



## Unit 4 – Growth and Development More on Puberty for Girls Supplement

### Case Study

Diondra was 12 when she started menstruating (having her periods). She remembered the day she started. She had been outside playing when she felt a strange wetness between her legs. Later that day when she went inside to go to the restroom, she saw spots of blood on her panties. Fortunately, Diondra's mother had already purchased her a package of sanitary napkins. Diondra changed her panties and then placed a sanitary napkin between her legs directly onto her panties. She bled for several days. Eventually, her period tapered off and then ended. After that, Diondra began having periods every month.

### The Facts on Puberty

A girl can begin having her period as early as 8 years old and as late as 17 years old. The onset of a period will also bring on other physical changes, such as the development of breasts, body and pubic hair. Some girls experience cramps with the onset of their periods or notice that their moods are a little uneven right before they start their period. An over-the-counter pain medication will usually relieve cramps. Sanitary napkins or tampons should be worn during a period. Both should be changed every few hours. A sanitary napkin can be worn at night while you sleep, but it is best not to wear a tampon at night. Tampons worn too long have been associated with an illness called "Toxic Shock Syndrome". This is a very serious and even life-threatening condition.

It is wise to track your periods on a calendar so you can be prepared for the onset of each period. Periods are sometimes erratic in the beginning but, eventually, a girl will experience a period approximately every 26-28 days. As a girl's breasts begin to grow, she will need to purchase several bras. It is a good idea to have someone measure you for a bra. Many department stores have saleswomen in the lingerie department that can do this for you.

### Important Steps

Once a girl begins through puberty, she needs to take extra steps to take care of her body. It is important to shower daily. At this time, girls often begin shaving their legs and under their arms. Girls should also wear deodorant under their arms. Select appropriate sanitary napkins or tampons. Both are available in various sizes and thicknesses to accommodate any level of flow.

### Who Can Help

As a girl begins to experience physical changes associated with puberty, she may have questions about her body and the feelings she is experiencing. Mothers, aunts, grandmothers, older sisters, school nurses, and doctors are people that can give helpful information.