

The Puberty Wellness Guide

A Parent's Companion for Her Growing Years

Supporting Your Daughter Through
Puberty with Care and Confidence

Presented by

Divakars Speciality Hospital

A passion for quality healthcare

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Welcome, Dear Parent!

Watching your daughter grow up is one of the most beautiful and sometimes overwhelming experiences of parenthood. Puberty is a natural, healthy milestone that every girl goes through, and your support during this time makes all the difference.

This guide has been created to help you understand the physical, emotional, and mental changes your daughter will experience during puberty. It includes practical advice, health checklists, and answers to the most common questions parents and young girls have.

Whether your daughter is 8 or 15, whether changes have already started or you are preparing ahead, this guide is your companion. Read it together with her, or use it to prepare yourself for the conversations that matter.

Remember: Every girl's journey through puberty is unique. There is no "right" timeline. Your love, patience, and openness are the most important things she needs.

With warm wishes,

Your Care Team at Divakars Speciality Hospital

Understanding Puberty: What Is Happening?

Puberty is the natural process through which a child's body matures into an adult body capable of reproduction. It is triggered by hormones released from the brain (specifically the hypothalamus and pituitary gland), which signal the ovaries to begin producing oestrogen and other hormones.

These hormonal changes cause a cascade of physical, emotional, and mental developments. It is not an overnight event but a gradual process that typically spans 2 to 5 years.

When Does Puberty Start?

For most girls, puberty begins between the ages of 8 and 13, with the average age in India being around 10 to 11 years. The first visible sign is usually breast budding (thelarche), followed by the growth of pubic and underarm hair, a growth spurt in height, and eventually the first menstrual period (menarche), which typically occurs about 2 to 3 years after breast development begins.

It is important to know that every girl develops at her own pace. Some may start earlier and some later. However, if you notice signs of puberty before age 8, or no signs by age 13, it is a good idea to consult a paediatrician or paediatric endocrinologist.

Common Physical Changes Your Daughter Will Experience

- Breast development (the first sign in most girls)
- Growth of pubic and underarm hair
- A noticeable growth spurt (girls may grow 5 to 8 cm per year)
- Widening of hips and changes in body shape
- Increased sweating and body odour
- Oilier skin and hair, often leading to acne
- Onset of menstruation (periods)
- Development of body curves and fat redistribution

Emotional and Mental Changes

Puberty is not just physical. Hormonal surges affect your daughter's brain and emotions too. She may experience:

- Mood swings and heightened sensitivity
- Increased self-consciousness about her body
- A desire for more privacy and independence
- New feelings of attraction or romantic interest
- Peer pressure and a stronger need to fit in
- Occasional irritability, sadness, or anxiety
- Greater awareness of social dynamics and friendships

All of these are completely normal. The most helpful thing you can do is create a safe space for her to talk, ask questions, and express her feelings without judgement.

Your Daughter's First Period (Menarche)

The first period is a significant milestone in your daughter's life. In India, the average age of menarche is around 12 years, though it can range from 9 to 16 years. Preparing your daughter before it happens is one of the most important things you can do.

What to Expect

The first period may be light and brownish rather than bright red. It is common for periods to be irregular for the first 1 to 2 years as the body adjusts to its new hormonal rhythm. Your daughter may experience mild cramping, bloating, tiredness, or mood changes in the days before or during her period.

Make sure she knows that periods are a normal, healthy sign that her body is developing properly. Normalise the conversation early so she does not feel scared or ashamed when it happens.

Period Products: Choosing What Works

- Sanitary pads are the most common choice for young girls and are easy to use
- Choose pads with good absorbency and change them every 4 to 6 hours
- Cloth pads are a reusable, eco-friendly option that some families prefer

- Tampons and menstrual cups are also safe options, but may be introduced later when she is more comfortable
- Always keep a small kit with pads, a spare underwear, and wet wipes in her school bag

Tracking Her Cycle

Help your daughter track her periods using a simple calendar or a period-tracking app. This helps her anticipate when her next period is due, notice patterns, and report any irregularities to a doctor if needed. It also teaches her to be aware of and in charge of her own health from a young age.

Essential Health Check-Ups During Puberty

Regular health monitoring during puberty ensures your daughter is growing and developing well. Here are the key check-ups to schedule:

Check-Up	Details
Annual Paediatric Visit	General growth assessment, height and weight tracking, BMI evaluation
Thyroid Function Test	Recommended if there are signs of fatigue, weight changes, or irregular growth patterns
Haemoglobin / Complete Blood Count	To screen for anaemia, which is very common in adolescent girls in India
Vitamin D Levels	Especially important during rapid growth phases for bone health
Calcium and Iron Assessment	Dietary evaluation to ensure adequate intake for growing bones and menstrual health
Vision and Dental Check-Up	Annual screening for early detection of issues
Skin Assessment	If acne is severe or persistent, consult a dermatologist
HPV Vaccination	Recommended between ages 9 and 14 for cervical cancer prevention
Menstrual Health Review	If periods are absent by age 15, excessively painful, or very irregular after 2 years

Mental Health Screening

If there are signs of persistent anxiety, depression, eating disorders, or social withdrawal

Daily Wellness Habits for Growing Girls

Nutrition for Growth

- Ensure a balanced diet with proteins (dal, eggs, paneer, legumes, fish), whole grains, fruits, and vegetables
- Calcium-rich foods are critical during growth spurts: milk, curd, ragi, leafy greens, sesame seeds
- Iron-rich foods help prevent anaemia: spinach, beetroot, dates, jaggery, red meat, fortified cereals
- Include Vitamin D through safe sun exposure and supplements if deficient
- Limit junk food, sugary drinks, and ultra-processed snacks
- Encourage 8 to 10 glasses of water daily

Physical Activity and Exercise

Active movement is essential for healthy growth, strong bones, and emotional well-being. Encourage at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily. This can include sports, dancing, swimming, cycling, skipping, yoga, or simply playing outdoors. Exercise also helps regulate mood swings and improves sleep quality.

Sleep and Rest

Growing bodies need more sleep. Adolescent girls should aim for 9 to 11 hours of sleep per night. Establish a consistent bedtime routine. Limit screen time for at least one hour before bed. A well-rested teenager is happier, more focused, and better equipped to handle the emotional ups and downs of puberty.

Skin and Hygiene Care

- Shower or bathe daily, especially after physical activity
- Use a mild deodorant or antiperspirant to manage body odour
- Wash the face twice daily with a gentle cleanser to manage acne
- Teach proper intimate hygiene: wash the genital area with plain water, always wipe front to back

- Change sanitary pads every 4 to 6 hours during periods
- Use sunscreen when spending time outdoors

Emotional Well-Being

- Keep communication open: ask how she is feeling without being intrusive
- Validate her emotions rather than dismissing them
- Encourage journaling, creative expression, or talking to a trusted adult
- Help her build a positive body image by focusing on health, strength, and capability rather than appearance
- Monitor for signs of bullying, cyberbullying, or social isolation
- If anxiety, depression, or eating concerns persist, consult a child psychologist

Common Concerns and Practical Solutions

Acne and Skin Breakouts

Hormonal changes cause the skin to produce more oil, leading to pimples and acne. This is very common during puberty. Encourage a gentle skincare routine: wash the face twice daily, avoid touching or picking at pimples, use non-comedogenic (non-pore-clogging) products, and stay hydrated. If acne is severe, painful, or leaving scars, consult a dermatologist.

Body Odour

Increased sweat gland activity during puberty leads to body odour. This is completely normal. Teach your daughter to bathe daily, use deodorant, wear clean cotton clothes, and carry a small deodorant in her school bag. Reassure her that this happens to everyone and is nothing to be embarrassed about.

Painful or Irregular Periods

Mild cramps during periods are normal and can be managed with a warm water bottle, gentle stretching, or over-the-counter pain relief as advised by your doctor. Irregular cycles are common in the first 1 to 2 years. However, consult a gynaecologist if periods are extremely painful, excessively heavy, or still very irregular after 2 years.

Body Image and Confidence

Girls going through puberty often compare themselves to peers, media images, or social media standards. This can lead to insecurity, low self-esteem, or unhealthy habits.

Encourage your daughter to appreciate what her body can do rather than how it looks. Limit exposure to unrealistic beauty standards. Celebrate her strengths, talents, and character.

Mood Swings and Emotional Outbursts

Hormonal fluctuations cause very real mood swings during puberty. Your daughter may cry easily, get angry over small things, or feel overwhelmed. Be patient. Do not dismiss her feelings or tell her she is overreacting. Instead, acknowledge her emotions, give her space when needed, and reassure her that what she is feeling is normal and temporary.

Your Top 25 Questions, Answered

These are the real questions parents and young girls ask us every day. We have answered each one with care, honesty, and practical guidance you can act on right away.

Q1. At what age should I expect my daughter to start puberty?

Most girls begin showing signs of puberty between ages 8 and 13, with the average in India being around 10 to 11 years. The first sign is usually breast budding. If you notice development before age 8 or no signs by age 13, consult a paediatrician.

Q2. What is the first sign of puberty in girls?

Breast budding (a small, firm lump under one or both nipples) is typically the first visible sign. This can happen on one side before the other and may be slightly tender. It is completely normal.

Q3. Is it normal for one breast to develop before the other?

Yes, this is very common. During puberty, one breast often starts developing before the other, and they may be slightly different sizes for a while. This usually evens out over time and is not a cause for concern.

Q4. My daughter is 9 and showing breast development. Is this too early?

Breast development starting between ages 8 and 13 is considered normal. At age 9, your daughter is within the typical range. However, if development started before age 8, or is progressing very rapidly, consult a paediatric endocrinologist to rule out precocious (early) puberty.

Q5. When will my daughter get her first period?

The first period (menarche) usually arrives about 2 to 3 years after breast development begins. In India, the average age for the first period is around 12 years, but it can range from 9 to 16. Every girl is different.

Q6. How do I prepare my daughter for her first period?

Start the conversation early, ideally before she turns 10. Explain what periods are (the shedding of the uterine lining each month), that they are a healthy and normal part of growing up, and show her how to use a sanitary pad. Keep a small period kit in her school bag with pads, spare underwear, and wet wipes so she feels prepared.

Q7. My daughter's periods are very irregular. Should I worry?

Irregular periods are very common in the first 1 to 2 years after menarche as the body's hormonal system is still maturing. Cycles may range from 21 to 45 days. However, if periods are still very irregular after 2 years, or she goes more than 3 months without a period, consult a gynaecologist.

Q8. Are period cramps normal for a young girl?

Mild to moderate cramps (dysmenorrhoea) are common and result from the uterus contracting to shed its lining. A warm water bottle on the abdomen, gentle stretching,

and over-the-counter pain relief (as recommended by your doctor) can help. If cramps are so severe that she cannot attend school or daily activities, seek medical advice.

Q9. My daughter has severe acne. What should I do?

Mild acne is a normal part of puberty caused by increased oil production. Encourage a gentle skincare routine: wash the face twice daily with a mild cleanser, avoid picking at pimples, and use non-comedogenic moisturiser. Avoid harsh scrubs. If acne is severe, painful, cystic, or leaving scars, consult a dermatologist for proper treatment.

Q10. My daughter has started getting body odour. How do I address it gently?

Body odour starts during puberty due to new sweat glands becoming active. Normalise it by telling her this happens to all teenagers. Teach her to bathe daily (especially after sports), use a mild deodorant, wear clean cotton clothes, and carry deodorant in her bag. Frame it as a new part of her daily routine, not as something wrong with her.

Q11. Is it normal for girls to gain weight during puberty?

Yes. Weight gain is a healthy and expected part of puberty. Girls naturally accumulate body fat, especially around the hips, thighs, and breasts, as their bodies develop an adult shape. This is driven by hormones and is necessary for healthy development. Focus on balanced nutrition and regular physical activity rather than restricting food or dieting.

Q12. My daughter is very self-conscious about her changing body. How can I help?

Acknowledge her feelings and let her know that every girl goes through this. Avoid commenting on her body shape or size. Focus conversations on what her body can do (strength, health, energy) rather than how it looks. Limit exposure to unrealistic social media images. Help her find clothes she feels comfortable and confident in. If body image issues are causing distress, consider speaking with a counsellor.

Q13. Should my daughter start wearing a bra? When?

There is no fixed age. Once breast development begins and she feels bouncing or discomfort during activity, a soft training bra or sports bra can help. Let her be part of the decision. Take her shopping and let her choose what feels comfortable. Never make it awkward or a big deal.

Q14. Why is my daughter so moody and irritable lately?

Mood swings during puberty are caused by rapidly fluctuating hormone levels, combined with the emotional and social pressures of growing up. Her brain is also undergoing significant development. Be patient, do not take it personally, and give her space when she needs it while making sure she knows you are always available to talk.

Q15. My daughter does not want to talk to me about puberty. What should I do?

Do not force the conversation. Instead, leave the door open by saying things like, “I am here whenever you want to talk about anything.” You can also provide age-appropriate books or resources she can read privately. Some girls are more comfortable talking to an older sibling, aunt, or school counsellor. The important thing is that she has access to accurate information.

Q16. Is it safe for my daughter to get the HPV vaccine?

Yes. The HPV (Human Papillomavirus) vaccine is recommended by the Indian Academy of Pediatrics for girls between ages 9 and 14. It protects against the strains of HPV that cause cervical cancer and genital warts. The vaccine is most effective when given before exposure to the virus, which is why it is recommended during early adolescence.

Q17. How much sleep does my daughter need during puberty?

Adolescents need 9 to 11 hours of sleep per night. During puberty, the body’s internal clock shifts, making teenagers naturally inclined to stay up later and wake up later. Establish a consistent sleep routine, limit screens before bed, and keep the bedroom dark and cool. Adequate sleep is essential for growth, mood regulation, academic performance, and immune health.

Q18. My daughter wants to start dieting because her friends are. Is this safe?

Dieting and food restriction during puberty can be harmful because the body needs adequate nutrition for growth, bone development, and hormonal balance. Instead of dieting, encourage a balanced, whole-food-based diet and regular physical activity. Talk openly about the dangers of crash diets and eating disorders. If you notice signs of disordered eating (skipping meals, obsession with calories, purging), seek professional help immediately.

Q19. Is it normal for my daughter to have white vaginal discharge?

Yes. A white or clear vaginal discharge (leucorrhoea) is normal during puberty and usually starts about 6 to 12 months before the first period. It is the body's way of keeping the vaginal area clean and healthy. However, if the discharge has a strong odour, is yellow or green, or causes itching, consult a doctor as it may indicate an infection.

Q20. When should my daughter first visit a gynaecologist?

A first gynaecological consultation is recommended if there are specific concerns such as: no period by age 15, periods that are extremely painful or heavy, irregular periods lasting more than 2 years, or any concerns about development. Routine pelvic examinations are not needed for young girls, but a conversation with a gynaecologist about menstrual health and puberty is valuable.

Q21. My daughter is being teased at school about her body. What do I do?

Take her concerns seriously. Listen without minimising. Help her develop responses and coping strategies. Contact her school if the teasing is persistent or involves bullying. Reinforce that her body is developing normally and that comments from peers say more about the other person than about her. If she becomes withdrawn, anxious, or starts avoiding school, seek support from a counsellor.

Q22. Can my daughter swim or exercise during her period?

Absolutely. Physical activity during periods is safe and often helps reduce cramps and improve mood. Swimming is also fine with a tampon or menstrual cup if she is comfortable using one. If she prefers pads, she can do all other exercises. Encourage her not to skip sports or activities because of her period.

Q23. How do I talk to my daughter about puberty without it being awkward?

Start early and keep it casual. Use everyday moments (like shopping for hygiene products) to open conversations. Use proper anatomical terms. Share your own experiences. Break it into many small conversations rather than one big talk. Be honest, age-appropriate, and matter-of-fact. If she senses that you are comfortable, she will be too.

Q24. My daughter has not started her period at age 14. Should I be concerned?

If your daughter has shown other signs of puberty (breast development, pubic hair, growth spurt) but has not started her period by age 15, or if she has had no signs of puberty at all by age 13, it is worth consulting a doctor. Delayed puberty can be caused by genetic factors, nutritional deficiencies, excessive exercise, or hormonal conditions, and is usually treatable.

Q25. What should I do if my daughter shows signs of puberty before age 8?

If you notice breast development, pubic hair, body odour, or any other pubertal sign before your daughter turns 8, consult a paediatric endocrinologist. This is called precocious puberty and may need evaluation. In many cases it is a normal variation, but sometimes it requires monitoring or treatment to protect her long-term health and growth potential.

IMPORTANT MEDICAL DISCLAIMER

This guide is provided for educational and informational purposes only. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition or treatment.

Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this guide. If you think your child may have a medical emergency, call your doctor or emergency services immediately.

The information in this guide is based on current medical knowledge and best practices as of the publication date. Medical information changes rapidly, and individual circumstances vary. Your healthcare provider is your best source for personalised medical advice.

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