

Tips to support menstruation

- **Prepare:**

Autistic people may need longer to process and adjust to changes in their lives especially when it concerns their own bodies, so it is a good idea to prepare them for their first period. Preparation will also avoid potential for fear developing from thinking there is something wrong or that they are hurt because of the bleeding.

- **Practice:**

You may find that practising hygiene routines before periods start works. They could wear sanitary products now and then to get used to the feeling of them. You will also need to prepare for the possible changes in mood in the weeks leading up to a period. Let them know they might feel angry, tired, sad, sleepy and hungry and help teach strategies to deal with these emotions.

- **Think about the products:**

There are a vast array of products on the market that may be better than bog standard products, including menstrual cups and cotton, washable pads.

- **Support choices and control:**

If appropriate, allow them to choose their own sanitary products. Periods are very personal and as much control as possible should be offered.

- **Model:**

They will need to know what pads and tampons look like and how to use them before periods start. Teach them how to use sanitary products and how to dispose of them. Sanitary pads can be easier to start out with, as they are less invasive. You could mark the person's underwear to show where the pad goes.

- **Inform the school:**

If they need assistance with their changing routine during this time make sure staff at school are aware of this. It may be suitable to get a plan in place so you are clear on what support they will get.

- **Be equipped:**

Ensure there are always sanitary products ready in the house and ensure they are always kept in the same place, so they know where they are.

- **Support executive functioning differences:**

It is important to support them to be as independent as possible so consider things you can put in place, like setting an alarm throughout the day when it's time to change their sanitary product. Visual cues may also be helpful in breaking down the process into easier to understand steps.

- **Be positive about it:**

Reflect on your own attitudes towards periods and how this may influence their attitude. Try to use positive language while still allowing time to address worries.