

Understanding a Girl's Body

Menstruation

One of the changes that happens during puberty is that a girl's body begins to *menstruate*. Menstruation is a normal process that happens for many years of a girl's life. During menstruation the built-up lining of the uterus slowly passes out of the body through the vagina. This happens about once a month. It is also known as *having a period*.

Periods are different for each girl. A girl may start having periods as young as age 9 or as old as age 16. Most girls will have a period about every 28 days, although the time between periods can be as short as 21 days or as long as 40 days. Periods may last from 1 to 5 days. There may be a lot of blood or a little. Some girls may feel cramps in the belly or lower back.

Taking care of periods. A girl will need to wear a *pad* or *tampon* during her period to collect the blood. She can ask her mother or another caring adult for help. Menstruating can be a little uncomfortable at times. But most girls can continue to be active and do all the things they usually do. Bathing regularly will help a girl stay clean and healthy.