

# For parents/caregivers of Girls Over 10 Years of Age: Puberty

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**Autism**ONTARIO

# Welcome

This workshop will provide information to parents and caregivers about how to support your child's transition through puberty. Topics will be introduced as a way to increase confidence and comfort.

- Menstruation
- Body Changes
- Self care
- Privacy
- Sexual development



# Things to consider

- Reflect on your own comfort level in these conversations
- What is your experience with these conversations in your family of origin and how may this influence you now
- Think about how you accessed this information when you were younger
- How are kids accessing this information now
- Are they accessing correct information?



# Body changes and menstruation

- If you haven't started talking about this, now's the time
- Explain the reason why menstruation occurs, not just that does it occur
- Talk about pads, period underwear (and for some girls tampons, and menstruation cups)
- Consider a dry run of using period underwear or pads. This can help with noting any sensory issues that could arise
- Note that some teens also may feel physical discomfort (cramps) and emotional ups and downs



# Visuals

## Types of visuals to consider:

- pictures of anatomy (internal and external)
- pictures or actual examples of pads, period underwear etc.
- calendars
- visuals for scales of 1-10 (or 1-5) to rate discomfort
- social stories
- step by step guides to change a pad
- step by step guide to put on deodorant



The following slides are copied from webinar session 3 and 4 for girls on the spectrum.



# Menstruation. Periods. Why do we bleed?

About once a month you will get period. This means that you will have vaginal bleeding about every 4 weeks.

Why do we get periods?

As a person with a uterus and vagina gets older their body changes to enable their body to grow a baby inside their uterus. When there is no fetus developing inside the uterus, the uterine wall comes off and bleeds a little. The blood comes out the vagina. The body creates a new uterine wall each month.



# Periods... what to expect?

What to expect with periods?

Well, not everyone gets them at the exact same age. Usually, a person with a uterus and vagina get their first period between the ages of 11-15 years old.

People usually get their first period a year or two after their breasts begin to develop.



# How often and how long?

How often will I get my period?

- Sometimes it's a little bit shorter than 4 weeks and sometimes it's a little bit longer.

How long does it last?

- Each time you get your period, it will last usually somewhere between 3-7 days.



# As parents/caregivers important to know:

More likely that people on the spectrum who have periods may have stronger periods, more painful periods and more challenges with ups and downs of mood.

Sometimes sensory tolerances may decrease just before and during periods.

Using calendars or apps to track periods.



# Body changes

Talk about the changes that have happened or may happen in factual ways. But don't overwhelm with information. Paced.

- changes in body hair
- changes in body odour
- development of breasts
- acne and skin changes



# Sexual development

- Sexual development is a normal and expected part of human development
- Normalize this but don't make assumptions
- Your children may be straight or may be part of the LGBTQTS+ community, which includes people who may be asexual
- Normal to have sexual feelings and to want privacy
- Important to continue discussions around privacy and boundaries



# Next Sessions

- Session Three for Girls and Teens: Healthy Friendships and Relationships
- Session Four for Girls and Teens: Puberty and Menstruation



# Thanks!

Thank you for being here! Thanks for being an involved parent/caregiver in your child's life as you support them as they transition into and through puberty.

