

PUBERTY

FOR BOYS

FACT SHEET

What is puberty?

Puberty (or adolescence) is the time when a child begins to change into an adult. The changes affect the way people look, feel, think, and relate to others.

Some of these changes might feel great, while others may be confusing or feel uncomfortable.

Puberty usually happens between the ages of 9 and 16. Many boys will notice changes around the age of 12 or 13. It's different for everybody. Puberty will start at the time that is right for each person.

Everyone is not the same

It is important to understand that general information about body changes and the reproductive system is not true for everyone. A small percentage of people are intersex – they have natural variations from conventional 'female' or 'male' bodies, including genital, chromosomal and/or a range of other physical characteristics. This is totally normal for them. Also, some people are transgendered and so their gender identity may be different from the sex they were assigned at birth.

What happens at puberty?

Most people will go through physical and emotional changes. Body chemicals called hormones make these changes happen. The male hormone is called testosterone.

Puberty for boys means changes like:

- voice changes or breaks, eventually becoming deeper
- hair growing under arms and in the pubic area
- facial hair growing – some boys will start shaving
- pimples for some boys
- an increase in height, sometimes very rapid, called a growth spurt
- shoulders and chest get broader
- erections happen more often (penis becomes hard)
- sperm start being produced in the testicles
- wet dreams can happen
- awareness of sexual feelings in the body
- mood swings

Some boys may like or dislike what is happening to their body, but puberty is a natural and normal process. If you have any concerns talk to someone you trust or see a doctor.

Erections

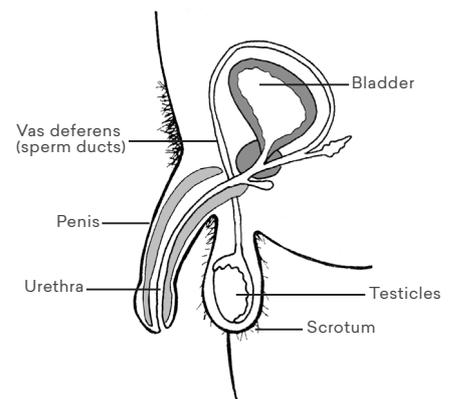
When a boy reaches puberty he may experience more frequent erections. This is a normal and healthy part of growing up. Sometimes erections may happen for no obvious reason and at an unexpected time or place such as at school, in a bus or when out with friends.

A good way to make unwanted erections go away or be less obvious is to:

- think of something really boring
- wear clothes that make erections less noticeable (e.g. board shorts over bathers)

About semen and ejaculation

Sperm are reproductive cells and are contained in a whitish fluid called semen. At puberty, sperm begin to be produced in the testicles. Ejaculation is when semen comes out of an erect penis. Urine also leaves the body from the penis (through the urethra), but never at the same time as semen.



How does pregnancy happen?

When a girl reaches puberty, her eggs begin to mature. If an egg is fertilised by a sperm from a male (this can happen as a result of sexual intercourse), then the girl may become pregnant. If not, blood and other fluids are passed out of the girl's body – this is called menstruation, or a period.

What are wet dreams?

A wet dream is when a boy or man ejaculates semen while he is asleep. Wet dreams usually bring pleasurable feelings. It is a normal part of growing up to have wet dreams and have these feelings.

Some boys may have wet dreams only occasionally; for others they may happen often. The amount of semen ejaculated is only about 5mL (1 teaspoon), so it can be easily cleaned up with a wet cloth, tissues or by washing pyjamas and sheets.

Masturbation

Touching or rubbing the genital area so that it feels good is called masturbation. This is a normal but private activity done in a private place, such as in the bedroom or bathroom. Masturbation can be a normal and healthy way of experiencing pleasure and learning about the body.

Body hygiene

Healthy strategies

During puberty perspiration (sweating) will increase, so it is important to wash clothes and the body regularly, especially the armpits. If a penis has a foreskin (is uncircumcised) cleaning gently under the foreskin every day during a shower is a good way to stay healthy. Putting on deodorant will also help control body odour that sometimes is present during puberty.

Pimples

Glands in the skin which produce oil become more active during puberty, causing excess oil to build up. This may result in pimples on the face or other parts of the body. Pimples are a normal part of puberty and are temporary for most people. Some people may develop a severe case of pimples, known as acne. If the condition is severe, a doctor or skin specialist may be able to prescribe medication.

Take care of the skin by:

- washing the face with warm soapy water twice a day
- trying not to squeeze pimples, as this may cause scarring and increase the risk of infection

Voice changes

At puberty a boy's voice will change and become deeper. This is a gradual process while the larynx (voice box) grows and the vocal cords stretch. The voice may alternate between being squeaky or deep, and is usually known as the voice breaking. The voice can break any time during puberty, before eventually settling down.

Weight gain and body image

Some people may put on weight around the time of puberty. Magazines and other media sometimes give out messages that being trim and muscular is important. But the most important thing is to be healthy and happy.

Eating a well-balanced diet and getting regular exercise will help control weight. If you are worried about weight gain, it's important to get advice and supervision before starting any intense training or diet programs.

Changing feelings

Puberty is not just a physical process. Hormones can cause mood changes or mood swings, where someone may feel happy one moment and sad or angry the next.

The changes that occur during puberty can often be very confusing and frustrating. Many people find it helps to talk to a person they trust about these changes.

These mood swings won't last forever. Eventually people will feel calmer and gain a more even state of emotions. In the meantime, it helps to try:

- finding a quiet, private space until the confusing or frustrating feelings are gone
- doing regular exercise like going for a run, playing soccer, or dancing
- making sure you get enough sleep
- talking to someone who can be trusted about these feelings

Puberty and relationships

Puberty is a time of discovering new kinds of relationships that might eventually lead to a sexual relationship. Loving and sexual feelings, or feelings of attraction to other people, might be experienced.

Some people may form relationships quite early, while others show no interest until they are older. Everyone is going to feel differently. While everyone goes through puberty, each boy's experience is going to be unique – it's all part of growing up.

CONTACT
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