

Improving menstrual wellbeing for children with additional needs



This guide supports the menstrual wellbeing of children with additional needs in Monmouthshire.

We share key insights from conversations with parents and professionals and signpost to relevant resources and services.

Additional needs refer to a child's physical, learning, communication, wellbeing, or behavioural development being impacted, often requiring extra support. As each child is unique, so are their menstrual wellbeing needs.



This guide is funded by the Welsh Government's period dignity grant and commissioned by Monmouthshire County Council's period dignity lead.

Physical

IDEAS FOR PREPARING CHILDREN FOR AND MANAGING PERIODS



*Creating a period positive home by making sure your period products are visible. Small group-work in schools with chosen peers and maybe young people with additional needs who have been through puberty to offer a different view. **Parent***

Warm baths, hot water bottles and painkillers are all great ways to help children manage cramps. Also scaling helps children explain how bad the pain may be.

School health nurse

We need to use simple language, ideally with pictures, when sharing menstrual education with children with additional needs.

Additional learning needs coordinator

Pillars of health are crucial. Sleep, nutrition & stress management really improve menstrual wellbeing.

Balancing blood sugar is super important for balancing hormones. Traits will fluctuate throughout the cycle due to hormonal fluctuations.

**Hormone expert
specialising in ADHD**

Reusable period pants are great as they can be used before periods start, are good for sensory issues, are cheaper and come in lots of pretty colours.

Children need to know how long a period will last and be helped to manage cramps. Stick on pain patches are good.

**Local voluntary
sector agency**

Weaving period chats into the fabric of everyday conversations is key as-well as being 100% honest in an age & stage appropriate way. The jigsaw analogy is great when thinking about how much information to share, small chunky pieces of info for children at the start, building up to more complex pieces as they develop.

Children's social worker

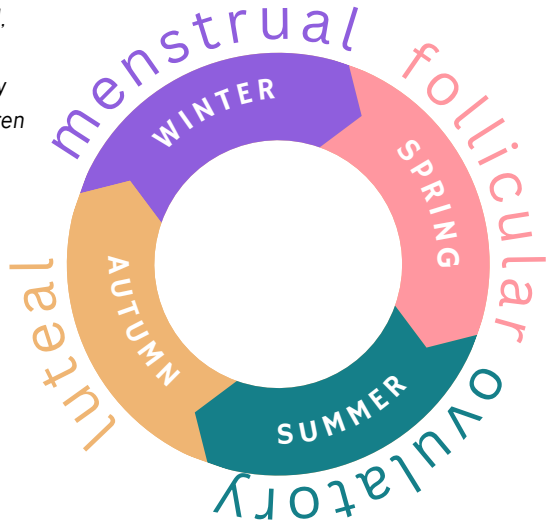
Emotional

IDEAS FOR HELPING CHILDREN UNDERSTAND THEIR EMOTIONS

Using the seasonal model (Red School, 2017) to explain emotional changes throughout the menstrual cycle is a very simple, accessible way of helping children understand why they feel different during the four phases of their cycle:

- inner winter - menstruation
- inner spring - pre-ovulation,
- inner summer - ovulation,
- inner autumn - pre-menstrum.

The energy of the outer seasons mirror the inner seasons.



Menstrual cycle coach



Tracking children's moods using a chart once they start their cycle is really helpful for being able to predict and support specific emotions.

School health nurse

Children with additional needs can struggle with interoception, which is the ability to sense and understand what's happening inside your body. This can make it harder to notice pain, hunger & emotions.

Creating a visual emoji chart or journal can be really helpful for children who might struggle to verbalise how they are feeling.

Pupil referral unit manager

Relational

IDEAS FOR GROWN UPS SHARING MENSTRUAL EDUCATION



Holding a meeting with parents / carers and professionals about how to support the child's menstrual wellbeing in a dignified way, at home and in school is really crucial.

Children's social worker

Social stories or parallel stories are a great way to help children with additional needs understand what to expect when they menstruate.

Manager of pupil referral unit

We need to ask who is best placed to share menstrual education with children. Who is the trusted adult in school?

Teachers need support to help them understand the impact of hormones on children's traits and behaviours.

Additional learning needs coordinator

Menstrual shame, stigma and taboo are really common and easy to unintentionally transfer to children. Children with additional needs may be especially vulnerable to menstrual shame.

Adults need to reflect on how we think, feel and talk about menstruation. If we have had difficult periods it is harder to share a positive or neutral view.

Children's social worker

Signposting

RESOURCES AND SERVICES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN

What now? Follow the link or scan the code below for relevant research, national policies, local services and useful practical resources, as-well as how to get FREE period products in Monmouthshire.

www.wombwisdom.uk/additionalneeds



menstrualcyclecoaching@gmail.com
Front page image - Vulvani.com

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of the parents and professionals who shared their views and the following people who generously gave their time to this project:

Dr Stacey Harries, Rosie Harris, Adele Wimslet, Sarah Bishop, Chloe Griffiths, Gwent Parent & Carers Network, Sparkle



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