



Puberty



What is puberty?

Puberty is the stage of life when the human body changes from a child into an adult because of chemicals called hormones. Puberty can change the way you look, the way you feel and the way you behave. These changes may take months or years. You will probably go through puberty some time between 8 and 18 years of age. For some people, puberty starts earlier or later than that. It will be different for everyone and that's OK.

Changes to your body

For everyone

It is important to remember that everyone goes through puberty sometime. We all experience these changes, just not always at the same time as other people.

Changes that every person will notice

Growth Spurts

Our bodies grow very quickly in a short space of time during puberty. This might happen a few times. Sometimes you might be surprised by how much someone has changed just over school holidays!

Muscles

As well as growing taller, our muscles also get bigger during puberty.

Body Hair

The hair on our arms and legs gets longer and thicker. You will grow hair under your arms and in your pubic area (the area near your penis or vulva). People with penises will start to get facial hair.

Some people think that they have to shave or wax their body hair off. Getting rid of hair is a choice, and what is fashionable often changes. People sometimes remove their hair, or keep it, because of rules at school, work, or in their religion or culture. Remember, having body hair is healthy and normal. It's your body, it's your choice.

Acne

Acne is another word for pimples. During puberty, our skin makes more oil. This will often lead to pimples, or blackheads. Some people get more pimples than others. Pimples usually appear on the face but you can also get them on your chest and back. It is important to keep your skin clean by showering or having a bath once a day, and try not to touch your face because the germs on your fingers make acne worse.

Body Odour

During puberty your body will start to smell different. Your skin starts to make oil as well as sweat and this is what smells. It's time to wash more often and use deodorant. Remember, it only works on clean skin. You may also get smelly feet so wear clean socks every day.



If you have a uterus

Body shape

As well as getting taller, your hips will get wider which might give your body a curvier shape. It's common to put on a bit of weight during puberty too. Eating well and exercising will help you stay healthy. Remember - the shape of your body won't stop you from being healthy or doing the things you love to do.

Breast growth

When your breasts start to grow, your nipples and the areola (the dark area around your nipples) might get bigger or change colour, then the breasts will begin to grow. One may develop a little bit faster but that's normal. They may feel sore sometimes but this will pass. Breasts come in all shapes and sizes and yours will be just right for your body.

Vaginal discharge

Vaginal discharge is the sticky white/cream wetness that you may notice on your underwear or toilet paper. This can happen before your first period and in-between periods. It is common and it helps to keep the vagina clean and healthy. You don't need to do anything about it, and never put soap or body wash in your vagina - it is made to stay clean and healthy all on its own!

Periods

Periods are part of the changes that mean your body can make a baby. Every month, the uterus grows a lining inside. If you don't get pregnant, the lining leaves the body and that is what is called a period. It comes out

through the vagina and looks like blood, but it can be different shades of red and can be sticky or clumpy. This bleeding lasts from 3-7 days and happens about once a month. Pads, tampons, special underwear or menstrual cups are used to absorb or catch the period fluid. For more information you can read Family Planning Tasmania's Periods booklet.

If you have testes

Body shape

Your hands and feet are likely to start growing first, then your body will get taller and your shoulders and chest will get broader. The penis gets longer and thicker and the testicles become larger. Some people might find that their breasts may grow a bit, this is because of the changes to your hormones and will settle down after a while.

Erections

Erections are when the penis becomes hard or stiff. It's normal to start to get more erections during puberty and they show that the body is developing and working well. Erections can happen because of touch, sexy thoughts or dreams, and sometimes for no reason at all. They usually happen in private.

Very rarely they may happen in public and you might be really embarrassed. If this happens, cover your penis area with something like a book, your jumper or a pillow, and think of the most boring thing you can and it should go away soon.



Wet dreams

Wet dreams happen to most people with a penis at some stage during puberty. A wet dream is when white/cream sticky fluid with sperm in it (called semen or ejaculate) comes out of your penis while you are sleeping. Wet dreams are a normal part of growing up but it can be uncomfortable to wake up feeling damp and sticky.

Voice changes

Your voice will get deeper. Sometimes your voice might jump from normal to squeaky or deep quite fast. You might have heard people call that your 'voice breaking'. It doesn't hurt and that stage won't last long.

Changes to feelings and emotions

Mood swings

Adolescence is the word used to talk about changes to your feelings that happen to everyone during puberty. Like the changes to your body, these are caused by hormones.

Your moods will probably change quickly during puberty. This can be confusing and frustrating for you and the people around you, but it is normal.

Independence and privacy

Puberty is the stage where you are stuck halfway between being a kid and an adult. You might find some days you feel like a kid and want love and support from your friends and family. Other times, you might want everyone

to leave you alone. It's all part of becoming a more grown up and independent person.

Often, the people around you don't know which one you want, and they might treat you like a kid when you want to be treated as an adult, or as an adult when you just want to be a kid. They might say things like "You are old enough to be responsible", but they might also say "You are too young to do that." It can be really frustrating and can lead to arguments. If you are finding it hard to get along with your family, you can speak to another adult you trust.

Sexual feelings and attraction

You might get some new feelings, like sexual thoughts and fantasies. You might even get feelings about a special person. This person may be of the opposite sex or the same sex. These feelings are normal and happen to lots of people going through puberty and adolescence.

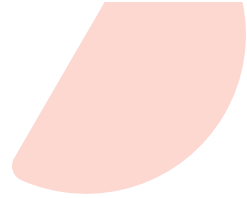


Rights and responsibilities

Remember, whether you have been through puberty or not, you always have the right to:

- feel safe at all times
- privacy
- say NO to attention or touching that you don't like or want
- talk with a person you trust
- ask for help and support
- keep asking until someone hears and helps you, and
- make choices about your body.

With rights come responsibilities. You have the responsibility to allow other people to have these rights too!



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