

Girls' Body Changes During Puberty

Puberty is the time when girls naturally change into adults. **Hormones** (messengers in the body) trigger the following changes:

- **Physical** – Growing taller and bigger
- **Sexual** – Organs mature; eggs are able to combine with sperm to create a baby.
- **Emotional** – Feeling and reacting differently
- **Mental** – Thinking and processing information differently

Puberty usually starts between 8 to 13 in girls. Girls of African- or Latin-American-descent tend to start puberty earlier than those of European-descent. Each girl goes through puberty at her own pace, usually 2-5 years. 22q differences do not delay the start of puberty unless there is a significant chronic illness. Delayed puberty should be investigated if no breast development by age 13 or no period by age 16.

Height and Weight in Teens with 22q11.2DS

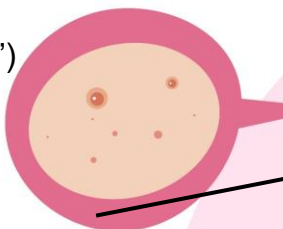
Teens with 22q11.2DS may not grow as tall as their peers, but they gain weight easily. See [Growth Charts](#) from a 2012 [study](#) on children of European descent.

Teens with 22q11.2DS may be **at risk of obesity**. It is very important to have a healthy diet and maintain an active lifestyle to decrease this risk.

Body Changes in Girls

PUBERTY.

Acne ("zits") appear on the face.



Breasts develop. The dark area around the nipples grow larger.



Hair grows on the legs.

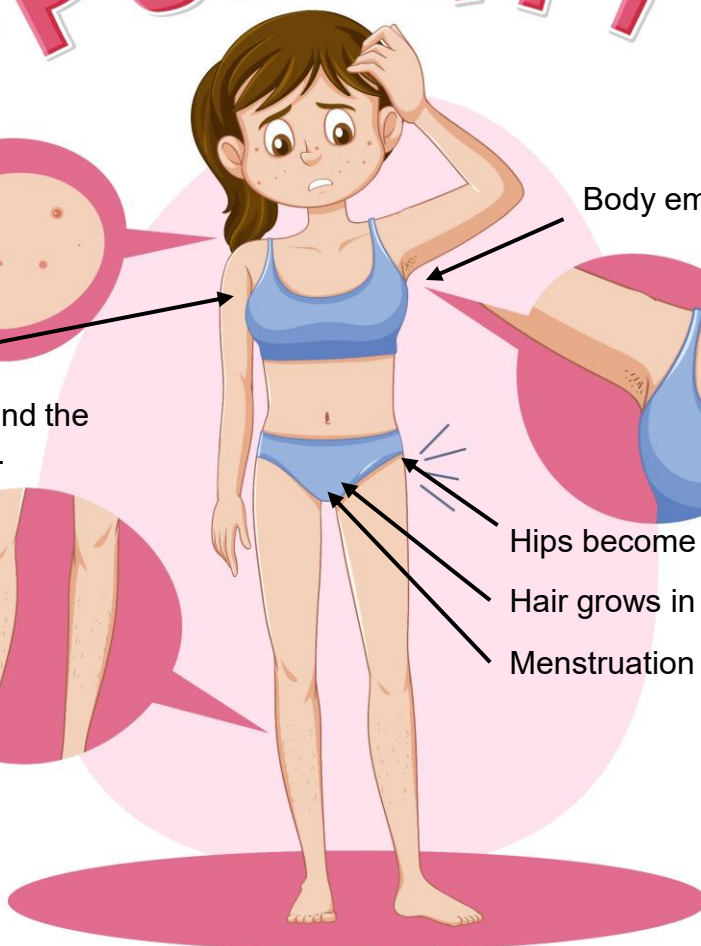
Body emits an odor.

Hair grows in the arm pits.

Hips become wider and curvier.

Hair grows in the private area.

Menstruation starts (see next page).

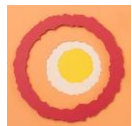


Girls' Body Changes During Puberty (continued)

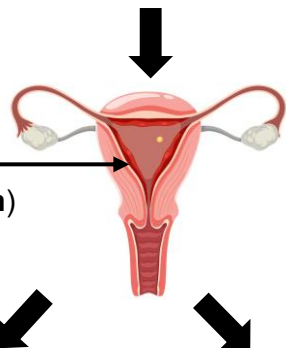
The Menstrual Cycle / Having the Period

As a girl grows up, her body will get ready to produce babies. The levels of various hormones guide the process.

The girl's **ovaries** releases an egg about once every 4 weeks.



To prepare for a baby's growth, the lining of the **uterus** (called **endometrium**) gets thicker.

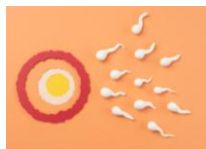


Rare Differences in the Reproductive System in Girls

A very small minority (<0.5%) of girls have **no vagina or uterus**. Their conditions may not be discovered until teenage years (e.g. if they don't have a period).

It is recommended that all individuals with 22q11.2DS receive a complete physical exam at diagnosis. Structural differences in a girl's reproductive system may need surgical repair.

If the egg meets a sperm, it may form into a baby. The girl becomes **pregnant**.



If the egg does not meet a sperm, the thick lining of the uterus is not needed. This lining comes out of the vagina as a mix of blood and tissues. This process is called **menstruation** or "**having the period**". It happens once every ~4 weeks and lasts 3 to 7 days.

For girls who are starting to have a period, it is easier to use pads to manage the blood. Tampons and menstrual cups will also work.

Some girls and women get tummy cramps and heavy bleeding during their periods. Some use medications to control the pain. Others may need medications to decrease the flow or stop menstruation.

See p. 23-29 of the [Healthy Bodies Appendix](#) for tools to help explain the period.



References / Resources

- [Puberty | Menstrual Cycle](#) – Cleveland Clinic, USA
- [Menstrual Cycle: An Overview](#) – Johns Hopkins Medicine, USA
- [What is Puberty?](#) (Video - 2 minutes) – Society for Endocrinology, UK
- [The Healthy Bodies Toolkit for Girls](#) (multiple resources, including a parents' guide for teens with disabilities, autistic teens) – Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, USA
- [Puberty/Adolescence/Disability Sex-Ed Resources](#) – The Arc Foundation, USA
- [Growth charts](#) from [Syndrome-Specific Growth Charts for 22q11.2 Deletion Syndrome in Caucasian Children](#) – 2012
- [Anomalies of the genitourinary tract in children with 22q11.2 deletion syndrome](#) – 2019
- Updated clinical practice recommendations for managing [\[children | adults\]](#) with 22q11.2 deletion syndrome – 2023
- Graphics on this info sheet were adapted from [magnific.com](#)