Puberty and her first period are among the most important rites of passage in a girl's life. Cashing in on this, transnational corporate giant Proctor & Gamble created the website beinggirl.com in 2000, to provide “a forum for girls to explore their collective interests and receive guidance in choosing the right feminine protection products provided by Tampax and Always at the very start of their cycles.” Featuring podcasts, polls, quizzes, an advice column, games, downloads, and a discussion board, beinggirl.com looks like many other commercially-created online spaces for girls. Employing an “experiential analysis” methodology, this article deconstructs beinggirl.com as a site that has both a corporate imperative as well as the self-proclaimed intention of providing a space for girls.
Procter & Gamble’s BeingGirl website, associated with its Tampax and Always brands of sanitary protection, offers advice and information about menstruation to girls who have recently started or are about to start their periods. The controversy comes just weeks after the publication of the Bailey report into the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood, which singled out sexualised and gender-stereotyped clothing, products and services for children as the biggest areas of concern for parents, worried their offspring are being encouraged to grow up too soon. This is more than just about menstruation – it covers all areas of puberty and development through these formative years, including hair growth and the choices this presents. PROCTER & GAMBLE ACQUIRES TAMBRANDS The company approached Procter & Gamble about a buyout, and the two announced a $1.85 billion deal. The move puts P&G back in the tampon business for the first time since its Rely brand was pulled in 1980 after two dozen women who used tampons died from toxic shock syndrome. Their personal experiences were documented in a series of webisodes airing on beinggirl.com/hero to help encourage and empower all teens to become global citizens. All of this effort is done with the idea that better health education and the use of the company’s products will result in fewer days absent from school and, thus, better education for female students. QUESTIONS 1. Evaluate the wisdom of Tambrands becoming part of Procter & Gamble.