



Puberty's Impact on Teen Girls and How You Can Help

Apricotton (2022)

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INTRODUCTION

Apricotton surveyed 370 girls, women, and moms to learn about their puberty struggles with bra shopping, mental health, relationships to determine where organizations and individuals alike can best guide girls through such a sensitive life stage. With 78% of survey respondents being under the age of 25, Apricotton's report reflects the credible, first-hand testimonies of women who are currently or have recently gone through puberty.

[Apricotton's report insights were featured in Global News, one of Canada's largest news networks.](#)

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At A Glance

- 🍷 Across the board, puberty is making tween and teen girls to feel self-conscious, largely due to body changes they do not feel prepared to handle or talk about
- 🍷 Girls need mental health support now more than past generations ever did before. A main impact to their mental health is that they are having more family and friendship conflict than before puberty
- 🍷 There is a market gap for bras tailored to the tween girl body type, as existing bras are either too sexy and mature or too flimsy and unsupportive
- 🍷 We can help by normalizing these puberty struggles, either in your daily life by talking openly about them with girls or sharing resources online

NOTE: All data and insights were sourced by Apricotton alone through our survey. No third-party sources were used in the making of this report.

Legend

Girls = girls under age 18 going through puberty

35% of total survey responses (125 individuals)



Women = women over age 18 who have gone through puberty

43% of total survey responses (152 individuals)



Moms = women with daughters who are going through or finished puberty

13% of total survey responses (47 individuals)



Parents = parents with daughters who are going through or finished puberty

13% of total survey responses (48 individuals)



PUBERTY'S IMPACT

On Self-Esteem

84% of girls currently going through puberty feel a lot more self-conscious than before they started puberty, with **89%** of women agreeing.

A large majority of girls and women and women agree that puberty has detrimental effects on their self-esteem.

How We Can Help:

These responses prove the importance of Apricotton's movement to boost girls' confidence during puberty by normalizing body changes through candidly sharing personal stories and older sister advice.

On Mental Health

84% of teen girls are struggling with their mental health during puberty in comparison with the **65%** of women who said they similarly struggled with their mental health

Girls today are 3x more likely to struggle with their mental health than the previous generation. This disparity is mainly due to the increased social media use, with girls watching the highlight reel of others' and comparing their bodies and lifestyles to each other. On top of hormonal changes that physiologically cause mood swings, new external pressures like academic performance and popularity can weigh down on a girl if she believes she's falling behind.

How We Can Help:

Middle school and high school are defining times in a girl's life because everything is changing. If you're a role model for a young girl, you can help her cope by being a stable supportive figure she can confide in. Make sure you're checking in on her because she might be overwhelmed to proactively approach you.

Similarly, organizations like Apricotton can share advice on what to do in specific scenarios or share personal mental health stories so girls do not feel alone. Doing so will build trust, where we have girls messaging us to ask private questions that we can personally help them with. As a preventative measure, encourage young girls to filter their social media feeds, unfollowing accounts that they recognize to have a negative impact on their self-esteem.

Family & Friendship Conflicts

70% of girls and **75%** of women have had more conflicts with their family and/or friends than before starting puberty

This consistent result across generations highlights that it's normal for girls to have conflicts with the people closest to them, which may exacerbate their existing feelings of isolation.

"Mentally it was most challenging to feel behind peers, and some of the changes hormonally probably contributed to conflicts with friends/family"



"I found it to be very difficult making friends at school who I truly enjoy being with... having people like Apricotton showing me how to do things (ie. bra shopping, period tips and being a better person) has really helped"



How We Can Help:

Since it can be difficult to talk about arguments, girls may feel like they are the only ones going through it. Feeling alone in a situation can lead to mental health declines, so we should normalize these conflicts.

For example, Apricotton's team members share personal stories of relationship conflicts on social media or compiling ones from our community. Our main message to share with girls is: these problems may feel like they last forever, but as they grow older, they will have more control over their living situations so their relationships will get better, whether with the same people or new ones.

Girls' Need for Puberty-Related Advice:

86% of girls said they would benefit from getting online advice on puberty-related challenges from women who have recently experienced them (e.g., Q&A, blogs, social media posts). Similarly, nearly **90%** of women agree.



"I'd say not only I, but many teens that have grown without a mother would need support on everything regarding puberty. The internet is a great resource but sadly, not many people use it for the greater good and women tend to be ashamed to talk about topics like feminine hygiene which could benefit other women"

These results validate the importance of Apricotton's community, as we do exactly this. It is crucial to educate girls on puberty from an older sister perspective because girls can relate to it more and will feel more comfortable asking questions. Health classes are helpful for foundational learnings, but the answers are very "textbook" and girls do not feel comfortable asking personal questions un-anonymously.

How We Can Help:

Apricotton's content is inclusive of diverse puberty experiences and explores the nuances of a textbook answer. For example, not only do we talk about periods, but [what to do if you're on your period while swimming](#). A huge part of gaining confidence is feeling knowledgeable, which is why we share older sister advice to ensure girls do not go through puberty alonesure, encourage young girls to filter their social media feeds, unfollowing accounts that they recognize to have a negative impact on their self-esteem.

Girls' Sentiment Towards Wearing a Bra:

Girls feel embarrassed (**50%** agree) and stressed (**33%** agree) when wearing a bra for the first time, while **46%** reported feeling excited

Why are girls embarrassed to wear a bra? Likely because of the stigma of being the first to develop and the sexualization of bras. After all, many school dress codes reinforce the idea that spaghetti bra-like straps should be hidden. Puberty is a taboo topic, and the lack of supportive resources to ease girls through this formative experience makes girls embarrassed to talk about it.

Parents' Sentiment Towards Wearing a Bra:

52% of parents said their daughter was prepared for puberty, but only **36%** of girls and **21%** of women agreed

"I feel I have not jumped out of my comfort zone yet because I am still hesitant to talk about puberty in front of my parents."



Parents overestimate their daughter's comfort level to wear a bra, likely because many daughters do not feel comfortable sharing 100% of their feelings with them.

How We Can Help:

The widespread feeling of excitement and preparedness presents the opportunity for organizations like Apricotton to start open conversations about wearing a bra. Small details make a big difference - the cofounders personally wrap each Apricotton order like a present to make wearing a girl's first bra a celebration.

First Bra Shopping Location:

Girls have mainly bought their bras from department stores (67% agree), followed by lingerie stores (38% agree) and teen stores (37% agree), with children stores being the least common (12% agree)

Similarly, women bought their first bras at department stores (76% agree) or lingerie stores (62% agree)

These two options are also the go-to for parents.

These results show that girls default to two options when bra shopping. They either buy cookie-cutter sized bras from department stores that are flimsy and unsupportive, or buy underwire cupped bras from highly sexualized lingerie stores that do not fit and feel awkward to shop in. Neither bra option is tailored for a growing girl's body and neither shopping experience supports girls, who are already self-conscious and embarrassed.

How We Can Help:

Apricotton's bras are perfectly designed for teen and tween girls. Girls can order their bras online so they can shop and try on their bras in the comfort of their own home. We are the only tween-focused bra brand in Canada and the only one worldwide that designs bras that grow as girls grow.

COVID-19's Impact on Bra Shopping:

61% of respondents reported that the pandemic has made it more difficult for girls to buy bras

Moms are usually buying bras for their daughters, and with girls being uncomfortable asking their parents for a bra, malls being closed for long periods of time or their family hesitant to shop for non-essential products, girls rarely find the opportunity to buy a bra. Online bra shopping is difficult too, because of how complex it is to find your typical bra size, involving unintuitive math to calculate both a cup and band size.

How We Can Help:

Our bras are easily sized based on a single underbust measurement, so girls can quickly measure themselves and order online themselves. Alternatively, it's easier to show their mom a website versus visiting a store with their mom.

Factors that Deter Girls from Wearing and Shopping for Bras:

Girls and women said they are deterred from wearing and shopping for their first bras...

- ♡ "When I have trouble figuring out my size" (**63.4%** agree)
- ♡ "When my bra doesn't fit (e.g., too tight, has cup gapping)" (**56.2%** agree)
- ♡ "Being seen bra shopping (e.g., by friends, interacting with sales associates, etc.)" (**50.1%** agree)
- ♡ "When people can see my bra through my shirt (e.g., the color or straps showing)" (**43.4%** agree)
- ♡ "When my nipples show through my bra" (**36.8%** agree)
- ♡ "When I have to keep buying new ones as I grow out of old ones" (**26.1%** agree)

There is clearly a need for more adjustable bras tailored for tween girls.



"Honestly, it's hard shopping for all clothing items not just bras when you don't know what is comfortable or fits right or made for your age or size group. It's also hard knowing what you are comfortable in."

How We Can Help:

Luckily, [Apricotton's bras](#) solve all of these crucial qualms because we designed them from feedback from tweens themselves.

Each bra can be adjusted to be worn when girls develop from an AA to D cup and the stretchy fabric and band ensures that it always fits perfectly to last multiple stages of puberty

Our bras stay invisible under t-shirts and tank tops through criss-crossable straps, hidden necklines, and neutral colors

Even if girls remove our bra padding, the bras are triple layered so that their nipples will never show through

Specific Demands for Puberty-Related Advice:

Girls, women, and parents agreed on the most needed support topics:

1. Bra shopping
2. Friendships and romantic relationships (including peer pressure)
3. Feminine hygiene (e.g., shaving)
4. Periods (e.g., reducing period cramps)
5. Mental health (managing stress and anxiety)
6. Body Image
7. Managing acne

How We Can Help:

A lot of moms said that they want their daughter to get these pieces of advice from not just themselves, but from female role models as it will resonate more with their daughter. Apricotton covers all of these topics in our older sister advice series on our [Blog](#) and [Instagram](#).

As either a role model or organization, you can prioritize these topics when helping girls through puberty. Recognizing that mental health struggles are real, we can encourage girls to be more forgiving of their troubles and to reach out for help.

Thank you for reading Apricotton's report. We look forward to cultivating a more inviting culture for young girls to ask questions and seek necessary support during puberty.

I NEED HELP WITH...

From Real Survey Respondents:



"Bra shopping has always been a struggle for my C-D cup-size because it is so difficult knowing where to start and finding what a good fit even means...and it is always expensive, so I would always avoid buying new ones"

"Having voices of other people who have gone through the same struggles and because I am the only daughter of the family and the only female relative"



"Having an outlet to better understand the different changes in my body and know what was "normal" and what wasn't."



"I'm very socially awkward and so I think pre pandemic it would've all been lot more difficult for me to bra shop and learn about menstrual products"



"I wish I had someone to talk to when I first got my period! It was an awkward time!"



"Sex education (I went to Catholic school and they taught abstinence and unhealthy misinformation)"



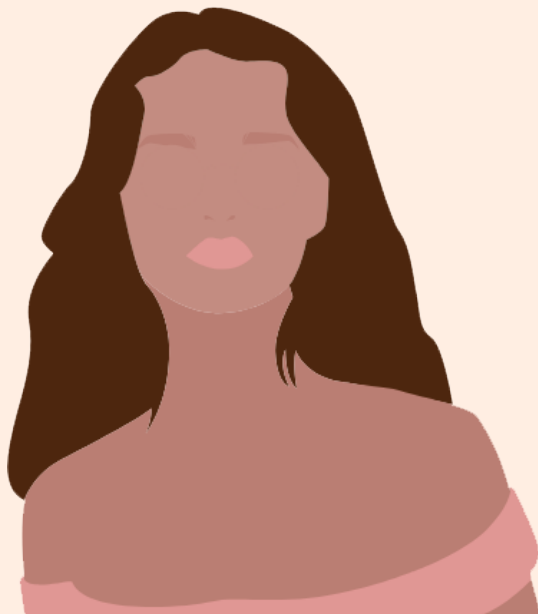


"How to connect with other girls that this is normal and shouldn't be embarrassing"

"Ignoring the negative comments from males, especially teen age boys"



"Bra shopping and mental health issues through puberty because nobody talks about it so it's kind of tabou"



"being envious of others who are prettier and larger breasted"



"Understanding that it's ok that my body is changing and that I'm still beautiful"

"Having people like you guys (Apricotton) showing me how to do things (ie. bra shopping, period tips and being a better person) has really helped especially going into high school this year"





"They need to be reassured and feel it's all normal and part of this stage of life!"

"How can I make sure I am present for support"



"Understanding that it's ok that my body is changing and that I'm still beautiful"

"Advice on things like picking the right underwear. I still have no idea how many types there are and what works better for my body"



"Losing and gaining friends"



"Relationship advice as I am unsure about healthy vs unhealthy habits"

