A fact sheet about

Puberty, periods and body care

UnderstandingZoe

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Puberty, periods and body care

A parent's guide for families raising an Autistic child. Supporting them through growing up, hygiene and staying safe, with less stress.



Clear, concrete steps make periods easier to learn. There is no single right way to do this. Breaking it into small pieces helps. So does practising calmly, where there is no pressure. Letting your child go at their own pace helps too.

Use a pad, step by step

1. **Get a clean pad.** A fresh pad, and a bin nearby for the end.
2. **Open it and peel the strips.** Open the wrapper. Peel the paper strip off the sticky back, and the smaller strips on the wings.
3. **Place it in the underwear.** The pad goes sticky side down, along the middle of the underwear.
4. **Fold the wings under.** The wings fold underneath the underwear. Press gently so the pad stays in place.
5. **Bin it, then wash hands.** The used pad goes in the bin. Then wash hands.

Where you can, practise ahead of time and make room for sensory preferences. Keep the tone easy and matter-of-fact. There is nothing to be embarrassed about, for them or for you.

Ease the pressure

Small changes in how we talk about bodies make a real difference. The aim is less pressure and more understanding. Your child can then feel safe, informed and more in charge of their own body. You know your child best.

Instead of	Try
Hinting or using euphemisms	Clear, literal words about bodies
Telling them at the last minute	Telling them well before
One big talk	A series of small chats
Pushing through sensory upset	Offering sensory-friendly options
Doing it all for them, every time	Teaching one small step at a time
Expecting them to manage alone	Preparing and rehearsing together
Treating privacy as optional	Respecting their growing autonomy

None of this happens in ideal conditions. You will not always have the time, energy or support you would like. Doing what you can, on the day you can, is enough. It matters more than getting it perfect.

Support the changes

Explain changes clearly. Starting early, around 7 or 8, and keeping home and school consistent, can both help. Use correct names, and translate slang so they know 'boobs' means breasts. Visuals, and short, structured stories written for your child, can help too. Girls usually start puberty around 11, and some start as early as 8. Boys usually start around 12 or 13, and some start at 9. Signs before those ages are worth a visit to a general practitioner (GP). So is no sign of puberty by 13 in a girl. The same goes for 14 in a boy. Some children do not feel like the gender they were given at birth. The changes still happen the same way, and the same support helps.

Periods and pain. Cramps are common. Heat on the tummy, comfy clothes and quiet time can help. A GP can advise on pain relief. Pain that stops them doing everyday things is worth a GP visit.

Body safety and privacy. Private parts are what underwear or swimwear covers. An adult only helps there for hygiene or health. That means a carer, or a doctor with a parent present. No one should ask a child to keep a secret about touching. Adults look after their own private parts, and never need a child's help. If something feels wrong, they can say no and move away. They can keep telling a trusted adult until someone helps.

When to get help. Big feelings can be hormonal. Watch for lasting low mood, feeling worthless, or losing interest. Two weeks or more is the sign to act on. A GP is the place to start. If your child mentions self-harm, or not wanting to be alive, get help that day. Lifeline is 13 11 14, or text 0477 13 11 14. Kids Helpline is 1800 55 1800. 13YARN is 13 92 76. In an emergency, call 000.

You do not have to work this out alone. A GP visit is a reasonable first step.

Understanding Zoe is the first neuroaffirming AI-powered app that turns every report, observation and moment into an actionable next step, supporting neurodivergent people and those who care about them to thrive.

for more information, you can contact

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