



Free Australian health advice you can count on.

Medical problem? Call 1800 022 222. If you need urgent medical help, call triple zero immediately

healthdirect Australia is a free service where you can talk to a nurse or doctor who can help you know what to do.

Puberty for girls

10-minute read



Key facts

- Puberty in females usually begins between the ages of 8 and 13 years.
- Puberty involves physical and emotional changes that can be both challenging and exciting.
- Having conversations with a parent or other trusted adult can help you while you experience these changes.

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What is puberty?

Puberty is when you start to move from childhood into adulthood. During puberty, your body makes more [hormones](#) — this leads to physical and emotional changes. Your [reproductive system](#) and other body systems mature, and your body develops so that you will be physically able to have a baby in the future.

Changes during puberty can make you feel many emotions, including feeling:

- overwhelmed
- excited
- awkward
- empowered

This is normal. It's a good idea to talk to a trusted adult who can support you and answer your questions.

This page has information about physical and emotional changes in females during puberty. You can visit our other pages to find more information about:

- [puberty for boys](#)
- [emotional changes](#) in puberty

When does puberty begin?

Puberty in females usually begins between the ages of 8 and 13 years. It can last for several years.

Puberty happens at different times for different people. These changes can happen quickly for some people and slowly for others.

You will start puberty at the right time for your body. This may be different from your friends or other females in your group.

Top

Early puberty, also called precocious puberty, can happen before the age of 8 in females. It can include early changes in the body such as breast development and changes in sexual behaviour. It can also lead to some health issues in the future. The reason for early puberty is not known. Your family doctor can give you a referral to a [paediatrician](#), who can organise tests and help you understand how you and your child can manage early puberty.

If you haven't started puberty by 13 years old or had your first period by 15 years old, speak with your doctor. You can ask to see a female doctor if this will make you more comfortable.



ASK YOUR DOCTOR — Preparing for an appointment? The [Pain Question Planner](#) can help you create a list of questions for your doctor.

How will my body change during puberty?

As you go through puberty, there are some changes you can expect.

Physical growth

One of the first changes you might notice during puberty is that you will get taller.

During a 'growth spurt', you may also notice other physical changes, such as:

- the widening of your hips
- weight gain around your thighs
- breast development

You might feel a bit clumsy as you get used to your new shape and size.

Growing breasts

During puberty, your breasts will start to develop.

It's normal for your breasts to grow at different rates. It's also normal for one breast to be larger than the other. Your nipples will also change during puberty. They may turn pink or brown and grow a few hairs. This is all normal.

Breasts can be many different shapes and sizes. It's normal for your breasts to look different to:

- your friends' breasts
- the breasts of people in your family
- celebrities' breasts

As your breasts develop, you may want to wear a bra. Talking with a trusted adult may help you decide. If you want to wear a bra, they can help you shop for one that is best for you.

As your breasts develop, you may feel some discomfort or pain. You can see your doctor if you are worried about changes to your breasts, like:

- pain
- lumps
- nipple discharge

Body hair

As you go through puberty, you will notice hair growing in new places or thickening in some places. You will grow hair under your armpits and in your pubic area near your genitals (vulva).

This hair may begin thin and straight but can become thicker and sometimes curlier as you get older.

If you decide to shave or remove any of your body hair, ask an adult to teach you how to do this safely.

Skin changes

During puberty, your body makes more hormones. These can affect the glands that control the oil in your skin.

Pimples or [acne](#) are caused by overactive glands in the skin. You may notice you get more pimples as you go through puberty. Try to avoid touching the spots. This can make them worse or lead to scarring.

If you are worried about your skin, speak to your doctor about the [treatments](#) available to you.

Sexual feelings

During puberty, you may start to have more sexual feelings. You may want to touch or rub your own genitals — this is called masturbation. This is normal but is a private activity and must only be done in a private place.

Some teenagers choose to engage in sexual activities with another person. It's important to stay safe to prevent sexually transmitted infections ([STI](#)) and [pregnancy](#). If you are concerned about STIs or pregnancy, speak to a doctor or a trusted adult.



FIND A HEALTH SERVICE — The [Service Finder](#) can help you find doctors, pharmacies, hospitals and other health services.

What is menstruation?

During puberty, you will get your first [period](#). This is also called menstruation. Your first period usually arrives around 2 to 3 years after breast development starts.

Periods happen about once a month. This is when the lining of your uterus leaves your body through your vagina. When you get your period, you will notice blood on your underwear.

[Irregular periods](#) are normal in the first 3 years.

What is a normal period?

While it may look like a lot of blood, only a few tablespoons of blood should come out with each period. The blood flow is usually heavier on day 1 or 2 of your period. Period blood can vary in colour from bright to dark red, and this is normal.

Your period may last for up to 7 days. Talk to someone if your periods are [heavy](#) or last longer than 7 days.

If your periods are more than 3 months apart, make an appointment to see your doctor. Your doctor will check that you don't have any health problems that affect your cycle.

What should I expect from my period?

Having periods is healthy and normal. It's common to experience some discomfort around the time of your period, such as [premenstrual syndrome \(PMS\)](#) and [period pain](#).

You can see your doctor if period pain or other [period problems](#) stop you from doing things, for example going to school and hanging out with friends.

Vaginal discharge

Between periods, your cervix produces other secretions (fluids) that may be clear or creamy-coloured.

This fluid travels out of your vagina. It's normal to notice it on your underwear. If you are concerned about your [vaginal discharge](#), you can make an appointment to see your doctor.

How might puberty affect my body image?

As you get older, you may take [more notice of how you look](#). During puberty, body changes can make you feel self-conscious and you might compare yourself to others around you.

It's important to remember that there is no 'perfect body'. People come in many different shapes and sizes. Try to:

- take pride in your appearance and your unique qualities
- have fun finding your style as your body develops
- not focus on unrealistic body standards in advertisements and on social media

If you are worried about your body image, you can speak to your doctor or a trusted adult.

How will my relationship with others change?

As you mature, you may want:

- more space and privacy from your family
- to spend time with boys and girls
- a romantic relationship

You might not feel any interest in romantic [relationships](#) — this is also normal. You may prefer spending time with groups of people.

The changes that come with puberty can sometimes be overwhelming. They can impact your [friendships](#), which may also change. If you are having problems with a friend, try to understand how they are feeling.

As a parent, how can I stay connected with my teen?

If you are a parent of a teen going through puberty, remember that this is the time that they may want more space from you. This is normal. The best thing you can do is encourage them to be independent safely.

It can be difficult talking to a child going through puberty. Try to find an opportunity to talk to your child about what to expect before they have their first period. Find time to talk about:

- what a period is
- what physical and emotional changes they may feel throughout their cycle
- how best to be prepared for these changes



- sexual health and safe sex

You can help your child feel ready for their period by discussing how to manage their period and how to track their cycle using a calendar or app so they know when to expect their next period.

If you don't feel that you are able to have this conversation with your child, another trusted adult may be able to help. This could be a doctor, school counsellor or another family member your child feels comfortable talking with. You can also speak with that adult to feel better prepared to support your child.

Read more about [emotional changes](#) and how to help your child through puberty.

Resources and support

Professional support and resources are available to help you through this life stage.

Resources for teens

Call [Beyond Blue](#) on 1300 22 4636 for support, or visit their website if you feel affected by anxiety, depression or suicidal thoughts.

Call [Headspace](#) on 1800 650 890 or visit their website to access group chats, online communities, and direct support.

Call [Kids Helpline](#) on 1800 55 1800 or visit their website for free, confidential online and phone counselling.

Contact [ReachOut](#) for online mental health information and advice across a range of topics, including relationships, stress and bullying.

Resources for parents

[Parent Line](#) in your state or territory provides counselling and support for parents and carers.

Sources:

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Learn more here about the [development and quality assurance of healthdirect content](#).

Last reviewed: August 2025

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