GROWING

A Booklet for 4th Grade Females

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Puyallup School District
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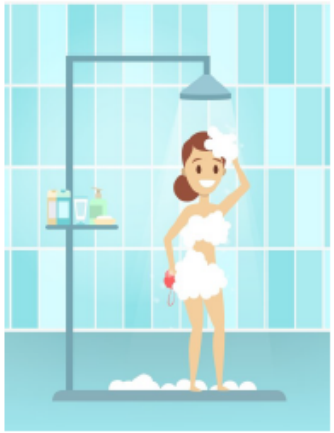
Have you ever thought about how your body will grow and change into an adult?

This change is something everyone goes through, males and females alike, and is called **puberty**.

This booklet will explain puberty for females, explain the changes you will face and hopefully answer a lot of questions.

Puberty begins when your body starts making **hormones** that cause your body to change. The main **hormone** for females is **Estrogen**. **Es**trogen is responsible for many changes that take place in your body. Females can go through puberty at different ages, generally between 9 – 14 years of age. Everyone's timeline is different. There is no "right" or "wrong" time to go through puberty. EVERYONE goes through it. Even though you may be feeling as though you are the only one who's body is changing, remember that every single adult that you see has gone through this change. It is a normal process and you will be just fine.

Keeping Clean



Once you start going through puberty, you will have to start taking care of your body differently. The glands in your body are becoming more active. You will learn you have sweat glands in places you never even knew you could sweat. Your armpit, **genital** area, feet and even bottom. Sweat can cause a very unpleasant odor. In order to keep your body smelling good, you need to take a shower or bath every day and thoroughly dry your entire body. After you're fresh and clean, it's a good idea to use a deodorant or anti-perspirant (that's a fancy name for sweat) – Oh! And clean clothes – especially underwear and socks (remember all the places you sweat?)

Did you know that the health of your mouth can affect the rest of your body? Everything is connected. It is important to make sure you are brushing your teeth, gums and tongue twice a day. Don't forget to floss, too. This will help keep your breath fresh and your body healthy.

Skin Changes



Another fun part of puberty? The acne! (Just kidding – it's not fun AT ALL). Your changing body and hormones will cause you to get acne (also known as zits or pimples). There is no way to avoid getting acne, but washing your face twice a day with a mild cleanser will help to keep the acne from getting out of control. If this isn't working, talk with a trusted adult about other options and possibly see your health care provider.

Physical Transformation

Your body will begin to change during puberty. Your breasts will start to develop (remember – not all females develop at the same time) you may start to get hair in your armpits and **pubic area**. You may gain some weight and grow taller.

Nutrition

Eating a well-balanced diet is important no matter your age. During puberty it is especially important to make healthy choices.

Some weight gain during puberty is totally normal. Not only are you growing taller, but the shape of your body is changing, too. Your weight is a non-issue unless you are substantially overweight. Talk to a trusted adult and/or your health care provider if you have questions/concerns about your weight.

5-2-1-0

Have you heard of 5-2-1-0? It's a good thing to strive towards. 5-2-1-0 stands for:

- **5** servings of fruits/vegetables a day.
- Limit our screen time to **2** hours a day.
- Get **1** hour of physical activity a day.
- Aim for **0** sugary beverages a day. If you need something besides water, try adding fruit to your water.



Exercise

Keep moving! Always keep moving! Exercise gives you more stamina and flexibility and strengthens your heart, lungs and bones! Triple whammy!

There are LOTS of options for exercise, not just team sports.

- Running
- Swimming
- Jumping Rope
- Dancing
- Roller-skating
- Speed Walking
- Bicycling
- Skiing/Snow boarding
- Ice Skating
- Climbing (stairs, rock walls, you get the idea)

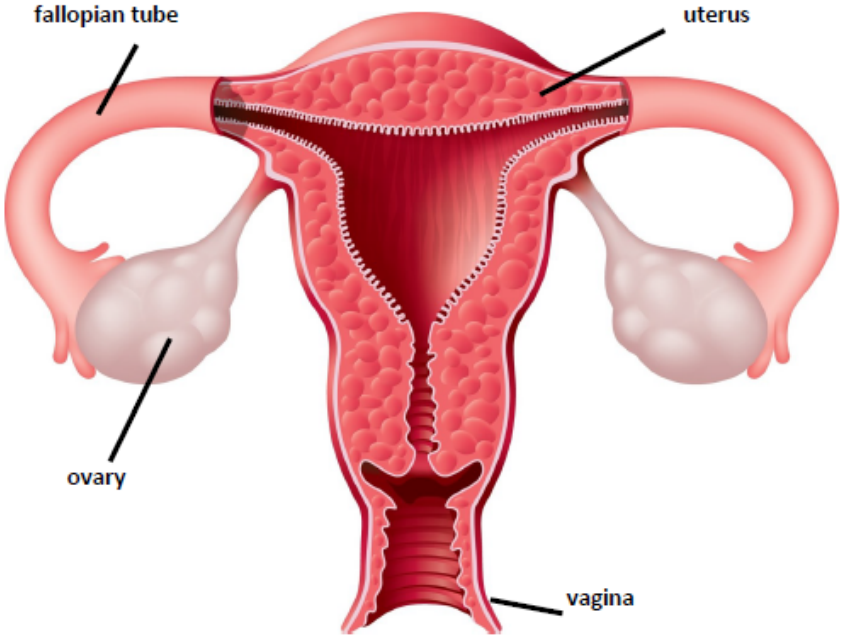


Periods – period.

So, what is happening to your body during puberty? What's a period? Where does it come from? Where does my urine (pee) come from?

Females are born with a **urethra, vagina** and **anus** that can all be seen externally. That's right, you have 3 holes "down there". The **urethra** is where your urine (pee) comes out. The **vagina** is a "tunnel" that leads to the internal organs - the **uterus, ovaries,** and **fallopian tubes**. Next, we will explain the responsibility of each organ.

Female Reproductive System



Ovaries

Generally, you have two **ovaries**, each the size of a walnut. When you are born, your **ovaries** are filled with **ova** or **egg** cells. Each ovary has a couple hundred thousand **egg** cells in it, but each **egg** is only the size of the point of a needle. About once a month, hormones cause one ovary to release an **egg** cell. This is called **ovulation**.

Fallopian Tubes

After the egg cell is released from the ovary, it travels to the **Fallopian tube**. The **Fallopian tube** has what looks like little "fingers" that sweep the egg cell into the tube. The egg can be fertilized by a sperm cell from a male while in the tube on its way to the uterus.

Uterus

The uterus is an organ which holds the egg cell if it has been **fertilized**. When **ovulation** occurs, the internal lining of the uterus starts to thicken. If the egg is **fertilized**, it will implant itself into this thickened lining (endometrium) and this is where a baby will grow.

If the egg is unfertilized, the lining is not needed. This uterine lining then breaks down and becomes a reddish fluid that flows out of the **vagina**. It takes about 3-7 days for this lining to completely shed. This process is called "menstruating" or "having your **period**." After your **period** has ended, the process begins all over again. **Menstrual** blood can be bright red, dark red and sometimes even brown. If you have questions regarding the color of your **period**, talk with a trusted adult or your health care provider.

Vagina

The **vagina** is the passage from the uterus to the outside of the body. This is where your **period** blood will come from and when a baby is born, it is (usually) delivered through the **vagina**. Sometimes, you will have clear or whiteish fluid coming from your **vagina**. This is called vaginal discharge and is completely normal.

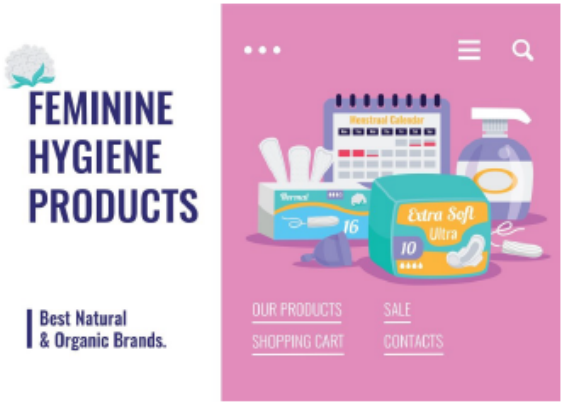
You may even notice that it happens right before your **period**. Again - vaginal discharge is completely normal. However, if you have a burning or itching sensation in your **genital** area OR if your discharge is a color other than white/clear OR if there is an odor associated with your discharge, you need to make sure to talk to a trusted adult and/or your health care provider.

What do I do when I am bleeding from my vagina?

There are different types of "feminine hygiene" products available for menstrual protection - pads (also known as sanitary napkins), tampons and menstrual cups. Pads are worn outside the body and have adhesive to stick to your underwear. Pads are the best option for females the first couple of years of having their **period**. It is important to make sure and change your feminine hygiene product (no matter which you use) every few hours. If you have any questions, talk to a trusted adult and/or your health care provider.

What's it like having a period and when will I get mine?

Just as all females are growing and developing at different rates, they will get their first **period** at different times as well. Some females will start menstruating at age 9. Some won't start until they are in their teens. Every female has her own internal clock. Generally, your first **period** will come about 2 years after the first signs of breast development. Vaginal discharge can be a good indicator that your **period** is coming soon.



Most women have their **periods** about every 28 days. Some are as early as 22 days, some as late as 43 days. Don't be surprised if your **periods** don't come on a regular schedule for a while. It takes about two years for your body to get on a regular schedule.

Your **period** will last from 3-7 days. Again, this can vary by person to person. The flow is typically heavier at the beginning of your **period** than at the end. Some days it may seem like a lot of blood is coming from your **vagina**. Don't fret. The human body contains A LOT of blood and will replace the amount you lost. However, if you are completely soaking through a pad every two hours, that is something that needs to be addressed with your health care provider.

Menstrual cramps can feel like a dull/heavy pain or a squeezing. "Cramps" is the uterus contracting (squeezing) to get the lining out of the body. You can have menstrual pain in your lower abdomen and back as well.

There are a few ways to try and help relieve cramps.

- Exercise! Take a long walk.
  This can be difficult when you are not feeling well, but it works.
- Deep-breathing exercises
- Warm bath
- Heating pad

The last thing to remember is this: Popcorn kernels are all cooked in the same oil at the same temperature, but they don't all pop at the same time. Think of puberty as popcorn kernels. We all go through puberty when our bodies are ready, and it's not all the same time.

GLOSSARY

Anus (Ay-nus) – The opening of the rectum through which solid waste (poop) is passed out of the body.

Egg – Also called an ovum, it's the female reproductive cell.

Endometrium (en-doh-MEE-tree-um) – The soft, spongy lining of the uterus.

Estrogen (Es-troh-jen) – Female hormone produced in the ovaries that is responsible for many changes that take place during puberty.

Fallopian tubes (fal-LOH-pee-un) – Two tubes connecting the ovaries to the uterus through which the egg travels.

Fertilization (fur-till-ih-ZAY-shun) – The joining of a female egg and a male sperm to form an embryo.

Hormones (HOR-moans) – Chemical substances (produced by organs called glands) that regulate the growth and activity of body tissues and organs.

Menstrual cycle (MEN-stroo-al SIGH-cul) – The process of ovulation and menstruation that occurs approximately once a month beginning at puberty.

Menstruation (MEN-stroo-A-shun) – The period during which the uterine lining (the endometrium) passes out of the body through the vagina.

Organ – A part of your body assigned to perform a certain function.

Ovaries (OH-var-reez) – Two glands, one on either side of the uterus, that contain a female's egg cells and produce the hormones estrogen and progesterone.

Ovulation (ah-view-LAY-shun) – The moment at which an egg is released from an ovary.

Period – The time when a female is menstruating.

Pituitary gland (phi-Too-ih-terry) – The gland at the base of the brain which is responsible for producing hormones that regulate growth and development at puberty.

Puberty (PEW-ber-tee) – The states of life during which human males and females become capable of reproduction.

Urethra (you-REE-thrah) – The tube that carries urine from the bladder out of the body.

Uterus (YOU-ter-us) – Muscular organ lined with endometrium.

Vagina (va-JEYE-na) – The flexible passageway leading the cervix to the outside of the body, through which menstrual fluid flows.