

GIRLTRIBE

NATION

**HAS THE
PUBERTY
TRAIN
ARRIVED?**



THE PUBERTY TRAIN

BREAST DEVELOPMENT

Have you noticed that her shirt is sitting a little differently on her chest? Budding breasts are one of the first signs of a girl starting puberty. Those breast "buds" are small coin-sized bumps under her nipple. Sometimes growth can start on one side before the other. This can make her breasts tender and she will probably start complaining that her breasts are sore. Uneven breast growth and soreness are both totally normal and usually improve with time.

GROWTH SPURT

Is she outgrowing her leggings? Are you wondering why none of her clothes and shoes fit her? She's hit a growth spurt signaling that the puberty train is here! Most girls have their growth spurt at a younger age than boys do. The fastest rate of height growth usually occurs in girls between when breast buds start to develop and about 6 months before they get their period. Once a girl has had her first period, her growth has already started to slow down. Most girls grow another 1-2 inches after getting their period, but increased height beyond that is less common. So if you start seeing eye-to-eye with her, enjoy the moment...she may pass you by soon!

BODY HAIR

You may be surprised to find that she has sprouted body hair. Body hair begins growing in her pubic region. This coarse hair in the genital area is a sure tell sign that the puberty train is heading your way. Body hair also begins to sprout under the arms, and on the legs. In some girls (about 15%), pubic hair may be the first sign of puberty—showing up before breast budding starts.

PERSPIRATION

Are her pajamas and sweatshirts starting to get stinky? Check those armpits! All those new hormones have started the party and are stimulating the sweat glands under her arms. When sweat and bacteria mingle...look out. It is about to get stinky. It is time for an introduction to deodorant. Be patient, it can take quite a while for this to become a new habit. You will likely need to give lots of kind reminders. After all, she has never had to do this before. It is an introduction to a brand new routine.



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OILY HAIR

With more oil and sweat being made by the skin, your tween may start to have oilier hair. She may not even notice, but you probably will. You'll want to encourage her to scrub the front and back of her hair extra well with shampoo and conditioner. She may want to transition to showers if she has been taking baths. Let her know how great her hair looks when it is clean!

ACNE

With the P-train comes the onset of the big P... pimples. Acne. No fun. This too is related to all the hormonal changes happening in her body. Acne is caused by glands in the skin that produce a natural oil called sebum. Puberty hormones make the glands produce extra sebum, which can clog the pores. Encourage her to gently wash with water and mild soap to get rid of excess sebum and help reduce breakouts. Over-the-counter and prescription medications are available for more severe cases of acne. Your family doctor can recommend a dermatologist (a doctor who specializes in treating the skin) if basic skin care and OTC medications don't keep acne under control.

HIPS WIDEN

Her hips will get wider and her waist may get smaller. Puberty starts to turn that kid figure into one that is starting to look more like a young woman. She may change clothing sizes rapidly and need encouragement that it is all part of growing up.

EMOTIONS

It may be the Puberty Train, but it sure can feel like a roller coaster some days. Emotions come on strong with the onset of hormones pummeling through the body. Mood swings may span the distance from confidence to irritation to sadness. She may burst into tears over a seemingly trivial thing. Give her lots of love, hugs, and encouragement. She may not have any idea what is wrong sometimes, either. Talk through all the different emotions and strategize ways to control them rather than let them control her.



THE PUBERTY TRAIN

CONCRETE THINKING

It's not FAIR. Starting to hear this more often? Things are either right or wrong, great or horrible, without much room in between. Tweens at this stage center their thinking on themselves. It seems really selfish - but is how their brain is wired right now...it is called "egocentrism". One repercussion of this is that preteens and early teens are often very self-conscious about their appearance. They may feel as though they are always being judged by their peers. Trying to enter into her world as much as possible is helpful even as you gently help her see the grey between the black and white.

NEED FOR PRIVACY

Your girl may start to become more independent from their family. In this process, she may push boundaries and may react strongly if you reinforce limits. You'll need to find ways to give her some extra privacy while still letting her know that it is important to participate with the family.

BRAIN

Her brain is not insane....it is just puberty! During puberty, the area of the brain called the hypothalamus starts to release gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH). When GnRH travels to the pituitary gland (a small gland under the brain that produces hormones that control other glands throughout the body), it releases two more puberty hormones – luteinizing hormone (LH) and follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH). These hormones go to the ovaries (the two oval-shaped organs that lie to the right and left of the uterus) and trigger the maturation and release of eggs. Those eggs have been in her body since she was born! Another hormone is triggered - estrogen, which begins to mature her body and prepare her to one day have a baby. At about the same time, the adrenal glands of both boys and girls begin to produce a group of hormones called adrenal androgens. These hormones stimulate the growth of pubic and underarm hair in both sexes.



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VAGINAL DISCHARGE

Some girls experience a small to moderate amount of clear or white vaginal discharge that starts about 6-12 months before their first period. This is a normal response to growing amounts of the hormone estrogen in the body. You may want to let her use a small pad if she is uncomfortable with this in her underwear. Reassure her that it is normal and that her body is just growing up and getting ready to start having a period.

PERIODS

Yes, Aunt Flow may indeed soon make an appearance. There is no absolute timeline, but most girls get their periods within 2 - 3 years after the development of breast buds. The average age for girls to get their first period in the United States is around age 12. Girls need to know that it's okay to talk about periods and ask questions about them. Help her be prepared with supplies in her school back pack or locker. While some girls will have bright red blood with their first period, other girls may only have spotting with red-brown discharge—both are normal! While some people will have periods once a month, periods may be irregular in the first few years as the body adapts to all these changes. Periods can be as short as 21 days or as long as 35... so even people with regular cycles might not have a period every single month! Cramping may accompany her period which is unfortunately, pretty common. Some over the counter pain meds can help, as well as a warm pack. If menstrual cramps are severe or causing your girl to miss school, talk to your pediatrician about other options. Give her some ideas about wrapping a sweater or coat around her waist if she bleeds through. Let her know she can go to the school nurse or even call you if she gets her first period away from home and is feeling nervous about it.



THE PUBERTY TRAIN

CHECKLIST

- BREASTS BUDDING
- GROWTH SPURT
- PUBIC HAIR
- UNDERARM HAIR
- PERSPIRATION
- OILY HAIR
- ACNE
- HIPS WIDENING
- CONCRETE THINKING
- EMOTIONAL MOOD SWINGS
- WANTS MORE PRIVACY
- VAGINAL DISCHARGE
- PERIOD HAS ARRIVED

