



## American Academy of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

### Puberty Information For Girls

Puberty is the time in a girl's life when her body changes from that of a young girl to that of a woman. It is also the time when a girl becomes physically able to have babies. Although there is no "right" time for puberty to begin, it generally starts earlier for a girl than it does for a boy - usually between 9 and 13 years of age. This is why many girls are taller and may act more mature than boys for a few years until the boys catch up.

#### How will my body change?

Following are some of the changes your body will go through during puberty:

#### Breasts:

In most girls, puberty starts with breast growth. When your breasts start to develop, you may notice small, tender lumps under one or both nipples that will get bigger over the next few years. When breasts first begin to develop, it is not unusual for one breast to be larger than the other. However, as they develop, they will most likely even out before they reach their final size and shape.

As your breasts develop, you may need a bra. Some girls feel that wearing a bra for the first time is exciting - it is the first step toward becoming a woman! However, some girls feel embarrassed, especially if they are among the first of their friends to need a bra. If the people around you make a bigger deal of your first bra than you would like, try to remember that they do not mean to embarrass you, they are just proud of how much you have grown.

#### Hair:

Soft hair will start to grow in the pubic area (the area between your legs). This hair will eventually become thick and very curly. You may also notice hair under your arms and on your legs. Many women shave this hair. There is no medical reason to shave, it is simply a personal choice. If you decide to shave, be sure to use a lot of soap and water and a clean razor made for women. It is a good idea to use your own personal razor or electric shaver and not to share one with your family or friends.

**Body shape:**

Hips get wider and your waist will get smaller. Your body will also begin to build up fat in the stomach, buttocks, and legs. This is normal and gives your body the curvier shape of a woman.

**Body size:**

Arms, legs, hands, and feet may grow faster than the rest of your body. Until the rest of your body catches up, you may feel a little clumsier than usual.

**Skin:**

Skin may get more oily and you may notice you sweat more. This is because your glands are growing too. It is important to wash every day to keep your skin clean and to use a deodorant or antiperspirant to keep odor and wetness under control. Despite your best efforts to keep your face clean, you still may get pimples. This is called acne and is normal during this time when your hormone levels are high. Almost all teenagers get acne at one time or another. Whether your case is mild or severe, there are things you can do to keep it under control. For more information on controlling acne, talk to your pediatrician.

**Menstruation:**

Your menstrual cycle, or "period," begins. Most girls get their periods between 9 and 16 years of age.