

Physical changes during Puberty

Lesson 4

Grades
4th & 5th

Menstruation

In this lesson we will explore what happens during menstruation.

Materials needed: journals, 3x5 cards, mailbox, overhead with images of ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus and vagina

Today you will need your journals and question cards. I will be handing out a new packet to you. This one discusses menstruation, or, getting your period.

Side Note: Give them a bit of time to get out their things. Pass out copies of the Petite Amie pamphlet – Changes During Puberty – Menstruation.

I'd like you to open your journals to a clean page. Put the date in the top right hand corner (or however you have your students head their papers). I want you to write down everything you know about getting your period. Maybe your mom has already talked to you about it. That's great. But for some of you, no one has told you about what is going to happen. So I want you all to write down what you know. I also want you to write down any questions you have about getting your period. You won't have to read out loud today. Remember, I want you to keep writing for the entire 3 minutes. Go.

Side Note: Give the girls 3 minutes to write. At the end of 3 minutes, tell them to finish the sentence they are writing and put their pencils down.

If you have more to write, you can continue writing at the end of this session. Leave space in your journal if you think you'll need it.

Does anyone want to read from their journal? I'd like to know what you know. Have any of your moms or older sisters talked to you about getting your period? Have you gone out and bought supplies, just in case it happens soon?

Side Note: You probably won't get anybody admitting to buying products yet. But if you do, these will be your go-to girls for this unit.

Today I am going to talk about getting your period. I want you to take some notes, as you will have a quiz about it at the end of the week. But, more importantly I want you to listen, as you will eventually get your period and I want you to be prepared.

No one can tell exactly when a girl will get her first period, but most girls start their periods between the ages of 9 and 16. The average age is 12. So some of you may already have gotten your periods. Some may





have your first period soon. Some girls won't get it until much later.

There are, however, some clues you can look for that signal your period is coming. Typically, a girl gets her period 18 months to 2 years after her breasts start to develop. Height is also another clue. Most girls have almost reached their adult height when they get their first period. You probably won't grow much more than 2 or 3 inches after you get your first period. In the months before your first period, you'll notice a thin, white discharge from your vagina. Don't worry, it is normal and it helps keep your vagina clean and free from infection. And, if you have hair down there called pubic hair or underarm hair, this is another sign that your period is on its way.

Have any of you noticed any of these signals? I want all of you to open your journals and write down – just bullet point – any of the signals that your period is coming that you have noticed happening to you. I'm going to give you a few minutes to jot these down. I'm not going to ask you to tell the class. I also want you to write down if you haven't noticed any signals.

Side Note: Give the girls a few minutes to write.

Okay, looks like most of you are done. Can anyone tell me why we get periods?

The reason you have a period is so that one day you can have a child (not that any of you will be ready for this until much later). But, how great is that? One day you will be able to have a mini you.

Menstruation, or your period, is a complex process that involves your hormones, your pelvic organs, and your brain. Can anyone tell me how these three parts of your body are connected with having your period?

Side Note: Listen for:

- ◆ Your brain signals hormones
- ◆ Hormones send signals to parts of your body
- ◆ You have glands near your pelvic organs

You have been listening! Your brain sends signals to your glands to send chemical messages (hormones) to the different parts of your body to start the menstrual cycle.

Each month these hormones will signal your body to release an egg from your ovaries. This is called ovulation. The egg travels to your uterus for possible fertilization and pregnancy. This happens even if you don't want to have a baby right now. The lining of your uterus (called the endometrium) becomes thickened with blood and nutrients in case you do become pregnant.

If the egg is fertilized by sperm, which comes from a man, the woman becomes pregnant and the egg will imbed itself in the endometrium. If the egg is not fertilized, however, the endometrial lining will shed away - and this shed lining is your menstrual period. So your period is made up of the endometrial lining along with some blood each month. It can be any shade of red, from a light pinkish color to a deep purple red.

You may also notice blood clots along with your normal menstrual blood flow. This is, in general, normal.

Blood clots, look a little like small, dark clumps. Blood forms clots all on its own. While you are sleeping, blood will accumulate and form clots, which will come out in the morning. If you see them, it does not necessarily mean you are losing too much blood.

Your period may last from 3 to 10 days each month. Anywhere in this range is normal. You may have heavy flow, or you may have light flow. Every girl is different. Your period occurs about every month. The timing is based on a cycle, called the menstrual cycle. Typically this cycle repeats every 21 to 35 days depending on your hormonal signals.

I'm going to give you some time right now to write down any questions you might have about your period in your journals. I want to make sure you remember them so you can write them down on question cards at the end of the lesson. If you feel comfortable enough to ask out loud, go ahead and raise your hand, and I'll take some questions now.

Side Note: You may get questions like:

- ◆ How much blood comes out?
- ◆ Can I take a shower when I have my period?
- ◆ What if I'm at school when it starts?
- ◆ How big are clots?

I want you to take 5 minutes and write in your journal. Write about what you learned, how you felt, or if you want, finish up writing what you started this morning. I am also going to come around and pass out 3 x 5 cards to you. If you have a question you don't want to ask out loud, write it down, and put it in the box, if you don't, put a blank card in. And if you have any questions you wrote down in your journal yesterday, write that on a card and put it in the box.

Side Note: Make sure everyone puts a card in the mailbox. There will be peeking to see who put something in and who didn't. When it reaches the last student, ask her to bring you the box. Look through the questions and choose any that you think are relevant to today's discussion.

Make sure you give basic answers to all of the questions. Let the girls know that you will be talking more in depth about these topics in the next few days. If you feel comfortable answering personal questions, do so. But if you don't, just shuffle them in with the 'no question' cards.

I see that some of you have more questions to ask. Write these questions down in your journal or on your question cards. You can put them in the mailbox on my desk after class today, or tomorrow when we discuss this subject again. Next time we'll talk about the products you will need to keep yourself clean when you have your period. You might want to talk to your mom about this tonight so you will have some prior knowledge for the next lesson.

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