

## Educating Your Daughter about the Menstrual Cycle – A Mother's Experience

Educating your daughter about the menstrual cycle is a wonderful bonding time between the two of you. Share with her how amazing our bodies are and that it is natural and exciting part of becoming a woman. Explain why the blood is lost and what it might feel like physically and emotionally at the time of the month. Share your own experiences. This will also encourage your daughter to feel comfortable to talk to you about what she is experiencing.

If there are younger siblings it is important to talk to them at an age appropriate level that their sister is going through some normal changes and that they should respect her privacy.

It could be helpful to let your daughter practice putting in a pad before she has her period to help things go more smoothly! Our girls need to understand what can be seen by people if the blood is not caught in a pad properly. For example blood on the back of the dress, blood left on toilet seat and fingers, blood on towel after a shower or even drops of blood on the floor of the bathroom after a shower.

I tried to cover all of the "what ifs" when working out the steps in managing my daughter's periods (and equipping her to manage independently).

Using the steps which follow, my daughter is able to be discrete during her periods, reducing the risk of embarrassment she may feel if teased by peers or her sisters and prevented her sisters from being "grossed out" by seeing traces of blood!

We found it helpful to keep a diary of her physical and emotional wellbeing throughout the month. We documented the level of blood flow and duration of the period. The more our girls get in tune with their bodies and how they are feeling, the better they will read what is going on and when to expect their periods to start and finish.

My daughter will wear a pad when it is getting close to the expected time of the month. Until this is known it wouldn't hurt to allow your daughter to wear a light pad all the time to make her feel less anxious about when they will come.

For the first few cycles (until she felt confident to manage independently) I visited the toilet with her to help her go through the steps and teach her about the level of blood flow she was experiencing.

## Setting up the Toilet

- Bin on one side of the toilet to dispose of pads.
- Basket on the other side of the toilet to store pads, wipes and change of clean undies. (I bought baby wipes in a plain white plastic refillable dispenser so it could be easily cleaned, easily managed and so her younger sisters didn't recognise them as baby wipes!)

## Removing Dirty Pad

- Sit down on toilet.
- Take off pad and roll up.
- Roll pad up in toilet paper and put in bin.
- Use a wet wipe to wipe inside of thighs in case any blood has leaked out. Put wipe in bin.
- Use another wipe to clean fingers "just in case".
- Feel undies to determine if they need changing. (You will need to show her how the undies feel if the pad did leak. Use opportunities when they are there.)
- If undies need changing, change undies. (Have a bucket of water in the laundry for your daughter to put undies in once she has finished.)
- Clean privates with toilet paper as normal when toileting.

## Putting in Pad

- Open up new pad and put rubbish in bin.
- Hold pad by wings and position onto undies. (We found that pads with wings made it easier for her to orientate the pad correctly.)
- Remove adhesive from wigs and secure to undies.
- Pull up pants.
- Make sure the pad is in the correct position by feeling from the front and back. (If it does not feel comfortable or evenly centred, sit back down and readjust. This may mean throwing away that pad and getting out a fresh one.)
- Before flushing toilet, use another wet wipe to wipe over toilet seat just in case blood was spilt.

My daughter is encouraged to change her pad every two hours to reduce risk of leakage and bad odour.

## Taking a Shower

### Set up

- Have a hook where the towel can be hung and reached without getting out of the shower.
- Hang a bag of dark coloured clean washers here also.

We have a toilet in with the shower so she would remove the pad as outlined before and go straight into the shower. If you do not have a toilet in the same room, it could be helpful to put in the

bathroom a plastic chair for her to sit on. Alternatively, she could just pull off her undies and take the pad out to be disposed of once she is showered and dressed.

### **Drying Off**

- When finished showering, take a new washer and dry off the inside of your legs.
- Use the towel to dry the rest of the body.

(This will help prevent blood stains on the bath towel. The washer can be left on the floor of the shower at this stage. After dressing the washer can be put in the bucket of water that is in the laundry.)

- If there is a toilet in the same room, she can go to the toilet and put on new pad and undies. Alternatively have a plastic chair in the bathroom to teach her how to prepare her undies before her shower by sticking the pad into the undies, so all she has to do is pull her undies on.

(Drying in the shower is a “just in case” to reduce the chance of getting drops of blood on the bathroom floor.)

### **Outside of Home**

If there is any chance that you may be at someone else’s house, school, shops etc during her periods, always have a bag with you that she can easily manage, with travel wipes, pads, spare undies and brown paper bags for disposal of dirty pads. (We just wrap up the bags with the dirty pads and leave them in toilet bag to dispose of when we get home, unless you are at the shops with a sanitary bin beside the toilet.)

These have only been suggestions to others based on what my daughter and I have found to work well - so far! As with many new experiences, better ways of doing things are often discovered through trial and error. I would love any ideas passed on from other mother daughter teams who have found different yet successful methods.