



Puberty Changes

PUBERTY CHANGES

Summary

This unit introduces the range of changes most people will go through during puberty. These concepts may be new to some students while others may have talked about puberty at home. Some students may already be experiencing these changes while others have not. In all cases, there are likely many students who have questions or concerns about the changes that accompany puberty. Since your students may have varying levels of knowledge and comfort about puberty, it's important to first set a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. Puberty education can be an awkward topic for students as well as their teachers and parents or guardians. Learning about the common physical, emotional, and social changes during puberty helps young people improve their self-confidence and enhances their ability to make healthy decisions. During the *Puberty Changes* unit, students will also understand that each person's body changes in different ways and at its own pace.

Student Learning Objectives

After completing the *Puberty Changes* unit, students will:

- Feel more comfortable learning and discussing puberty topics (attitude)
- Identify the physical, social, and emotional changes of puberty (knowledge)
- Identify ways to handle the challenges of puberty (skills)

Activities	Minutes	Materials & Preparation Checklist
A. Getting Started*	15-20	<input type="checkbox"/> White board or chart paper and markers
B. Puberty Changes Match-Up*	20-30	<input type="checkbox"/> Read through Puberty Changes Educator's Guide. <input type="checkbox"/> Copy and cut out Puberty Changes Match-Up cards.
Supplemental Activity: Video	10-20	<input type="checkbox"/> If showing a video: View and select appropriate puberty video and set up video/audio for viewing in class
C. <i>Dear Puberty</i> : *	15	<input type="checkbox"/> Make copies of <i>Dear Puberty</i> scenarios <input type="checkbox"/> Read through <i>Dear Puberty</i> Educator Key
D. Introducing Anonymous Questions	5	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare Anonymous Question box <input type="checkbox"/> Index cards or small pieces of paper for questions and exit ticket
Supplemental Home Activity	5	<input type="checkbox"/> Make a copy of The Interview worksheet for each student

Instructional time: Times for each activity are estimates. Varying class times may require educators to shorten, add or split up activities into multiple days.

* These activities are deemed essential for meeting the learning objectives in this unit.

Advanced Preparation for Educators:

- Review kidshealth.org for information about puberty, including terminology appropriate for students.
- GLSEN's *Ready, Set, Respect! Elementary Toolkit*, particularly the activity *Everyday Inclusion: Tips for Teaching More Inclusively*, provides tips for creating a more inclusive learning environment. <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN%20Ready%20Set%20Respect.pdf>

Common Student Questions and Suggested Answers

Why do we have to learn about this?

A: We learn about all the other things our bodies do- why wouldn't we learn about this? Puberty is an important period of change, and it's important to know what is happening to your body and what changes to expect.

A. Hormones are special chemicals your body makes to help it do certain things. During puberty, the body starts making more of certain hormones, like testosterone, estrogen, and progesterone. These hormones trigger the changes a body makes as a person matures from a child into an adult.

What are hormones and why do we have them?

Is it normal to masturbate?

A. Masturbation is massaging or rubbing the genitals. Many people do this because it feels good. It is a private activity, not a public one. In some families it is believed to be okay and in others, it is believed that you should not do it. You can decide for yourself what it means for you, but know that there are no negative health effects of masturbation.

A. Mood swings are very normal, and they can intensify during puberty because of all the changes that are going on in your body and brain. The hormones that are telling your body how to change are also causing changes in your brain, and can lead to lots of ups and downs in the way you feel. Finding activities or hobbies that you enjoy or finding a quiet place to relax when you're feeling moody can help. If someone finds they are always moody and feeling angry, anxious, or sad it is important to talk to someone for support. Remember that mood swings happen to most people.

I can sometimes be very moody. Is this normal?

ACTIVITY A: GETTING STARTED

i. Warm-up activity

Have your students participate in one of the warm-up activities below, or choose one of your own.

Say, *Today we are talking about puberty.*

During puberty most people's bodies change and grow faster than at any other time in life; except when they are a baby.

During this time, you will also have more responsibilities and learn many new things about yourself and your relationships with family and friends.

Before we get into the specifics of puberty, we're going to start with a fun activity.

Warm-up activity, Option 1

Do you? Have you? Are you?

Designate areas of the room where students can stand or gather as you read the following statements. Make adjustments according to your classroom space and number of students.

Say, *I am going to read a statement. If you can answer with a yes, I will ask you to go to one side of the room; if you are answering no, you will go to the other side of the room.*

Select and read aloud several statements from the list provided; add or change as needed for your group of students. Move through the statements quickly.

Do you....

- ...like to sleep late on weekends?
- ...have more than one pet?
- ...hope to be famous one day?
- ...have rules in your house about using electronic devices?
- ...like to tease your friends or family members?
- ...have curly hair?
- ...have a favorite place to go when you want to be alone?



Educator Note

Starting with a warm-up activity (or icebreaker) sets the stage and helps students feel more comfortable with each other before launching into the curriculum contents.

Students may have different expectations about what will be discussed in puberty class. The warm-up is an opportunity to promote the concept that it is normal for students to have both similarities and differences and that each person develops in different ways, pace, and time frame.

Are you...

- ...someone who cries at sad movies?
- ...taller than most of your classmates?
- ...on a team (could be sports or other team)?
- ...someone who likes to sing?
- ...an artist?
- ...mostly left-handed?

Have you...

- ...ever had a secret you didn't want to share?
- ...talked with someone about the changes your body is going through?

When finished, have students sit down. Ask the following processing questions.

- *How did it feel when you were in a group with a number of your friends?*
- *What was it like when you were by yourself or with just a few others?*
- *Did anyone wish that they could change places once they had chosen a place to stand? Did you wish you could move to be with your friends or with a bigger group of people?*

Explain to the class that the statements you read may have seemed silly or unimportant. Ask them to think about what it would feel like to not be able to be with your group of friends just because they didn't have a pet or curly hair.

Finish by saying,

Sometimes when you are going through puberty, you may feel left out. It's important to remember that everyone goes through the changes of puberty at different times. We should avoid situations where we cause someone to feel hurt, left out or alone. We need to be understanding of other people's feelings and value our differences.

Warm-up activity, Option 2

Circle Up

This activity sets the stage for students to express how they feel about the changes of puberty. Have students sit or stand in a circle. It is important for everyone to feel comfortable and know they have a right to pass if they don't want to answer. Or if they need a bit more time, they can ask that you come back to them later. You can also use a talking stick or other tool to represent that only one person has the right to speak at a time, and all others should listen and wait their turn.

Start the activity by asking:

What is something you look forward to about growing up?

After everyone has had a chance to answer, ask:

What scares (or worries) you about growing up?

Complete the activity by asking students to share:

Who can you talk to about these changes or feelings?

Tell students:

This can be both an exciting and awkward time, but learning together about the common changes that most people experience can help to make it less worrisome and more comfortable.

ii. Setting classroom agreements

Say,

Before we begin our puberty lessons, it is important for us to have classroom agreements that will help us learn new information and feel safe to ask questions and share ideas.

Start with a prepared list of items you think are important for your classroom. Before presenting the list, ask students to brainstorm what they think should be included. Add or adapt your list with their ideas. For each classroom agreement, ask students to explain what it means to them to make sure the class has a common understanding of how to behave and interact with one another.

Below are a common set of agreements you may want to include as you guide students in creating classroom agreements.



Educator Note

If your class has already established a set of behavior expectations or classroom rules, it may be helpful to review or add to these so that they relate directly to discussions about puberty. It is important to create a safe tone and space; this can ease any anxiety that your students may feel as they begin learning about puberty. Having students provide input in setting these guidelines, in their own words, gives them ownership and commitment to the classroom expectations.

Agreement	Explanation
Respect others	Each person is different. Our bodies are different; our families are different; our opinions and ideas are different. It's important to listen to others and respect those differences. Think before making a comment and listen to what other people say.
Questions are welcome and okay	If you have a question, probably others in the class do too. You can ask questions by raising your hand in class. Or if you feel shy asking a question out loud, you can write it down and put it in a question box and I will answer it at a later time.
No personal questions and stories	This means not asking personal questions of a classmate or me. If you have a question or story that you want to share, you can say "someone I know."
Laughing is good, except when it gets in the way of moving forward	Some of the information may be about things we don't usually talk about in class. It's very common to laugh or think something is funny when we are feeling awkward or embarrassed. However, it is not okay to laugh at someone, embarrass someone or stop others from learning.
You have the right to pass	If you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about an activity or a question, you can say "pass." But know that we want to hear from everyone, so be sure to participate when you can, because your ideas and opinions are important.
Don't gossip	It's not fair to talk about or share what other students have said in class to other kids in school. While you are old enough to talk about this information, it may not be appropriate for you to share this with the younger kids at school. We do want you to talk about what you have learned with your parents and other trusted adults.
Use the correct or scientific terms for body parts	Not everyone knows the correct names for all body parts and what they do. In class, you will be learning the correct/scientific names. When asking questions, try to use these terms.

iii. Introduce the anonymous question box

Let students know that questions may come up as they are learning together about puberty. While they are welcome to ask questions out loud, sometimes it feels safer to write down a question privately without including a name. You will provide an opportunity in each puberty lesson for them to write down anonymous questions.



Find a box or container to collect anonymous questions. Place the box in a common area that is not in front of everyone. Hand out note cards in advance or at the end of each unit, whichever method works best for your classroom space. As you move through each activity, remind them about the note cards as a place to write down a question if something comes up as they are learning.

ACTIVITY B: PUBERTY CHANGES MATCH-UP

i. Brainstorm: What have you heard about puberty?

Say,

Tell me some things that you've heard about puberty.

Ask students to share while writing their responses on a newsprint or white board. You may need to prompt students if they are quiet. Possible prompts:

- *Can you name some of the changes that commonly happen during puberty?*
- *What changes have you seen in friends or family members who have gone through puberty?*

Acknowledge students' responses, then say:

Puberty is a time when many changes happen to most people. During puberty a person's body starts changing and growing from a child into an adult. These changes can take place over several years and each person has their own unique time line. Let's talk about some of the changes that most people will experience.

Use the **physical**, **emotional** and **social** cards at the end of this unit, or write them on the white board. You can also have a column that says **idk** or **unsure**.

Explain that the changes experienced during puberty include:

physical changes. *Can someone tell me what physical means?* (changes that happen to a person's body);

emotional changes. *What do you think emotional means?* (changes in the way someone thinks and feels); and

social changes. *What do we mean by social?* (changes in a person's relationships with family and friends).



Educator Note

During puberty, many students may feel uncomfortable with the changes their bodies are going through. This may be especially true if their gender doesn't match the sex of their body. For this reason, we have separated the changes by physical, emotional and social rather than changes experienced by boys vs. girls.

Since many physical changes are specific to male or female bodies, try saying "most boys" or "most girls" to be inclusive of all identities along the gender spectrum.

ii. Put students into small groups or pairs

Pass out a few cards with physical, emotional and social changes evenly among the small groups. Have students spend a few minutes discussing the changes written on their cards and deciding what changes fit under physical, emotional or social.

You can also have them put the change under idk (I don't know) or unsure if they can't decide. Encourage them to guess if they don't know. We're all learning together and it's okay if they don't know the answers yet.



Educator Note

- The purpose of this activity is to provide an introduction to the changes of puberty. Other changes are discussed in more detail in the other units.
- Students may not understand all the terms they see and it may be helpful to write some of these unfamiliar words on the board.

Physical	Emotional	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breasts develop• Start growing hair in pubic area and under arms• Genitals start to grow and change• Grow taller• Acne (pimples) may start to appear• Sweat more and have body odor• Muscles develop• Voice changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sudden mood changes• More concerned about appearance• More aware of what others might think• Have a crush or attraction• Feel more stress or anxiety• Want to try new activities• Start to wonder "who am I?" or "what do I like to do?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Argue more with siblings• Take on more responsibility at school and at home• Disagree more with your parents or guardians• Want to fit in with friends• Have to do more school work• Hang out with different people• Question the rules at school or home• Want more freedom to make decisions

Walk around to see how the conversations are going. If students are having difficulty, give them clues. For instance:

Does the change on their card relate specifically to their body (physical)?

Does it relate to how someone might think or feel (emotional)?

Does it include other people (social)?

Encourage them to guess if they don't know, or if they're really stuck, they can put their change under unsure/I don't know (idk).

iii. Process the activity

Once the groups are finished placing their cards under each category, go through each list. Ask students if they think any of the cards should be changed to another heading. See the Educator's Guide at the end of this unit for an explanation of the changes of puberty if additional information is needed.

Ask:

1. Was that activity easier or more difficult than you thought it would be?
2. Did anything surprise you or did you know most of those changes already?
3. What changes do you think are (or will be) the most difficult?

Say,

While almost everyone experiences these changes during puberty, they aren't happening at the same pace. That can make puberty awkward at times. Remember that the changes you experience are what's right for you and your body. Our next activity will give us a chance to think about the challenges of puberty and ways to handle them.

Supplemental Activity: Video

The following page includes links to several videos available online that introduce the changes of puberty.



Videos currently available for this age group present puberty changes as they differ between boys and girls which is not inclusive of transgender youth. For this reason, we recommend teaching students together, rather than separating them by gender so that all students receive the same information and no one feels excluded.



Tips for using puberty videos:

- Some educators use videos as an introduction to the topic or to reinforce learning that has already taken place in the classroom.
- These recommended videos include age and developmentally appropriate content for older elementary students; however, it's important to review any video before you show it in class to determine if it is a good fit for your students.
- Viewing videos in advance allows you to identify key concepts or information you think may need further explanation for your students.
- A video should not be the only source of information your students receive. Small group and classroom discussions, interactive games and activities, and making time to respond to student questions and clarify misinformation, are more effective methods of learning that students can apply to their own lives.
- Stop the video at certain points to engage with students by answering questions or initiating dialog about information you wish to highlight.

Recommended puberty videos

Amaze.org includes short videos on sexual health topics for ages 10-14. New videos are posted on a regular basis. There is a section on the website specific to puberty with several videos appropriate for use with this curriculum.

<http://amaze.org/>

The Subject is Puberty (15 minutes) This links to a free, comprehensive Safer Sex version of the video. A version that does not include safer sex information is available for purchase from ETR (Education Training and Research) <http://pub.etr.org/>. For younger audiences, the version on Vimeo can be stopped before the last section on safer sex.

<https://vimeo.com/28063382>

Am I Normal? (Girls and Puberty) (2 minutes)

<http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/puberty-normal-video.html>

What Boys Want to Know about Puberty (4 minutes)

<http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/boys-puberty.html?WT.ac=k-woar>

Always Changing and Growing Up/Co-Ed Version, 2016 (26 minutes) by Procter & Gamble

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKfJ8w7XX6E>

ACTIVITY C: DEAR PUBERTY

Introduce the activity by saying:

Now that you understand some common changes that most people experience during puberty, we are going to help some pretend kids your age handle the challenges that might come up during this time. Pretend you work for an online advice column, answering questions from people who write in about the changes of puberty.

Divide students into small groups of 2-3 (or if continuing from Activity B, you can keep them in the same groupings). Students can first work alone, then share their responses with each other, or they can read the scenario together and work on responses as a group. Allowing students time to work individually gives each person time to reflect on their own responses and can avoid a situation in which one person dominates and does all the work of the group.

Say: *You will each be given one Dear Puberty question. When you read the question you are going to do two things:*

- 1. Discuss the person's dilemma with your team and come up with a group answer to help the person understand what they are going through.*
- 2. Suggest places or people they can go to for help in handling the situation they are experiencing.*

Pass out *Dear Puberty* scenarios to each group and give them 5 minutes to read the question and provide an answer. Have a member of each group share their question and response. Invite other students to add to the responses if they have other suggestions. Use the *Dear Puberty Teacher Key* with prompts. Make sure students identify a helpful adult who can help with each situation.

ACTIVITY D: INTRODUCE THE ANONYMOUS QUESTION BOX

Say,

Now we've covered some of the changes most people will experience with puberty. As we continue to talk about these changes, you will have an opportunity to ask questions anonymously (without others knowing who you are).

Today, we'll start off by having everyone take a piece of paper (or note card). On that paper, please write:

- 1) One thing you learned about puberty*
- 2) One thing you still want to know*
- 3) Someone you can go to if you have questions or concerns*

Make sure each student gets a note card or piece of paper.



Educator Tip

- There are more *Dear Puberty* scenarios than you will likely need. Select those that you think are most relevant for your students, or create others that address specific issues you think need to be addressed among your students.
- If you have limited class time, you can use the *Dear Puberty* scenarios as a review in a subsequent class or at the end of the puberty unit as a way to assess how students apply their learning to real life scenarios.

SUPPLEMENTAL HOME ACTIVITY

The Interview is an optional activity to encourage communication between students and their parents, guardian, or other trusted adult. Students come from all kinds of family structures and backgrounds that may not consist of a two parent household with their biological mother and father. Students may not all have equal opportunities for open discussion with their family members or guardians. In some homes, these discussions may not be safe. In other families, talking about subjects like sexual health or puberty is considered taboo. Although you can encourage students to complete this assignment with a supportive parent or guardian, it may not be possible for everyone. Be sensitive to the needs of your students.

Information shared between students and their trusted adult does not need to be written down, graded or handed in. You may want to have a parent or guardian sign off that the communication took place for extra credit, if that is appropriate for your classroom.

Physical



Emotional



Social



Breasts develop

**Start growing hair
in pubic area and
under arms**

**Genitals start to
grow and change**

Grow taller

**Acne (pimples) may
start to appear**

**Sweat more and
have body odor**

Muscles develop

Voice changes

**Sudden mood
changes**

**More concerned
about appearance**

**More aware of what
others might think**

**Have a crush
or attraction**

Feel more stress
or anxiety

Want to try
new activities

Start to wonder
“who am I? or
“what do I like to do?”

**Argue more
with siblings**

**Take on more
responsibility at
school and at home**

**Disagree more
with your parents
or guardians**

**Want to fit in
with friends**

**Have to do more
school work**

**Hang out with
different people**

**Question the rules
at school or home**

**Want more freedom
to make decisions**

PUBERTY CHANGES MATCH-UP EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



While most students will start puberty changes in 4th-6th grade, some transgender students may use medications as a puberty blocker to delay the development of secondary sex characteristics. For that reason we use the words "most" or "many", rather than "all" when referring to young people who experience the changes of puberty.

Directions: Use this information as a resource to answer student questions and provide information during the Puberty Changes Match-Up activity.

Physical Changes

Breasts develop – Most girls will notice their breasts developing, although everyone is different. This is often one of the first signs of puberty. Many boys experience some breast development too, but it usually disappears within six months to a year. Some girls may begin to wear a bra. Biologically, girls' breasts develop so that someday, if they choose, they can develop milk to feed a baby. It's normal for one breast to be smaller than the other, just like some people have one foot bigger than the other.

Start growing hair in pubic area and underarms – Pubic hair grows around a person's genitals (around the labia or penis). Pubic and underarm hair is often coarser than the hair on the person's head. It is also common for most boys and even some girls to notice some hair on their face as well. The *amount* of hair a person gets on their face and body is genetic (inherited from a person's biological family).

Genitals start to grow and change – Many people, when they first start going through puberty, will notice changes in their genitals, or private parts. This might be more obvious with the penis and scrotum since they are on the outside of the body. The vulva (external genitals including the labia and clitoris) gets bigger during puberty, too.

Grow taller – During puberty, most people experience growth spurts at different rates. Some people start these changes earlier than others. This growing can be very uneven, and how tall a person will become is often part of ones' genetics. The body grows most during sleep, so it's important to get lots of rest! Lack of growth over time can signal certain medical conditions, so if someone is worried, they should talk with their doctor or health care provider.

Acne (pimples) may begin –Acne is when the body produces more oils, along with bacteria. Sometimes the skin blocks the pores or openings where the oils are supposed to flow, causing a pimple. People should wash gently with mild soap twice a day, but washing will not prevent acne altogether. Scrubbing hard can actually make acne worse. People with acne can buy over-the-counter medications or may need to see a doctor in more serious cases.

Sweat more and have body odor –During puberty, sweat glands start to produce sweat more actively, causing the body to have a strong odor. When most people start going through puberty they may need to take a bath or shower more often than when they were younger. If someone is especially active, they also need to wash their clothes more often as the body odor can stay and continue to smell on shirts, underwear and socks. Many people will also use deodorant or antiperspirant to lessen body odor, but you don't need to get too carried away, body odor is common.

Muscles develop – Muscles will develop during puberty due to increases in the hormone called testosterone. Boys produce more testosterone, so they might notice more changes in their muscles and strength. Everyone grows in different ways, but it's important to stay physically active for muscles to continue to grow and be healthy.

Voice changes - The depth of the voice is a matter of air passing through the vocal chords. A person's vocal chords thicken during puberty. On average, boys' vocal chords will get thicker than girls' as they mature. Sometimes when this happens, the voice will sound like it's cracking. This is because the vocal chords don't always thicken evenly.

PUBERTY CHANGES MATCH-UP EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Emotional Changes

Sudden mood changes – Feeling happy one minute and being in tears the next, sometimes for no apparent reason, isn't at all unusual during puberty. Hormones influence how you feel during puberty, and most people will experience hormonal changes as they grow. Remember that these mood changes will happen, so have patience. Find ways to let the strong emotions pass before acting or saying things that might make someone else feel bad.

More concerned about appearance and aware of what others might think– Everybody goes through a time of worrying what other people think of them. It's common to want to spend more time in front of the mirror getting ready for school or picking out what clothes to wear. It's okay. Sometimes people want to look like the people or celebrities they see in the media. What should matter is who you are inside. It's important to remember that many images of people we see in the media are made to look beautiful and don't represent most of the people we see in our lives every day.

Have crushes and attractions– Crushes are the feeling of really liking someone and wanting them to like you too. Some people have crushes during puberty while others may not notice those kinds of feelings until later, or at all. A person may have crushes on people of the same gender, another gender, or both. Attractions to other people are normal and don't necessarily mean someone needs to act on those feelings. When the time seems right to act on a crush or attraction, it's best to communicate openly with the other person.

Feel more stress or anxiety – Added stress or anxiety can come from the changes a person's body is going through. Stress can happen when someone is trying to figure out who they are and what they are feeling, having more responsibility or higher expectations from others, changing friendships, demands at school, or because they want or need to be more independent. These feelings are common, but feeling too much stress or anxiety can be unhealthy. If someone is feeling stress or anxiety, it is a good idea to talk this over with a trusted adult or someone at school, like a teacher, counselor, social worker, or nurse.

Want to try new activities – As the brain develops, people expand their abilities and may discover new interests. It is very common for people to try new things—and there's no better time to discover new interests and try new activities! It's part of growing up and becoming more independent.

Start to wonder “who am I?” and “what do I like to do?” – Along with trying new things, as a person grows older, they learn more in school and from other people in their life. This process opens someone's mind to new ideas and the way they see the world and their place in it. As we grow older we keep learning and growing, so it's okay to ask these questions, even if you don't have the answers yet, or your answers keep changing.

PUBERTY CHANGES MATCH-UP EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Social Changes

Argue more with siblings. If you have older or younger brothers and sisters, sometimes you may find yourself arguing with them over things you didn't used to. This is normal, but try to be patient and find ways to work problems out, if you can. One solution is to ask for help from an adult family member if you are having trouble getting along with siblings and other family members.

Take on more responsibility at school and at home – Whether we want it to or not, getting older means taking on more responsibility. This can sometimes be responsibility you don't want while other responsibilities may make you feel more grown up and proud.

Disagree more with parents or guardians – Even though both you and your parents or guardians may understand that growing up means more responsibility and independence, it's not always easy. Sometimes you may feel like a little kid and want someone to take care of you and other times you want to do things on your own. If you aren't on the same page at the same time, there can be a struggle. That doesn't mean you don't care for each other. Most families get through it eventually.

Want to fit in with friends – It is common for friend groups to change and grow. When people this age try new things or get involved in different activities, some friendships may grow apart while new ones may form. It's normal to want to fit in, but at times someone may feel left out. It's important to understand that these changes are common. Keeping up with friends on social media can also lead to misunderstandings and gossip. Communicating with friends and sharing feelings is key. Talking to a trusted adult can also help you sort out the ins and outs of friendships.

Have to do more school work – Getting older often means having to do more projects and homework! It's all part of growing up. This may mean not having as much time to do the things you would rather do. It's important to get plenty of rest and find a way to balance school work with activities and spending time with friends. A trusted adult can help figure out this balance. If you're struggling with school work, you may be able to get help from an older sibling, a parent or a teacher.

Hang out with different people – As you develop new interests and try new activities, you are likely to make new friends too. It is common to change friend groups during puberty and this can sometimes be challenging. You may have more demands on your time; you and your friends may end up with different schedules so you can't see each other as much. Sometimes it can feel like you are in the middle and don't really fit in to any group or you may feel left out. Most times friendship changes will work out, but it's important to communicate with your friends when these changes happen. Seek help from a trusted adult if you're feeling sad about the changes that are taking place.

Question the rules at school or home – More independence can also mean that the rules you've had to follow in school or at home don't seem to fit anymore with your growing independence. Sometimes you may feel like you're too old for the rules. Remember that rules are made to keep everyone safe. Talk with your parents if you think some of the rules at home may need to change—and show them how you are becoming more responsible. But remember that rules are usually there for a reason and sometimes respecting those rules is a way of showing you are becoming more mature.

Want more freedom to make decisions— As you get older, parents and guardians often trust their kids to make more of their own choices, especially as they take on more responsibilities. Adults may have greater expectations for you as well—both in contributing around the house and being more responsible for your school work and your actions.

Dear Puberty scenarios

Cut each Dear Puberty scenario into strips to hand out to pairs or groups of students.



#1

Dear Puberty,

I am one of the shortest kids in my class. When I was younger, I did a school science project on shrimp. Some kids in my class gave me the nickname, Shrimpy, and it stuck. Now other kids are using that name and it really makes me mad. Why am I so short and how can I get them to stop calling me Shrimpy?!

What advice do you have?

Who might this person go to for help?

#2

Dear Puberty,

I love to swim but lately my breasts have been growing and I feel very self-conscious. My swimsuit is also getting tighter now and I feel like everyone is looking at my breasts.

What advice do you have?

Who might this person go to for help?

Dear Puberty scenarios

Cut each Dear Puberty scenario into strips to hand out to pairs or groups of students.



#3

Dear Puberty,

I was giving a presentation at school and my voice started to crack and squeak! Now I'm embarrassed to talk out loud in class again.

What advice do you have?

Who might this person go to for help?

#4

Dear Puberty,

All of a sudden people plug their noses when I sit next to them after gym class. I don't know what's happening to me—I take a shower twice a week like usual but all of a sudden something has changed.

What advice do you have?

Who might this person go to for help?

Dear Puberty scenarios

Cut each Dear Puberty scenario into strips to hand out to pairs or groups of students.



#5

Dear Puberty,

My family doesn't seem to understand me anymore. I keep getting into arguments with my parents and my little brother annoys me more than ever. I wish I could go live at my friend's house instead!

What advice do you have?

Who might this person go to for help?

#6

Dear Puberty,

I've been feeling left out of the group of friends I've had since I was in kindergarten! They're doing an after school program but I can't do it because I have piano lessons. All of a sudden that's all they want to talk about at lunch and I feel left out.

What advice do you have?

Who might this person go to for help?

Dear Puberty scenarios

Cut each Dear Puberty scenario into strips to hand out to pairs or groups of students.



#7

Dear Puberty,

All of a sudden school projects seem more difficult. I want to keep spending time with my friends but my parents are making me stay home and do homework.

What advice do you have?

Who might this person go to for help?

#8

Dear Puberty,

Of my three best friends, I'm the only one who hasn't gotten my period. Is there something wrong with me?

What advice do you have?

Who might this person go to for help?

Dear Puberty scenarios

Cut each Dear Puberty scenario into strips to hand out to pairs or groups of students.



#9

Dear Puberty,

I keep exercising and eating healthy food, but I am getting more round and not growing taller! The only thing that seems to be growing are my feet and my breasts. And I'm not even a girl so how awkward is that?!

What advice do you have?

Who might this person go to for help?

#10

Dear Puberty,

I'm the tallest kid in class and I'm starting to feel strange- not to mention that all my pants are getting too short and my family doesn't have money to buy me new ones every few months! Everyone says I'm lucky I'm so tall, but I don't feel that way!

What advice do you have?

Who might this person go to for help?

Dear Puberty scenarios

Cut each Dear Puberty scenario into strips to hand out to pairs or groups of students.



#11

Dear Puberty,

My Dad and Mom have told me they want to have the “puberty talk” with me. I have put it off, but don’t think I can do it much longer. What should I do? How awkward!

What advice do you have?

Who might this person go to for help?

#12

Dear Puberty,

One minute I’m working on math problems at my desk, the next minute the bell rings and I realize I have an erection. Since I had to get up to go to lunch, I put my backpack in front of me, but I know other people saw it because they are calling me Mr. Bump! I’m so embarrassed! What should I do?

What advice do you have?

Who might this person go to for help?

Dear Puberty scenarios – Educator Key

#1

Dear Puberty,

I am one of the shortest kids in my class. When I was younger, I did a school science project on shrimp. Some kids in my class gave me the nickname, Shrimpy, and it stuck. Now other kids are using that name and it really makes me mad. Why am I so short and how can I get them to stop calling me Shrimpy?!

What advice do you have?

- *People grow in different ways and at different times. It can be tough if other kids are growing faster than you. Remember that your body will grow in its ways at its own time.*
- *We can't control our genes (the traits we inherit from our parents). Knowing this doesn't always make it easier when you are being made fun of; it can still hurt.*
- *Remember that how your body looks is just one part of who you are- your interests, personality, talents are all other parts of you that are special and unique.*

Who might this person go to for help?

- *It is important to talk with a trusted adult- a parent, guardian, teacher or guidance counselor. Name calling can be a form of bullying and should not be tolerated. Your friends may not mean to make you feel bad, so it's important to let them or your teachers know this is how Shrimpy makes you feel.*

#2

Dear Puberty,

I love to swim but lately my breasts have been growing and I feel very self-conscious. My swimsuit is also getting tighter now and I feel like everyone is looking at my breasts.

What advice do you have?

- *As your body changes, it is common to feel self-conscious and feel that everyone is looking at you.*
- *Breasts grow just like many other parts of your body, to eventually become your adult body.*

Who might this person go to for help?

- *Talk to a parent or guardian about getting clothes that fit your growing body and allow you to feel comfortable.*
- *If you think attention is being directed to you because of these changes, you should tell a trusted adult.*

Dear Puberty scenarios – Educator Key

#3

Dear Puberty,

I was giving a presentation at school and my voice started to crack and squeak! Now I'm embarrassed to talk out loud in class again.

What advice do you have?

- *During puberty our voices are changing to become our adult voices, and because of this process they can make annoying sounds. Try to remember it happens to most people at some point.*
- *When you talk in class, you could say "my voice may make some weird noises, but what I have to say is important-so deal with it." When you own what is going to happen, it sometimes takes the power away from the people that might make fun of you.*
- *Also, you can also point out that it's not right to make fun of others and or make them feel uncomfortable.*

Who might this person go to for help?

- *Talk with your teacher about the situation and tell them how you feel.*

#4

Dear Puberty,

All of a sudden people plug their noses when I sit next to them after gym class. I don't know what's happening to me—I take a shower twice a week like usual but all of a sudden something has changed.

What advice do you have?

- *During puberty our sweat glands kick it up into high gear. It is a way for our body to cool itself down. Because of this, we may need to shower more often than we used to and start to use deodorant.*
- *Sometimes we can't always smell our own body odor, so we may need to be on a regular shower schedule. Basic soap and water can take away the smell.*
- *It's not nice to make someone feel bad about themselves. If you have a friend that has this problem, talk to them when others aren't around.*

Who might this person go to for help?

- *Talk to a parent or the school nurse and they will help you. Maybe they have some deodorant or a change of clothes at school.*

Dear Puberty scenarios – Educator Key

#5

Dear Puberty,

My family doesn't seem to understand me anymore. I keep getting into arguments with my parents and my little brother annoys me more than ever. I wish I could go live at my friend's house instead!

What advice do you have?

- *During this time, it is common to think that parents and other family members don't understand you. You are changing in many ways. These changes are new for not only you, but for your parents, siblings and other family members too.*
- *As you grow older, siblings may also feel sad as you spend more time with friends rather than with them. Help them to know you care about them and will spend time with them, too.*
- *Know that it is very possible that the same thing is happening at your friend's house. Change is difficult, but talking it through with someone you trust can make a big difference.*

Who might this person go to for help?

- *Talk with your parents or siblings about what you are feeling and plan a way to have more conversations than arguments.*

#6

Dear Puberty,

I've been feeling left out of the group of friends I've had since I was in kindergarten! They're doing an after school program but I can't do it because I have piano lessons. All of a sudden that's all they want to talk about at lunch and I feel left out.

What advice do you have?

- *It is common for friends to start having different interests. In fact, it's healthy to be involved in activities outside of school, even if it's different from what your friends are doing.*
- *Show an interest in what they are doing and share with them what you are doing. This way you all get to share.*
- *Help plan other times when you can all do something together.*

Who might this person go to for help?

- *Let your friends know that you are feeling left out when all they talk about is the after school program and you're not involved.*
- *Talk to your parents if you think that you are doing too many activities and you want to have time to spend with friends too.*

Dear Puberty scenarios – Educator Key

#7

Dear Puberty,

All of a sudden school projects seem more difficult. I want to keep spending time with my friends but my parents are making me stay home and do homework.

What advice do you have?

- *Not only is your body growing and changing, but your brain is too! What might have come easy to you in the past may now be more challenging. Because of the changes, it may be difficult to focus and stay on task with homework.*
- *In addition, teachers and other adults may start to ask more of you as you get older. This is a normal part of growing up, but it can be challenging at times.*

Who might this person go to for help?

- *If you are feeling that your school work is becoming more difficult, talk with your teachers about extra help or suggestions they may have to assist you.*
- *It is important to find a balance with family, friends and school work. Talk with your parents and let them know how you are feeling.*

#8

Dear Puberty,

Of my three best friends, I'm the only one who hasn't gotten my period. Is there something wrong with me?

What advice do you have?

- *First, there is nothing wrong with you. The changes that happen during puberty occur at different times for different people.*
- *There is a large range for when people begin to menstruate. Some people begin menstruating as early as 10 years old, while others don't start until their late teens.*

Who might this person go to for help?

- *If you are concerned/worried talk with your parent, other adults, the school nurse or your doctor.*

Dear Puberty scenarios – Educator Key

#9

Dear Puberty,

I keep exercising and eating healthy food, but I am getting more round and not growing taller! The only thing that seems to be growing are my feet and my breasts. And I'm not even a girl so how awkward is that?!

What advice do you have?

- *Going through puberty causes many changes to your body. Even though you are doing all the right things, it may take more time for different parts of your body to catch up with each another.*
- *It is common during puberty for bodies to grow out before they grow up!*
- *It's also common for breasts and feet to grow, no matter what your gender is.*

Who might this person go to for help?

- *Talk with your parents, other adults or the school nurse if you are concerned.*

#10

Dear Puberty,

I'm the tallest kid in class and I'm starting to feel strange- not to mention that all my pants are getting too short and my family doesn't have money to buy me new ones every few months! Everyone says I'm lucky I'm so tall, but I don't feel that way!

What advice do you have?

- *Feeling that your body doesn't fit you anymore can feel very strange and uncomfortable. Everyone grows at different times. You may be the tallest person in your class now, but in a few months that could change.*
- *Clothes not fitting can be a big deal. This is a time when hand-me-downs come in handy! You may have an older sibling, cousin, or neighbor who may be able to help, or a second hand store (like Goodwill) where clothes are less expensive.*

Who might this person go to for help?

- *Talk to your parents or other adults about how you are feeling and ask if they can help you find some clothes that fit you better.*
- *Talk with your teacher or guidance counselor about what is happening. They may have some solutions to help you. Some schools have a clothing exchange for just this reason.*

Dear Puberty scenarios – Educator Key

#11

Dear Puberty,

My Dad and Mom have told me they want to have the “puberty talk” with me. I have put it off, but don’t think I can do it much longer. What should I do? How awkward!

What advice do you have?

- *Your parents want to help you understand what is happening to you as you grow and change. They want to be there for you as you have questions, concerns or just want to talk.*
- *Think about a time or place that would help you feel more comfortable in talking and share this with them. Sometimes riding in the car or sharing a walk are times that ease the discomfort of the “talk.”*

Who might this person go to for help?

- *You can let your parents know how you are feeling and they may share with you that they are feeling awkward as well. This helps everyone start at the same place.*

#12

Dear Puberty,

One minute I’m working on math problems at my desk, the next minute the bell rings and I realize I have an erection. Since I had to get up to go to lunch, I put my backpack in front of me, but I know other people saw it because they are calling me Mr. Bump! I’m so embarrassed! What should I do?

What advice do you have?

- *Try to remember that this is common and can happen to anyone with a penis.*
- *It can feel really embarrassing when our bodies do things we can’t control. Lots of people experience erections, and there’s nothing wrong or shameful about them.*
- *Other students might be looking for attention to hide their own discomfort, so the more you can ignore the negative attention, the faster everyone will forget about it.*

Who might this person go to for help?

- *There are a few ways to handle it. Tell those that are calling you a name that you want them to stop. You can also ignore it or laugh it off and say they are lucky something embarrassing hasn’t happened to them - yet!*
- *Talk with your teacher or guidance counselor for their help in handling the situation.*

SUPPLEMENTAL HOME ACTIVITY

The Interview



Puberty is an exciting and sometimes confusing time. It helps to have a parent, an older sibling or an adult you trust to talk to about your questions or concerns. They have gone through puberty and so can share their experiences. Sometimes when you know how others experienced something, it helps prepare you for what's ahead and how to handle it.

Instructions: Interview a parent or trusted adult. Don't write down the answers—you don't have to turn this in.

What was popular in clothing and music when you were my age?

What did you like most when you were my age? What did you like least?

Who was someone you could talk to when you had problem or concern?

What do you want me to know about growing up?

Who was your best friend and what did you like about them?

How old were you when you started going through puberty?

Optional: Signature of parent or trusted adult that a conversation happened:
