

Managing Periods

Sensory processing differences can contribute to difficulties managing periods. Sights, smells, textures and pain may all be experienced differently and therefore impact the young person's ability to manage their period independently.

The following ideas are designed to help address these challenges. When using them, consider your child's age, any potential risks and their sensory preferences. Reflect on how to adapt these strategies to best support your child in feeling calm and relaxed during toileting.

Young person has difficulty recognising the need to change sanitary products.	Encourage them to set a timer as a prompt to go to the toilet every few hours to check.	
	Trial the use of "period pants" or menstrual cups that need to be changed less often therefore risk of leaking is reduced.	
	Create a social story™ with visual examples of what a sanitary towel/the toilet bowl may look like if you need a fresh product. For further information on social stories™ see: Social Stories - Carol Gray - Social Stories (carolgraysocialstories.com)	
	Use thicker absorbency products. These may help increase awareness that they are wearing a product acting as a prompt to check more often.	
	Practice wearing sanitary towels/liners when not menstruating to familiarise self with how they feel. This may help them identify the difference in sensation when they bleed.	
Young person has difficulty tolerating the textures of sanitary products	Trial alternative textured sanitary towels such as bamboo or reusable cloth pads.	
	Trial alternative tampons. Consider the young person's preference in texture of tampon and applicator materials.	
Young person struggles to co-ordinate self and apply/remove sanitary products	Many sanitary product companies provide educational videos, with step-by-step guidance on how to apply tampons.	
	Encourage trialling different tampon application methods such as "easy glide", reusable tampon applicators, or tampon specific lubricant.	
	Encourage them to practice inserting and removing using a mirror to guide coordination.	
	If using sanitary towels or liners, encourage them to practice applying these on underwear when they are not on their body. This may support them to visualise where the product should be placed. For example, pants on lap whilst seated or using a table/flat surface to practice.	

	Use a marker pen in old underwear or draw attention to the seams to help guide the young person on where to place their pad or liner.	
	Consider if pads/liners without wings may be easier to apply. Consider trialling period pants.	
	See Worksheet-N Managing Periods in 'Paediatric Occupational Therapy Motor Skills Resource Pack' on our website.	
Young person distressed by menstrual pain	The pressure and temperature of a hot water bottle/ wheat bag can have a soothing effect when experiencing pain.	
	Encourage activities that involve gently moving the body; stretching the muscles to relieve cramps.	
	Use social stories to help explain why periods occur and why it is common to experience some level of pain or discomfort. Include examples of resources/strategies to help soothe menstrual pain.	
	Encourage "period tracking" (either on an app or written down) so the young person can mentally prepare for periods occurring.	
	It is advisable to contact your GP for guidance on managing menstruation, especially if you are concerned about the pain levels your child is experiencing or if the pain seems beyond what is typically expected.	
Young person feels distressed by the sight, touch, or smell associated with menstruation.	Trial scented products or disposing of them in scented nappy bag.	
	Trial scents, sprays or spritzes in the bathroom prior to changing products to cover smells.	
	For young people that become distressed by the sight of menstruation, trial darker coloured "period pants" that absorb the blood.	
	Disposable products may be more appropriate, so the young person does not have to touch reusable products to clean them.	

Useful resources:

- [National Autistic Society - Menstruation](#)