



Tips for Parents: Puberty in Girls Begins Earlier

Girls are beginning puberty at an earlier age. Many of today's girls will begin breast development at age seven or eight and may begin to menstruate just two or three years later.

The reason for this change is debated. Some experts cite pollution in our food chain such as insecticides, or hormones being injected in animals used for food. Others suspect increased rates of childhood obesity lead to higher levels of natural hormones such as estrogen.

While experts debate the reasons why, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Don't wait until your daughter is 12 or 13 to talk to her about her changing body and menstruation. As soon as she begins to develop breasts and/or pubic or armpit hair, explain to her that her body is maturing and what she can expect. For many girls, this talk should occur at eight or nine years of age.
- Reassure her as she sees changes. It is common for girls to feel embarrassed about the changes they see in their body—especially if they begin puberty earlier than other girls their age. Let her know her growth is perfectly normal, and share stories of your own maturation.
- Make sure she's prepared in case she starts her period. Let her know what to expect and give her a pad or two to keep in her backpack or purse if she starts at school or a friends' house.

For more information about talking to your daughter about puberty, visit: [4Parents.gov's Resources on Girls and Puberty](http://4Parents.gov's%20Resources%20on%20Girls%20and%20Puberty) or our [Sex Ed resource page](#).

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