



Supporting Your Child Before Their First Period

Many children begin puberty during primary school, and some may experience emotional and physical changes before their first period starts. Understanding what's happening can help you support your child with confidence.

When do periods usually start?

- Most children start their first period between ages 9–13, but this can vary.
- It's normal for changes to begin 1–2 years before the first period.

Emotional changes before the first period

Before any bleeding begins, your child's body is already producing hormones (like oestrogen). These can affect emotions. You might notice:

- Mood swings (happy one moment, upset the next)
- Increased sensitivity or tearfulness
- Irritability or frustration
- Anxiety or feeling overwhelmed
- Wanting more privacy or independence

These changes can start months or even a year or more before the first period.

Is there a cycle before periods begin?

Yes—although there is no bleeding yet, the body may already be trying to establish a menstrual cycle.

- Hormones can rise and fall in a cycle-like pattern
- This means emotional changes may happen at similar times each month
- However, this pattern is often irregular at first

So you might notice:

- A few days of emotional ups and downs
- Then a return to their "usual self"
- This repeating roughly every few weeks

How long before physical signs appear?

Emotional and hormonal changes can happen 6 months to 2 years before the first period.

Common physical signs that usually come before periods include:

- Breast development
- Growth spurts
- Body hair (underarms/pubes area)
- Vaginal discharge (often clear or white)

Periods typically begin about 1–2 years after breast development starts.

Is there a pattern before the first period?

Sometimes—but not always.

Before periods begin:

- Hormonal patterns can be inconsistent
- Emotional changes may feel unpredictable

- Over time, a loose monthly rhythm may appear

After periods start, it can take 6 months to 2 years for cycles to become regular

How you can support your child

1. Keep communication open

- Let them know these changes are normal
- Encourage questions without embarrassment

2. Name the feelings

- Help them understand mood changes are linked to body changes
- Example: “Your body is growing and hormones can affect how you feel.”

3. Create a calm environment

- Offer reassurance during emotional moments
- Be patient with mood swings

4. Prepare them gently

- Talk about periods before they start
- Show them how to use pads
- Consider putting a small kit in their school bag

5. Watch for patterns

- You may notice emotional changes every few weeks
- This can help you anticipate when extra support is needed

Reassurance for parents

Every child develops differently. Emotional changes before periods are completely normal, even if they feel sudden or intense. With understanding and support, your child can feel safe, prepared, and confident as their body grows.