or counsellor.
- You will see children and adults of all sizes, and personalities if you look around. Everyone is different and it is your identity that makes you unique.

## How can I prevent Acne and Pimples?

All the new hormones that your body produces during puberty affect the oil producing (sebaceous) glands and sweat producing glands. Pimples are caused when the sebaceous glands that lie just under your skin creates oil (sebum) that is a bit thicker and flows a bit slower resulting in your pores getting clogged. When pimples get inflamed, this condition is called acne.

Some of us have to deal with acne for many teenage years and there is no single treatment that works for all of us. Most of us get pimples and acne on the face, but you can also breakout in other parts of the body. Try these tips to make sure you are looking after your skin well and giving your body the chance to reduce the number and severity of breakouts.



## TIPS TO BETTER MANAGE PIMPLES & ACNE

- Keep your hands clean and finger nails trimmed and clean.
- Washing your skin is important to remove excess oil and dead skin cells which can clog your pores. Washing too much can actually damage your skin by over drying or irritating existing pimples.
- If you've been exercising, doing a sport, doing active work or if the heat is just so terrible that you are sweating too much, you should wash your face and other acne-prone areas of your body as soon as possible.
- If you use skin products, choose products that don't clog your pores (may be labelled as "non-comedogenic")
- Be careful with hair styling products and keep them away from the face. A lot of these products contain oils that can make your acne worse!
- If you get acne on your body (e.g. back or thighs), avoid wearing tight clothes. They can rub against the pimples and irritate it more.
- Never pop, pick or squeeze pimples. This can actually push pus or an infection deeper inside causing more redness, swelling, and worse - scarring, which may be there forever!
- Don't be embarrassed to get help. If your acne is really bothering you, you should speak to a trusted adult. Doctors can recommend special creams or gels and medicines for your acne and can help you manage your acne better.
- If you are taking prescription medication for acne, you must complete your medication as the doctor advised (unless the doctor tells you to stop it before that). When your skin starts to look better, you might feel like you don't need the medicine anymore, but there is a chance that you might get a breakout if you stop too early.
- Here is some good news - acne usually gets a lot better as you get older!
- A well balanced nutritious diet and physical activity can keep your body and skin fit and healthy.

## SHAVING TIPS

Hair on your legs may get thicker as you grow older. Some girls and women shave their legs, but you don't have to. If you want to shave, it is really up to you to decide when you want to start shaving.

- Before shaving, you should wash your hands properly.
- Rinse your razor to make sure it is clean.
- It is important to wash the surface of the skin before shaving, so you don't get a rash from shaving. This is particularly important if you have sensitive skin.
- You can use a mild soap to wash your skin.
- Hair in different parts of the body grows in different directions. You should shave in the direction your hair is growing. Shaving in opposite direction can give a rash, redness or razor burn!
- Rinse your razor every few strokes to make sure it doesn't get clogged.
- When you are done, wash your skin surface.
- Make sure you rinse and dry the razor, and store it safely.
- You must renew the blade of your razor or get a new razor if it becomes blunt or if it develops a stain to make sure you don't end up with a rash, redness and blotches.
- You may get some cuts and nicks. You just have to be careful and make sure it doesn't happen every time!
- Also, you must never share razors/shavers with others.



## MYTH BUSTER

### **"You lose a lot of blood"**

Nop. You only lose 3-4 tablespoons of blood at first. Even once periods get more regular as you grow up, you still lose a very limited amount of blood every time.

### **"It is a disease or sickness"**

They could not be more wrong! Periods are part of the functions of normal female reproductive system. Having your period means you are growing up healthy and well!

### **"Menstrual blood is not regular blood"**

Menstrual blood is regular blood. Just because it flows from the vagina does not make it abnormal. In fact, vaginas are a normal part of the female body, and having your period means you are growing up healthy. Also, did you know it has no odor at all? Whatever smell comes after blood is exposed to air. Now, there is a cool fact for you!

### **"You should not wash your hair or cut your nails during your periods"**

Wrong again. You should continue good hygiene practices as any other time of the month. You would probably need to wash your hair daily and trim your nails at least once a week.

