



CHAPTER 20

A MESSAGE ABOUT GETTING IT

Each of you is different and special. Girls get their periods at different ages. The average is 12 years 8 months. A few girls start as early as 9 and a few as late as 17. If you are 9, 10, or 11 when you start your period, you will probably be one of the first in your class to start. This may feel awkward. You may still feel like a girl and not like a woman. Like Babs, you will need to grow many more years before you feel like a woman. Don't worry, your body and your emotions have many years to practice!

Sarah knew all about periods. She was ready and anxious for hers to start. But her body was not ready. She had to be patient. She had to wait. If you have an older sister, ask her if she is menstruating yet. Ask her how old she was when she started. Ask your mother how old she was when she got her first period. And ask your grandmother. At what age you start your period seems to run in families, so this could be useful information.

If you have been fully physically developed (meaning you have pubic hair and underarm hair and breasts) for 2 years and you still don't have your period, ask your mother or other trusted adult to set up an appointment with your family doctor. You are probably fine. It's just time to have a check-up.



Mirror Viewing

Sarah suggests to Babs that she use a mirror to look at her genitals. Try this yourself. It's important that girls and women know how they look so it is not a mystery. (Boys can easily see their genitals – we need a mirror to see ours!) See how beautiful you look. Look at an anatomy book and compare yourself to the drawings or photos. Basically what you will see is, vulva, labia, clitoris, urethra, vagina, and anus. Everyone looks slightly different. Touch each part and explore the miracle of you. See appendix, Glossary of terms.

Self Love: Masturbation

Sarah, Betsy and Joyce speak together about masturbation. Masturbation is pleasuring yourself. Loving yourself. Having sex with yourself. It is healthy, good, natural and important for girls and young women to know and feel good about. Touching yourself can be relaxing, fun, highly pleasurable and it helps you understand your body and how it works. Masturbation to orgasm will help you feel better if you have discomfort before or during your period.