

## FIRST MENSTRUATION - ALL AGES (GIRLS)

### Executive Summary

First menstruation and the early years of periods can feel frightening and confusing, especially for autistic girls and teens. Warm blood, cramps, wetness, new smells, and the fear of leaks often show up suddenly at school or in public settings. Without preparation, many girls worry they are hurt or “bleeding to death” instead of understanding that this is a normal body change.

This guide organizes first menstruation into three stages—childhood girls (8–11 years, first-period prep), tween girls (12–14 years, early cycle management), and teen girls (15–18 years, period mastery)—with tables, checklists, and realistic scripts for families. It focuses on planning, communication, and sensory supports, especially for autistic girls and those with complex medical or emotional needs.

This guide is an educational resource only. It is not medical, diagnostic, or treatment advice. Do not start, stop, or change any medication, supplement, or treatment based on this guide. Always consult your child’s healthcare professionals (pediatrician, gynecologist, adolescent medicine specialist, PANS/PANDAS specialist when applicable) for personalized recommendations. Any mention of pain relief, supplements, or biomedical ideas is for discussion with clinicians, not a recommendation to use specific products, doses, or brands.

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### Childhood Girls (8–11 Years) – First Period Prep

#### At-a-Glance Summary

Item	Key Points
Typical focus	Emotional safety and basic “what is a period?” understanding.
Main challenges	Shock at first sight of blood, cramps, pad bulkiness, fear of leaks at school.
Core supports	Early talks from about 8 years old, home pad practice, school nurse kit, zero-shame language.
Goal	First period feels expected, understandable, and manageable—not like a medical emergency in her mind.

## Sensory & Social Profile

Domain	What She Might Experience	What Helps Right Now
Physical	Warm blood, wetness, pad bulkiness, new cramps.	Soft pads, underwear that fits well, heating pad or warm compress if approved, extra clothes at school.
Emotional	Embarrassment, panic, “Is something wrong with me?”	Calm reassurance: “This is normal and safe,” and treating it as a routine body event rather than a catastrophe.
Social	Fear of changing pads at school, gym or recess leaks, friend questions.	Quiet plan with nurse/teacher, stocked school kit, simple scripts for asking adults for help, no forced sharing with peers.
Executive	Forgetting to check underwear, not knowing when to change pads, not sure who to tell.	Visual schedules at home, a laminated “period started” card for school, clear list of trusted adults she can go to.
Odor	Worry that others can smell her period.	Regular pad changes, wipes in the kit, reassurance that normal period smell is not obvious to others.

### What to Pack – First-Period School Kit

#### Supplies

- 4–5 pads (mix of light, regular, and overnight).
- Spare underwear in a discreet pouch.
- Travel-size wipes.
- Resealable zip bag for used supplies or soiled clothes.

#### Comfort

- Small, flat heating pad or heat pack if school allows.
- Access to an approved pain reliever through the nurse, only if prescribed or cleared by a doctor.

- Small protein snack (for example, a protein bar or other safe option) to help avoid extreme sugar crashes and support mood.

### Documents & Emergency

- Laminated “My period started” card she can hand to teacher or nurse.
- Laminated parent/guardian phone number card.
- Optional: small amount of cash in case a quick pharmacy trip is needed.
- Backup pants or leggings stored with the nurse or in a locker.

### Sample “First Period Day” Schedule

Time / Situation	What Happens	What You Do to Support
Morning at home	She notices pink or red in her underwear.	Say: “This means your body has started its period; it’s normal and safe. Let’s put on a pad and pack your kit.” Help her change and pack the school kit.
Arrival at school	Anxiety about leaks and telling someone.	Remind her she can give the “period started” card to the teacher or go straight to the nurse at the beginning of the day.
Mid-morning or recess	Pad feels wet or bulky.	Encourage a bathroom trip; she changes the pad, uses wipes, and places used items in the zip bag. Praise the routine, not just the outcome.
Lunch	Cramps or tiredness may appear.	If school and doctor allow pain relief, nurse can support. Include a protein item in lunch to help energy and mood.
After school	She feels drained or overwhelmed.	At home: shower if she wants, change pad/underwear, quiet time, heating pad, and a snack. Check in gently about what was hardest.
Evening	Worries about tomorrow.	Normalize: “Many people have periods. We’ll keep your kit ready and make tomorrow easier.” Review what worked.

## Things to Discuss Together (Childhood)

Use this as a conversation checklist.

- **What a period is:**
  - **Blood from the vagina as part of growing up.**
  - **It is not an injury and does not mean her body is broken.**
- **Who she can tell at school:**
  - **Which teacher or the nurse is her “safe adult” if her period starts.**
  - **That she can quietly say, “I need to see the nurse,” or use a card.**
- **How to ask for help without many words:**
  - **Handing the “period started” card.**
  - **Pointing to her bag and saying, “I need the nurse.”**
- **What happens if there’s a leak:**
  - **She can change into extra pants and underwear at school.**
  - **After changing, “it’s like a reset”—she is not in trouble.**
- **Zero-shame rule:**
  - **No family jokes about blood, pads, underwear, or leaks.**
  - **Parents and siblings avoid telling others about her period without her permission.**

## Siblings (Younger Girls)

What to tell siblings:

- **“Your sister’s period is a normal part of her body growing up. We don’t tease or talk about it with friends. If you are curious, ask an adult privately.”**

Example sibling script:

- **“If you want space, I can leave you alone or we can watch something together later. You can decide.”**

## In Case of Emergency (Childhood)

Body red flags – talk to a doctor or nurse promptly:

- **Bleeding is very heavy from the start (for example, soaking through pads every 1–2 hours for several hours).**
- **Severe pain that does not ease with rest, warmth, or any doctor-approved pain plan.**
- **First period appears very early (well before age 8), or there are other unusual signs such as rapid breast or pubic hair changes; this may warrant medical evaluation.**

**Mood or thinking red flags:**

- **She expresses intense fear, wishes she were not alive, or shows ongoing distress that does not calm with support.**
- **In these situations, contact your child’s healthcare providers or appropriate crisis services according to local guidelines.**

**Tween Girls (12–14 Years) – Early Period Management**

**At-a-Glance Summary**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Key Points</b>
<b>Typical focus</b>	<b>Managing irregular cycles, school days, gym class, and sleepovers.</b>
<b>Main challenges</b>	<b>Heavy or unpredictable flow, cramps, bloating, acne, strong mood swings, tampon curiosity, intense embarrassment.</b>
<b>Core supports</b>	<b>School and gym kits, tracking cycles, simple skincare routine, monthly check-ins with nurse/parent.</b>
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Tween can get through school, activities, and selected social events on her period with predictability and backup plans.</b>

**Sensory & Social Profile**

<b>Domain</b>	<b>What She Might Experience</b>	<b>What Helps Right Now</b>
<b>Executive</b>	<b>Forgetting to pack supplies; surprise periods at school.</b>	<b>Period tracking (app or calendar), restocking kit weekly, reminder alarms on phone or visual notes.</b>

<b>Domain</b>	<b>What She Might Experience</b>	<b>What Helps Right Now</b>
<b>Physical</b>	<b>Heavy flow, cramps, bloating, breast tenderness, acne flares.</b>	<b>Layered protection (liner + pad or period underwear), heat at home, balanced meals, predictable skincare routine.</b>
<b>Social</b>	<b>Worry about leaks in gym, at lunch, or on sleepovers.</b>	<b>Light-day vs heavy-day planning, gym and sleepover rules, clear permission to call home if needed.</b>
<b>Emotional</b>	<b>PMS mood swings, feeling ugly or “gross.”</b>	<b>Naming PMS as a real body process, validating feelings, providing downtime and preferred calming activities.</b>

### **What to Pack – Tween Period Kit**

#### **School Kit**

- **Several pads and liners in a discreet pouch.**
- **Spare underwear and neutral leggings or jeans.**
- **Wipes and a small bag for soiled items.**

#### **Gym / Sports Kit**

- **Tampons when she is ready to learn, plus period underwear for backup.**
- **Wipes and a small towel or cloth for quick cleanup.**

#### **Tracking & Comfort**

- **Period tracker (app or paper) noting start days, flow, and pain.**
- **Access to approved pain relief via the nurse, if agreed with a clinician.**
- **Heat pack or heating pad available at home.**

#### **Sample Tween Period Day**

<b>Time / Context</b>	<b>What Happens</b>	<b>What You Do to Support</b>
<b>Morning</b>	She checks her cycle tracker and sees she is on an early day of her period.	Help choose appropriate pad/tampon + liner; confirm her school kit is stocked; encourage breakfast that includes some protein.
<b>Mid-morning</b>	Notices pad filling, cramps starting.	Before school, you can plan: “Mid-morning is a good check time. If you feel wet or worried, go to the bathroom or nurse.”
<b>Lunch</b>	Potential leak worry and mood dips.	Remind her that lunch is a second check-and-change window; nurse can support if she needs supplies or pain relief.
<b>Afternoon gym</b>	Movement and uniforms increase anxiety about leaks.	On heavy days, plan extra layers (tampon + period underwear, or pad + period underwear) and a bathroom stop just before class.
<b>After school</b>	She feels tired and sensitive.	Support a short rest, snack, and heat pad if she likes, then a quick update in her tracker about flow and pain.
<b>Evening</b>	Cramps may ease; she may worry about overnight leaks.	Help choose appropriate overnight pad or period underwear. Reassure that leaks are not “failure” but information for next time.

### Things to Discuss Together (Tweens)

- **Supplies & Storage**
  - Where extra pads, liners, and underwear will be kept at home.
  - Who helps keep the school kit stocked and how often you will check it together.
- **School & Gym Plans**
  - Which adult is her “go-to” at school when she needs help (nurse, counselor, particular teacher).
  - What she prefers for gym: period underwear plus liner, or tampon plus backup, and how she wants to manage quick changes.

- **Sleepovers & Trips**
  - Whether she wants to do sleepovers only on light days at first.
  - What code word or text she can send you if she wants to come home early without embarrassment.
- **Skincare & Hormones**
  - A realistic routine: for example, wash + one treatment + moisturizer that she can actually keep up with.
  - When it might make sense to talk with a dermatologist if acne is painful or scarring.

**Siblings (Tweens)**

**What to tell siblings:**

- “Your sister’s period is private. We don’t tell friends, cousins, or classmates about it or joke about leaks, pads, or her mood. If you’re annoyed or confused, talk to me instead of making fun of her.”

**Example sibling script:**

- “If you need the bathroom longer, I can wait. Just tell me when you’re done.”

**Tween Period & Symptom Log**

**My Period & Symptom Log – Tweens 12–14**

Cycle Start	Day	Flow (Light/Med/Heavy)	Cramps (0–10)	Mood (1–10)	Leaks? (Y/N)	Notes (school, gym, sleepover)
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This log can be kept private or shared with parents or clinicians if she chooses.

**In Case of Emergency (Tweens)**

**Body red flags – contact a clinician:**

- Very heavy bleeding (for example, soaking through pad or tampon every 1–2 hours for several hours, or many large clots).
- Severe cramps that do not improve with rest, warmth, and any doctor-approved pain plan.

- **Sudden changes, such as periods stopping for several months without an expected reason, should be discussed with a healthcare provider.**

**Mood/thinking red flags:**

- **Persistent hopelessness, self-harm thoughts, or dramatic mood shifts around the cycle that feel unmanageable.**
  - **For tweens with conditions like PANS/PANDAS, abrupt spikes in OCD, rage, or anxiety around periods should be shared with their specialist team.**
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## Teen Girls (15–18 Years) – Period Mastery

### At-a-Glance Summary

<b>Item</b>	<b>Key Points</b>
<b>Typical focus</b>	Independence with periods in work, dating, sports, travel, and dorm/shared living.
<b>Main challenges</b>	Balancing heavy days with responsibilities, learning about cups or other options, budgeting for supplies, integrating conversations about sex and birth control with clinicians.
<b>Core supports</b>	Flexible product mix, dorm and shower plans, budgeting skills, clear understanding of when to seek medical help.
<b>Goal</b>	Periods become one manageable part of life, not the center of it, while she knows when and how to get help.

### Sensory & Social Profile

<b>Domain</b>	<b>What She Might Experience</b>	<b>What Helps Right Now</b>
<b>Executive</b>	Juggling school, work, sports, and cycles; forgetting to track or restock.	Monthly “restock” routine, simple list of recurring supplies, using a tracker that fits her style.
<b>Physical</b>	Heavy days during key events, cramps in long classes, fatigue.	Planning for heavier protection on event days, scheduled breaks, consistent rest and hydration, following any pain plan from her clinician.
<b>Social/Dating</b>	Worry about dates, intimacy, or roommates noticing period-related issues.	Practiced scripts for explaining periods calmly, discreet storage of supplies, perspective that everyone in shared spaces has body needs.

Domain	What She Might Experience	What Helps Right Now
Financial	Realizing period products and comfort tools cost money.	Basic monthly budget, bulk purchasing when affordable, exploring low-cost or reusable options if she is interested and comfortable.

### What to Pack – Teen Period Kit

#### Dorm/Home Base

- Menstrual cup (if chosen) and safe cleaning/sterilizing method as discussed with a clinician.
- 2–3 pairs of period underwear.
- A mix of pads and tampons in a small storage bin or drawer.

#### Sports/Active Days

- Tampons plus period underwear or liner for extra security.
- Wipes and a discreet bag for quick changes.

#### Outings & Dating

- Compact pad or liner in bag or pocket.
- Breath mints, small sanitizer, and any approved pain medicine carried safely according to medical and legal guidance.

#### Budgeting

- A simple monthly spending target for hygiene and period products.
- A short list of typical items (pads, liners, cup or tampon refills, underwear replacements, pain tools).

#### Sample Teen “Busy Period Day”

<b>Time / Context</b>	<b>What Happens</b>	<b>What She Plans / You Support</b>
<b>Morning shower</b>	<b>Inserts cup or tampon, or chooses a high-absorbency pad.</b>	<b>Checks calendar for major events; chooses products that match flow and activities. You can remind her to grab backups.</b>
<b>School or work</b>	<b>Needs to balance bathroom access with schedule.</b>	<b>Identifies best times to take breaks. Keeps a small kit in bag or locker with backup supplies.</b>
<b>Sports or gym</b>	<b>Movement and uniforms raise leak concerns.</b>	<b>Plans bathroom stop right before warm-up; uses tampon or cup with period underwear. Has a change plan if there is a leak.</b>
<b>Evening date or event</b>	<b>May need discreet protection.</b>	<b>On light days, uses a liner or cup; on heavier days, she may choose to simplify plans or shorten outings. You support her decision without shaming.</b>
<b>Night</b>	<b>Needs safe overnight coverage.</b>	<b>Uses overnight pad or period underwear; if using a cup, removes and cleans it before bed based on product instructions and doctor advice.</b>

### **Things to Discuss Together (Teens)**

- **Cycle & Health Patterns**
  - **What is “normal” for her flow, pain, and mood.**
  - **What changes would signal it is time to call a doctor (for example, heavier or much longer periods, big changes in timing).**
- **Sports, Work, and Events**
  - **How to prepare for games, exams, or shifts that land on heavy days.**
  - **What small schedule adjustments are possible.**
- **Dating & Communication**
  - **How she wants to talk about periods with partners, if at all.**

- That she has the right to say “I am not comfortable” regardless of where she is in her cycle.
- **Dorm/Shared Bathrooms**
  - Where supplies will live, how often to do laundry, and how to handle cleaning cups or period underwear respectfully.
- **Financial Planning**
  - Who pays for which supplies now, and how that may shift as she earns money.
  - How to prioritize needs (for example, consistent pads and underwear before extra cosmetics).

**Siblings (Teens)**

**What to tell siblings:**

- “Your sister is managing more responsibility now: school, work, friendships, and her body. That may mean more bathroom time or more laundry. It’s okay to say if it affects you, but we still do not tease or share her information with others.”

**Example sibling script:**

- “Let me know when you’re done in the bathroom so I can get ready too.”

**Teen Period & Health Log**

**My Period & Health Log – Teens 15–18**

<b>Cycle Start</b>	<b>Cycle Length</b>	<b>Avg. Flow (Light/Med/Heavy)</b>	<b>Worst Pain (0–10)</b>	<b>Fatigue (1–10)</b>	<b>Mood (1–10)</b>	<b>Notes (sports, missed school, meds, etc.)</b>

She can use this for herself or bring it to appointments to make conversations with clinicians clearer.

**In Case of Emergency (Teens)**

**Body red flags – seek medical care:**

- Very heavy bleeding compared with her normal pattern, or periods that last much longer than usual.

- Severe pain not improved by rest, warmth, and any doctor-approved pain strategy.
- Periods stopping for several months without an expected reason should be discussed with a clinician.

#### **Mood/thinking red flags:**

- Ongoing depression, self-harm thoughts, or extreme anxiety related to body changes or periods.
  - In complex conditions like PANS/PANDAS, marked worsening of intrusive thoughts, rage, or emotional storms around menstruation should be shared with her specialist.
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#### **Meltdown Recovery & Ongoing Reflection (All Ages)**

##### **Meltdown/Shutdown Support**

- Provide immediate bathroom privacy without interrogation at the door.
- Support a full change of pad, underwear, and clothing if needed, plus basic comfort (rest, warmth, hydration, snack) as appropriate.
- Encourage returning to regular routines once she feels more settled, so periods become a manageable body event rather than a recurring crisis.
- Use calmer moments later to reflect on what worked, what was hardest, and what to adjust for next time.

##### **Ongoing Reflection**

##### **Questions you can revisit regularly with your child or teen:**

- “How predictable are your periods feeling right now?”
- “How well did your school or outing plan work this month?”
- “Do you feel you have the right supplies, or do we need to change something?”
- “Is there anything about your period or your body you want to ask the doctor at our next visit?”

**These conversations help turn menstruation from something scary and mysterious into a body process your child can understand, anticipate, and manage with support.**

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