

## WHAT DOES PUBERTY MEAN ABOUT MY BODY?

Puberty is all about how our bodies mature -- from a child's body to an adult's. It's a marker of growing up.

It's important to know this: a female who has gone through puberty has the physical ability to eventually become pregnant.



Produced in cooperation with the  
New York State Department of Health



## YOUR CHANGING BODY:

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

VISIT:  
[WWW.JOWMA.ORG/TEENHEALTH](http://WWW.JOWMA.ORG/TEENHEALTH)

OR EMAIL:  
[TEENHEALTH@JOWMA.ORG](mailto:TEENHEALTH@JOWMA.ORG)

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This information is only for general education. It's not meant to be used to diagnose or treat any specific condition. It cannot replace medical advice from a professional. If you have questions about a medical condition, always talk to your doctor or another health care provider.



*Puberty  
in  
Females*

## BODY CHANGES ARE PART OF GROWTH.

Our bodies go through changes as they mature. This process of change is called, "puberty." It's important to understand changes that will occur -- and what they mean about your body.

## WHAT DOES PUBERTY MEAN FOR A FEMALE?

### BREAST DEVELOPMENT

- When puberty ends, females will have two adult breasts. Each will have a nipple and an areola. The areola is the darker area around the nipple.
- As your breasts begin to develop, you may notice that they feel sore. This will go away as your breasts become rounder and fuller. You may notice red "stretch marks" over your breasts and chest as they grow. These will get lighter with time.
- Breasts can grow unevenly so one is larger than the other. Breasts can be all types of shapes and sizes!
- You may notice a small amount of hair around your areola. This is normal.
- It is very important to wear a bra that fully supports your breasts! Make sure you find one that is comfortable for you.
- The mature breast is what a mother will use to nurse her baby.

## SKIN CHANGES

Your skin may become more oily, and you may break out in pimples and acne. It is important to wash your face daily and hair as needed. Many doctors can help you with medications to reduce the amount of acne. Be sure to ask your doctor about these options if you feel you need treatment.

## PUBIC AND UNDERARM HAIR

This starts off thin and gets thicker / coarser / curlier. Usually, pubic hair appears before underarm hair. Some girls may decide to remove the hair under their arms, on their legs, and sometimes in their pubic area. This is up to you!

## SWEAT

Your sweat glands become active during puberty! This can cause "body odor." It is important to use deodorant on your underarms every day.

## VAGINAL DISCHARGE

You may notice a yellow or white stain in your underpants as puberty begins. This is normal. However, if you have any itchiness or irritation around your vagina, you should talk to a caregiver or a doctor.

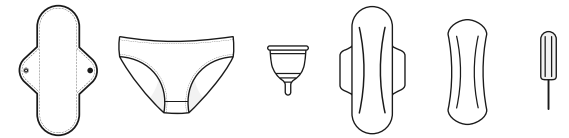
## PERIOD/MENSTRUATION

- Getting your period is also called menstruation. It is the process of bleeding from the vaginal area every month.
- You will probably get your period two to two and a half years after you first start developing breasts. Your first period may start when you are between age nine and 15. But, most females first get it when they are age 12 to 12 and a half.

- Periods generally arrive once a month (every four weeks) and last five to seven days. Know that for the first two and a half years after your period starts, it may be "irregular." This means there will be more than one month between periods --or sometimes even two or three months between periods.

- You may have pain in your abdomen or "belly" when you get your period. This is called having menstrual cramps. If the pain from cramps becomes so uncomfortable that it gets in the way of daily activities, talk to a doctor.

- There are several ways to handle your period. You may choose to use tampons, menstrual cups, pads, or period underwear. Each sanitary item comes in different sizes, brands, and materials. Find an option that works for you!



## GROWTH SPURT

Many girls have a "growth spurt" the year before they get their first period. After your first period, you will probably grow one or two inches taller.

## EMOTIONS

Part of going through puberty means having some ups and downs. Sometimes you may feel sad and angry and not know why. This is NORMAL. Find people who you can talk with about these feelings.

Talk to an adult if you feel sad or angry for what feels like too long, or for longer than two weeks. Seek out a teacher, a caregiver, or a doctor. Tell them how you feel.