

CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR COACHES OF TEEN GIRLS

Just having a few simple phrases can go a long way. These prompts help you open up team-wide conversations in a safe, supportive way, letting the girls know it's okay to talk about things like puberty, periods, fueling, and more in your sports environment. Invite whanau to be involved or present when these conversations or let them know when these conversations will be taking place.

Conversation starters around puberty and body changes

- **"Everyone goes through changes at different times,** height, strength, feeling clumsy or uncoordinated. That's all normal. If something feels off in your body, let's figure out how to adjust your training, and we'll chat with your parents too."
- **"Each of you is growing and developing at your own pace.** Two athletes the same age can be up to five years apart in biological development, and that's totally normal. That's why we don't compare you to each other. Let's focus on your own growth and progress."
- **"Your body will change as you grow, which includes putting on body weight and fat tissue.** This is not only normal, it's healthy and essential. Your body needs it to grow, stay strong, and keep performing well in sport."
- **"A well-fitting sports bra makes a big difference in both comfort and performance** (especially in sports involving running or high impact, and contact sports). If yours isn't quite right, have a chat with your parent or a female support person who can help you find one that fits well."

Body Image & Uniforms

- **"We don't talk about anyone's body shape or size** as everyone is different and you will continue to change as you grow. Our focus is always on what your body can do, not how it looks."
- **"If your uniform ever feels uncomfortable or distracting,** let me and your parent/whanau know. We want each of you to feel confident and comfortable when you train and compete."

Fuelling and Nutrition

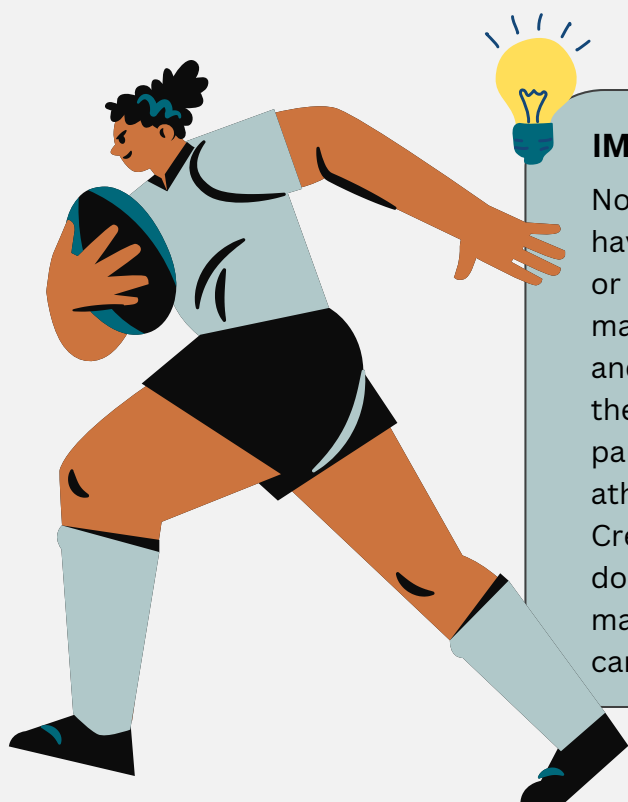
- **"Food is fuel** and it is so important that you put quality fuel into your body so you can grow and enjoy your training. If you're not sure you're getting enough, we can talk about it as a team, it's something all athletes can learn more about together."
- **"If you're feeling low on energy or your mood's all over the place,** sometimes it's linked to how you're fueling. Let's make sure you're eating enough for sport."

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Conversation starters around the menstrual cycle

- **"The menstrual cycle is a sign of good health,** and it's something all female athletes go through. Some girls feel different at certain times, perhaps more tired, sore, in pain, or off their game. If your cycle is affecting how you feel at training or competition, it's okay to let me know or get your parent to have a chat with me. We can adjust what we do, or take it easier that day. Sometimes light exercise can actually help."
- **"Just so you know, we have period products available.** You can grab what you need anytime — they'll be located [insert location here]."
- **"Having your period is a healthy sign that your body is getting what it needs.** If you're 15 and haven't started your period yet, or if your period stops for 3 months or more, it's really important to speak with your parent or a doctor. That can be a sign that your body isn't getting enough fuel for how much you're training. If that happens, let me and/or your parents/whanau know so we can adjust your training with your doctor's advice."
- **"If you ever experience pain or heavy bleeding during your period that affects your daily life (eg. like cramping so severe you need to stay in bed) that's not normal.** It's important to talk with your parent or whanau and see a doctor or female health professional."



IMPORTANT

Not all coaches feel confident or comfortable having conversations about puberty, periods, or wellbeing and that's completely okay! What matters most is checking in with your athletes and ensuring they know they have someone they trust to talk to. Consider identifying a parent, female staff member, or older female athlete who can offer support when needed. Creating a safe and supportive environment doesn't mean doing it all yourself. It means making sure every girl feels seen, heard, and cared for.