



# Puberty and hygiene

## What is puberty?

Puberty is the period during which growing boys and girls undergo the process of physical changes in their body. Puberty includes a series of physical changes that lead to the achievement of fertility and the development of the physical features associated with adults such as the growth of pubic hair.

## When does puberty occur?

The age of puberty varies from person to person. The internal onset of puberty, which are changes that cannot be seen externally, usually start at about the age of eight years. In Kiribati the changes we can see usually occur in girls between the ages of 10 to 14. In boys puberty generally occurs a bit later, between the ages of 12 and 16.

It helps young people if they know about the changes that puberty makes before these changes happen so they know what to expect. It's important to reinforce that everybody goes through these changes. No matter where you live, whether you're a boy or a girl, you will experience puberty. Puberty is a **'rite of passage'** for all human beings.

A **rite of passage** is an experience or a ceremony. It marks the transition from one phase of a person's life to another.

Most often the term rite of passage is used to describe puberty: the change from adolescence to adulthood. But rite of passage also refers to any of life's significant transitions, for example significant birthdays, graduations, marriage and ultimately death.

## Changes in boys

- Breasts look like they're growing
- Chest broadens
- Voice "breaks" and deepens
- Boys gain weight and grow taller
- Body and facial hair appears (armpits, pubic area, moustache, beard, or sideburns)
- Shoulders get wider, muscles start to get bigger and stronger.

## Changes in girls

- Breasts start to develop
- Girls gain weight, particularly on the hips
- Menstruation starts
- Bodies become curvier and hip bones widen
- Hair grows in pubic area and armpits
- Muscles get bigger and stronger, but they do not show up as much as boys' muscles.

## Girls' Menstruation Guide

### Q What is menstruation?

A monthly flow of blood from the woman's uterus from puberty to menopause.

### Q Menstruation is NOT:

- An illness
- Shameful
- A reason to keep girls and women from school, household activities or work.

### Q What are the cultural teachings learned at a 'Katekateka'?

The main purpose of a Kiribati cultural 'Katekateka' is to prepare young women to:

- learn and follow the hygienic standard of cleaning during menstruation
- know the boundaries with boys or male relatives after having a first menstruation
- be able to withstand difficult times and feed her children and family when she bears a family.

### Q When do girls begin their first menstruation?

Girls begin to menstruate anywhere between the ages of 9 to 14.

### Q How long will menstruation go?

The bleeding during menstruation usually lasts between 2 to 7 days each month

### Q When is your next menstruation?

Menstrual cycles are between 28 and 30 days

### Q Do you feel pain during menstruation?

It's natural to experience pain while having a period. In Kiribati's tradition, drinking herbs or 'taberanikai':

- the menstrual blood will not smell strongly.
- Relieve stomach pain during menstruation.

### Q How do you prepare for school?

Do not miss school because you are having a period. Instead bring the following if the school is not ready yet:

- old white linen to make into sanitary pads
- a piece of soap to use at school
- spare pants if you need to change
- a disposal plastic bag.
- Always inform your teacher, even a male teacher, if you are having menses. Sometimes teachers forget about the girls' special needs. Politely ask your teacher that you need to visit the toilet several times because you are having a period and you are uncomfortable.
- Dispose of the used sanitary pad properly. Do not put it in the toilet. Wrap it and put it in the bin. Keep it in a plastic and dispose of it properly if there's no bin in the toilet.
- Wash the used pads with soap if you change at school. Keep it in the plastic and take it home to wash it carefully, soak, rinse and hang it in the sun.

A girl learning the cultural teachings at a 'Katekateka'





## Experience and reflection

- Record your monthly period on the calendar. Highlight hygiene practices you have done at school and at home during your menses:

### Example:

#### January

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
		1	2 <i>Day 1</i>	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

- Draw up a calendar for the coming months in your journal. Write a recount, description, explanation or short story regarding your experiences, hygiene practices during monthly menses or a 'Katekateka' you have gone through.
- Propose to your teachers to have access to water, soap and segregated toilet in your school, if there is no toilet only for girls.

### New words

#### Menstruation

te aoraki n aine, te teiao

#### Menses

am tai are ko aoraki n aine iai

#### Menopause

te tai are ko a mwakoro  
iai ke e a toki aorakinnainem

#### Puberty

te roro are I aon te tei ke te roro are  
a kaoti kaninkina bwa ko a eweka te  
mwaneke n ikawai are i aona bwa e  
a burae am baim, ao a bati riki

#### Sanitary napkins

te moti ibukin te aoraki n aine

#### Segregated

kaokoroaki- aine irouia ao mwaane irouia

## Making Sanitary pads (*pasador*)

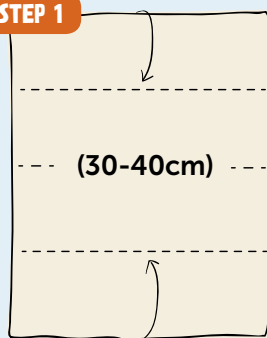
Tell girls to bring an old ragged white T-shirt or pale coloured T-shirt from home. Prepare a bag to store sanitary napkins made from a cloth. These napkins are called a *pasador*.

The texture of T-shirts should be soft and absorbent. Tell girls to ask their mothers to prepare a bag for storing *pasadors* to bring to school.

### Materials

- White soft cloth (old white T-shirt is better than colored materials because you can easily see if there's something dangerous on the pad)
- Pair of scissors.

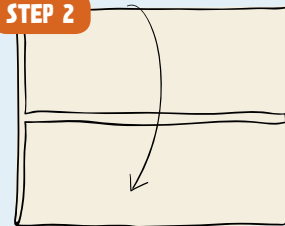
#### STEP 1



Cut the T-shirt into good sizes (30-40cm) that you can make a sanitary pad.

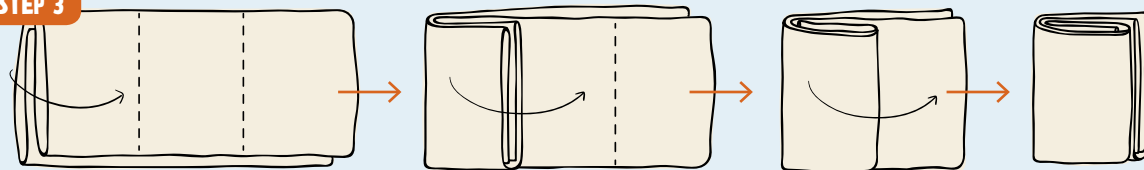
Fold one end of the cloth to the centre. Fold the other end.

#### STEP 2



Fold the cloth into half.

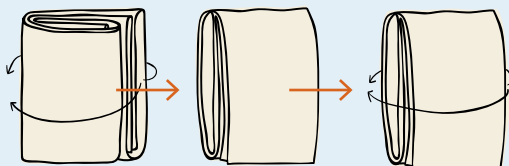
#### STEP 3



Fold in the folded piece into a size of the sanitary pad you like, until you get to the end of the folded cloth.

### How to use and keep the local made sanitary pads

1. Put it in your pant and you will feel comfortable. If you go to the toilet, turn the pad inward again to get a clear side. Put in a clear side of the pad while the stained part was hidden. You will feel comfortable, rather than using the same stained spot.



2. Change your pad if the sides are all used up.

3. Wash your pads with bar soap, soak and put them in the sun to clear off the stain.
4. Keep the soap that no one else is using it. You can use it at your next menses.
5. Use a basin ONLY for washing your pads, then keep it for your next menses. Do not allow family members use your soap or basin.
6. Wash the pads in clean water with soap and hang them on the line to dry. Make sure you put them in the sun for long to kill the germs.
7. Collect the pads, fold and keep them in a closed bag, ready for use at your next period.