

Practical points

It is very important for a girl in Year 6 to know what to expect when her periods start. These points may be helpful:

- + Ask your daughter to tell you as soon as her period starts. If she is at school she should go to her class teacher or, if this is a man, to another female teacher. You should have been told which teacher your daughter should go to at the introductory meeting.
- + Give her some sanitary pads and discuss where she should keep them.
- + Tell her that she may bleed for anything between 3-7 days; every girl will be different. You should make sure she understands where the bleeding will come from. Also point out that the average cycle is around 28 days. So counting the day she starts as day one, she could start her next period 28 days later, although this may be irregular at first. You may both want to make a note of the dates.
- + Tell your daughter that she may feel some cramps in her tummy and she may have a headache. You can give her a painkiller for this. She may also feel emotional – you can give her a lot of love and affection for this.

A sign of fertility

Spend a few minutes explaining to your daughter why she has periods. You can tell her that:

- + She has had all her eggs in her ovaries since she was born. At puberty the eggs begin to mature.
- + Once a month an egg is released from the ovary and travels down the fallopian tube. This is where fertilisation takes place.
- + If the egg is not fertilised then the lining of her womb comes away and passes out of her. This is what the bleeding is.
- + One effect of the period is that it keeps the lining of the womb healthy for a baby to grow there.

- + Your daughter's periods are part of the wonderful way in which God made women, so that they can have babies, and continue His work of creation.

Talking points:

- + Ask your daughter if she has any questions about periods. After you have spoken about menstruation you may feel that this would be a good moment to talk about sexual intercourse.

Your daughter may already have some knowledge of this, but she will benefit from what you want to say to her.

If you prefer not to talk about this to your daughter right now, you can leave it for another time.

Sex and babies

“This is my body” teaches children that life begins at the moment of conception. Every new baby is a gift to the world created by God. Your daughter is a gift from God. He has given her to you to look after. Sex is also a gift from God to men and women so that they can bring new life into His world.

An important message is that the purpose of sex is to have babies. It is also a beautiful way in which a husband and wife show that they love each other. Love, marriage, sex and babies all go together. This is what the Catholic church teaches because this is what brings happiness to people. People can get hurt and become very unhappy when love, marriage, sex and babies are separated from each other. Please share this message with your daughter.

This is my body

TALKING TO YOUR DAUGHTER ABOUT PUBERTY

Important note to parents

The most important thing to remember is that parents are the best people to talk to their daughters about puberty. Even if you think someone else could do a better job, this is one of the rights God gave to you when your daughter was born. For that reason you will most probably do it better than anyone else.

Be confident. Many parents worry about talking to their children about sex. They worry about finding the right moment to talk to their child. They also worry that they will be too embarrassed.

The right time could be now. There are lots of openings to talk to your daughter about puberty while she is working through the “This is my body” programme at school. She is learning about how unborn babies grow in the womb, which gives a natural opening to talk to her about how her body changes so that she can become a mother herself.

Don't be embarrassed – it will mean a lot to your daughter that you have spoken to her about puberty. You don't have to spend a lot of time talking, but your daughter needs to know what to expect when her periods start. This could lead naturally to talking about sexual intercourse, but you may want to leave that for another time.

Please read this leaflet so that you can prepare yourself to talk to your daughter. It's best if mothers can talk to their daughters, but this leaflet will also help dads, another family member or a trusted friend.

Finally, this leaflet is for you. Don't just give it to your daughter to read. Sit with her and talk together.



Changing from girl to woman

Puberty is the time when the body changes from that of a child to an adult. For boys and girls these changes are connected with preparing their bodies to become a father or a mother.

The body goes through three big changes, or growth spurts, in life:

1. In the womb
2. From birth to one year
3. Puberty

Talking points:

- + Talk about the way in which a baby grows so quickly in the womb – from a single cell to a complete baby in 9 months! Your daughter will be able to tell you a lot about this, because of what she has learnt through the “This is my body” programme.
- + Tell your daughter about how quickly she developed up until her first birthday. Sitting up, crawling, holding things, walking etc.

A few points about puberty

Puberty can start at any time between 9 and 16 years old. The process of changing from a child to an adult is not complete until a person is in their early twenties.

Girls usually start developing before boys.

Everyone develops at their own rate. Your daughter is unique.

Puberty starts when the brain sends a signal to the pituitary gland which releases certain hormones into the bloodstream. These hormones are chemical messengers which tell the body to start growing. Puberty is a time of rapid growth and change, both emotional and physical.

Every parent with a teenager knows what a challenging and sometimes difficult time this can be. But it is also an exciting time. During puberty you and your daughter start to discover more of the plan God has for her.

Talking points:

- + Ask your daughter about the ways in which she thinks she has changed since Year 5.
- + What does she notice about teenage girls whom she knows?

The signs of puberty

Changes to body shape

As you know, as your daughter enters puberty her body shape begins to change. Many girls have a growth spurt during Year 6 and everyone comments on how much taller they are. You may have noticed some change to your daughter’s weight. Her breasts will be starting to grow and her hips will be getting broader.

She will be starting to develop the natural shape of a woman; the shape designed by God to enable her to have babies. Girls entering puberty can start to worry about the way they look. Make sure you tell your daughter that God has made her the way He wants her to be. The work she is doing at school in “This is my body”, teaches her that she is a unique and special part of God’s creation.

Talking points:

- + Talk to you daughter about the changing shape of her body. You could start by chatting about her clothes; how she probably needs some new clothes because she is taller etc. You could point out to her that she will need to wear a bra soon, because her breasts are starting to grow.

Hair, skin and body odour

Your daughter’s skin and hair will be changing. Typically these become more greasy or oily. Your daughter may have already noticed these changes, particularly if she sees spots on her face.

Body odour is, of course, another sign of puberty. The important point to make to your daughter here, is that she will need to take care to wash regularly and use a deodorant.

You daughter may also be noticing that she is getting hair under her arms and also pubic hair. She might be feeling a bit self-conscious or embarrassed about this. These feelings are not bad, they are a natural way of telling us that our bodies are private and we must look after them.

Menstruation

Please talk to your daughter about having periods even if she already knows from her friends or older girls. Starting her periods is one of the biggest changes in your daughter’s life. Later on, she may feel very hurt if you didn’t spend time talking to her and re-assuring her.

Periods will usually occur when other body changes of puberty have started, such as breast and hair development, and so she will already be aware of some changes happening in her body.

Some parents get upset when their daughter starts to menstruate, particularly if it seems to start too early. But this is really a time for parents to feel glad that their daughter is growing into a woman

