

# PUBERTY: CHANGES IN ME

## Lesson 1

DIFFERING  
ABILITIES

### LEARNER OUTCOME

Describe physical, emotional and social changes that occur during puberty; e.g. menstruation, secondary sexual characteristics, changing identity and moods. <sup>1</sup>



#### MATERIALS:

1. Life Stages Photos
2. Pictorial Puberty Changes Cards
3. Pictorial Puberty Changes Answer Key



#### INTRODUCTION:

As children enter puberty they can experience feelings ranging from excitement to dread. We can help students deal with these feelings by helping them to identify the changes that occur and the tools they have to cope with these changes. This lesson helps students establish a comfort level with the topic as they begin to identify puberty changes. Students will identify puberty as a life-stage and how the changes they are experiencing will affect them.



Between the ages of 8-16 puberty changes begin. Generally these changes end around the age of 18-20 years old.<sup>2</sup> Most children will go through puberty within this standard range unless they are experiencing a physical condition or are using medications for their condition that influence their sexual development e.g., early onset puberty due to medications.<sup>3</sup>



## APPROACHES/STRATEGIES:

### A. GROUND RULES

- Ensure that ground rules are established before starting this lesson. For classes that have already established ground rules, quickly reviewing them can promote a successful lesson.
- You should be prepared for giggles in your class. Try to acknowledge students' reactions to the subject by saying that puberty and body parts can be difficult to talk about and it's ok to feel a bit uncomfortable.



Sexual health education occurs most effectively in a classroom where there is a mutual feeling of trust, safety and comfort. Having Ground Rules in place can be a very successful way to facilitate a positive classroom environment. Click [here](#) for more information on how to set up ground rules.

### B. PUBERTY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Raise your hand if you are a child growing into an adult/grownup? – ensure that students can make the connection that they are growing up and changing.
- Growing up and changing from a child into an adult is called PUBERTY. Puberty means that you may experience changes with your body, your feelings and your relationships.
- Puberty happens to everyone, even if you do not want to change. Your body knows what changes to go through and the changes happen when they are right for you. You can't speed up or slow down puberty; your body clock is set just right for you. Everyone is different.
- Boys and girls go through some changes that are the same and some that are different.

### C. LIFE STAGES PHOTO ACTIVITY

1. Pass the photos around the group and ask students to look at the photos – how old are the people in the photos? Are they girls/women or boys/men?
2. Ask for feedback about each of the photos. Arrange the photos youngest to oldest, in life stages.
3. Ask students to generate ideas about how people's interests, abilities and emotions change through these life stages.

Example: Right now- I am interested in....., I can....., I feel....

When I am 13- I am interested in....., I can...., I feel....

## **Baby-> Child -> Teenager -> Adult -> Senior/Older Adult**

Baby – no one can really remember what it was like to be a baby.

- How big are babies? Ask students to show using their arms – pretend to rock a baby in your arms to show size.
- What do babies do? – cry, eat, smile, laugh, poop, crawl
- Ask students if they have photos at home of when they were a baby.

Child – you are children or have just moved out of the child life stage.

- How big are children? Use your hand to show a height of a child.
- What do children do? – go to school, play, fight with their siblings, do sports
- What did you like about being a child?

Teenager – how old are teenagers?

- Teenagers are 13 – 19 years old and that is why they are called teens – count with the class out loud 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19.
- What do teens like to do? – listen to music, hang out with friends, go shopping, eat, watch TV, play computer games.
- What is the best thing about being a teen?

Adult – who are the adults in your life?

- What do adults do? – work, do chores, look after kids, drive.
- What are you looking forward to about being an adult? - driving, having own place, independence.
- Are all adults married? Are all adults parents?

Senior – who are the seniors in your life?

- What do seniors do? – some work, many are grandparents, some live alone, some live in residential homes.

## **Identify with group that they are pre-teens/teens growing into adults.**

To clarify understanding of gender ask the group:

- Raise your hand if you are a boy growing into a man.
- Raise your hand if you are a girl growing into a woman.

Teens going through puberty will have many changes happen to them.

- Some changes will be physical, body changes e.g., grow taller, grow pubic hair.
- Some changes will be emotional, feelings e.g., mood swings.
- Some changes will be social, relationships e.g., wanting to spend more time with friends rather than family.

Do boys and girls go through puberty at the same age?

- The changes that you experience in puberty can happen to different people at different times, and can begin as early as 8 and continue until 20.
- Girls usually experience puberty earlier than boys.
- Puberty takes several years to complete; there may be times when you grow fast and times when your growth slows down.



Girls usually begin puberty changes between the ages of 8 and 16. For boys this age range is 12-18. The changes are generally complete by the age of 18 for girls and 20 for boys. It is very important that you emphasize to students that everyone is different and there is no correct time for these changes to happen, their bodies will know when the changes should take place.

Students who notice signs of puberty earlier or later than their peers may feel embarrassed and uncomfortable with their changing bodies. This can be a difficult transition for some students, be sure to watch for and address signs of bullying with your students. For more information and support to help stop bullying please visit:

<http://www.education.alberta.ca/teachers/safeschools/bullying-prevention.aspx>

#### **D. BOYS/GIRLS/BOTH – PUBERTY CHANGES ACTIVITY**

This activity provides a fun way to stimulate open discussion about puberty changes. Teachers can select the cards for their group to suit learning needs and level e.g., teachers may want to select only the physical change cards to keep the activity at a more basic level. Emotional and social changes are more difficult concepts to understand especially for students with limited social skills.

1. Print the pictorial puberty changes cards and the headings.
2. Post the following titles on the wall/board in 3 columns – BOYS/GIRLS/BOTH.
3. As a group decide where each randomly picked card should be placed, or distribute the puberty changes cards to students in the group. Students may need prompts by using the pictures on the cards as visual cues or asking students to think about older teens they know who have gone through puberty.
4. Students can work in pairs or alone to place each card under the title which best fits the puberty change described.

5. As a class, review the card placements, and make the necessary changes according to the Puberty Changes answer key. Explain changes that participants do not understand.



Every group of students is different and will present different strengths and challenges. Feel free to adapt the cards and activity to suit your student needs e.g., you may want to use some photos to help students understand the puberty changes.



It is important to acknowledge that some people have reproductive systems that aren't exactly like what is talked about in the lesson. For more information on gender diversity, see the [Sexual & Gender Diversity](#) pages at [teachingsexualhealth.ca](http://teachingsexualhealth.ca) or the booklet [Gender Identity in Schools](#).

## E. COPING WITH PUBERTY DISCUSSION – BUILDING RESILIENCE

- Growing up and changing can be exciting and scary at the same time.
- Ask students what they are looking forward to about puberty. Some examples may include getting taller and stronger, having more independence, wearing make-up.
- Ask students what they are least looking forward to about puberty. Some examples may include acne, pubic hair, having more chores around the house. Assure students that these fears are normal and there are things they can do to cope with the changes – we will learn more about hygiene and taking care of the body in another session.
- How can teens look after themselves to help puberty go more smoothly?
  - During puberty appetite may increase as growth speeds up. It is easy to reach for foods that are quick but not healthy. Eat a healthy balanced diet – take some time to ask students about healthy foods versus “sometimes” foods. Get students to give examples of healthy snacks in particular.

- Make exercise and activity a part of every day. Ask students what they like to do to stay physically active.
- Teens need lots of sleep and may not get enough as they stay up later yet have to get up early for school. Emphasise the importance of switching off technology e.g., computers, phones, to give the brain some time to get ready for sleep.
- Drink healthy fluids including water, milk and fruit juice. Limit pop and sports drinks.
- Talk about problems and concerns about growing up. Stress the importance of finding a trusted adult to talk to. Ask students to give examples of people in their lives who they can talk through things that are bothering them. Some may say their parents but they may also include teachers and school staff.



Strategies for healthy development during puberty are strategies for healthy living. Teachers can integrate healthy eating into the school day by talking about nutrition when doing cooking activities or working with students and families to encourage healthy snack and lunch choices for school. School health nurses can be a valuable resource to teachers to assist with nutrition. Physical education of any sort can be used as examples of how to stay active and can set habits that students can continue outside of the classroom.

For more information on building a healthy school community visit:

<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/csh.asp>



## QUESTION BOX

Have students fill out questions and address them next class.

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The process of asking questions is an important learning activity that helps students clarify and validate information being presented. Question Box is a method of individualized instruction which has been proven to enhance learning. Click [here](#) for more information on how to use the question box.

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## SELF REFLECTION

During the lesson, were:

- Ground rules being followed?
- Good practices established regarding group work and discussion?

What will you change for future classes with this group?

What will you change for future use of this lesson?

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## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

During the lesson, did students:

### Knowledge:

- Identify various changes that occur during puberty?
- Categorize changes into those that happen to boys, girls or both?
- Describe ways to cope with physical and emotional changes?
- Identify who they can go to or where they can go to talk about puberty changes?

### Skills:

- Demonstrate appropriate listening and speaking skills during class discussion?

### Attitudes:

- Accept that change is a part of puberty?
- Anticipate the changes that will occur during puberty?
- Acknowledge that changes happen to everyone?

<sup>1</sup> Alberta Education. (2002). *Health and life skills guide to implementation: Kindergarten to grade 9*. Retrieved from <http://education.alberta.ca/media/352993/pos.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Alberta Health. (2000). *Growing Up Ok!*. Retrieved from <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/growing-up-ok.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Public Health Agency of Canada. (2013). *Questions and Answers: Sexual Health Education for Youth with Physical Disabilities*. Retrieved from [http://library.catie.ca/pdf/ATI-20000s/26289\\_B\\_ENG.pdf](http://library.catie.ca/pdf/ATI-20000s/26289_B_ENG.pdf)

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# Girls

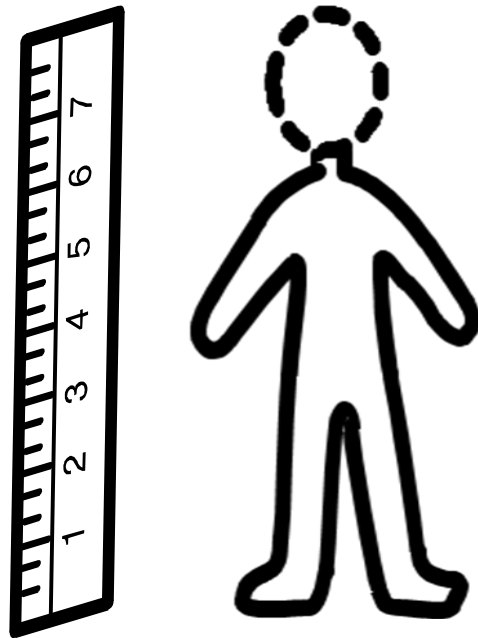
# Boys

# Both

(boys and  
girls)



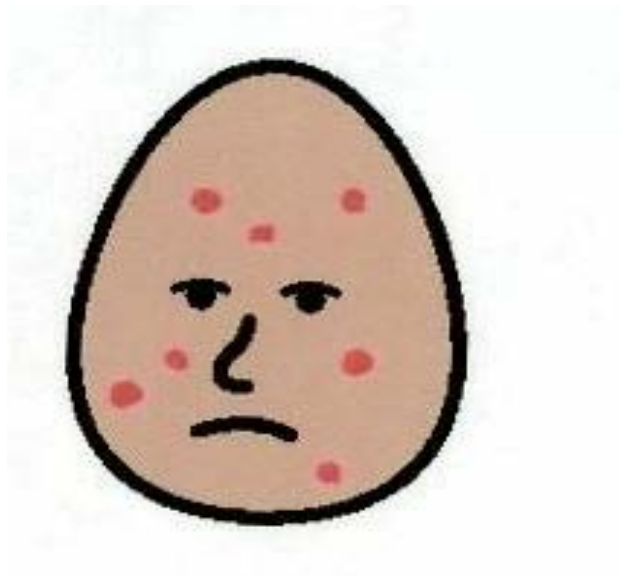
# Grow taller



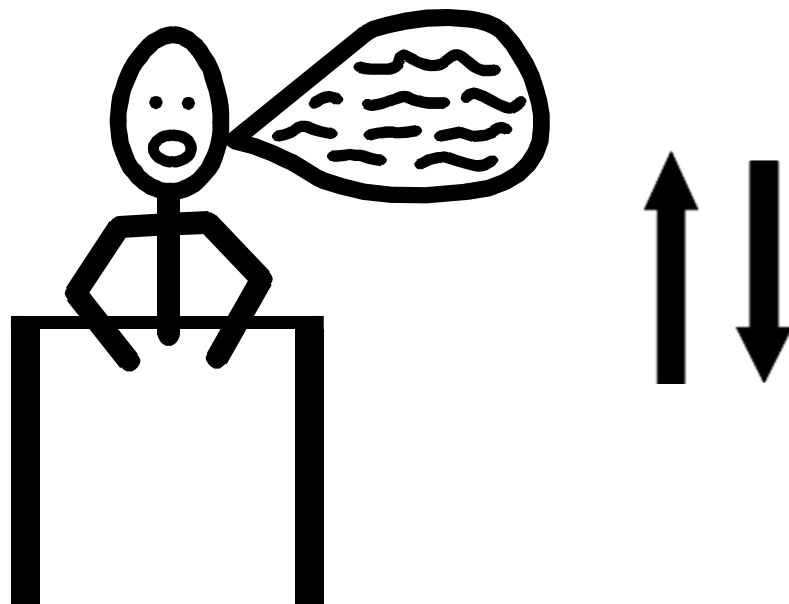
# Skin gets oily



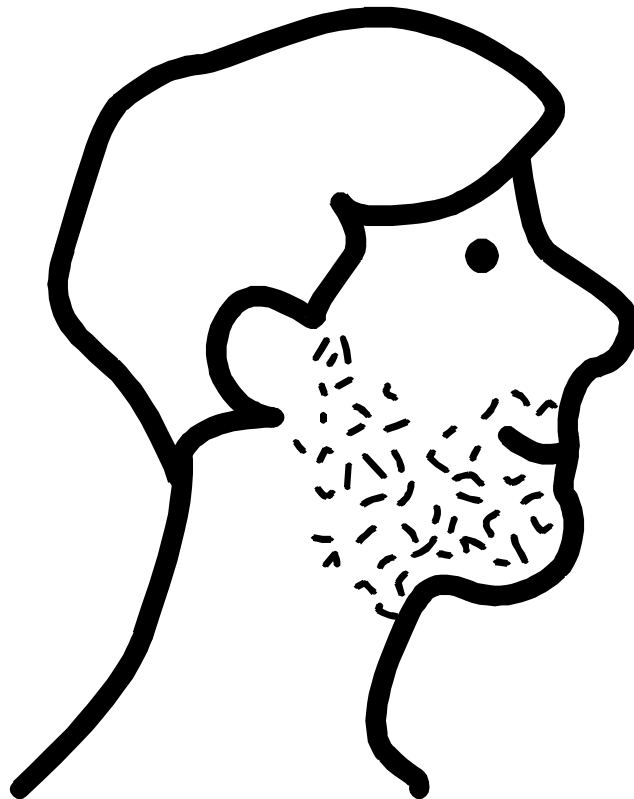
# Acne (pimples)



# Voice changes



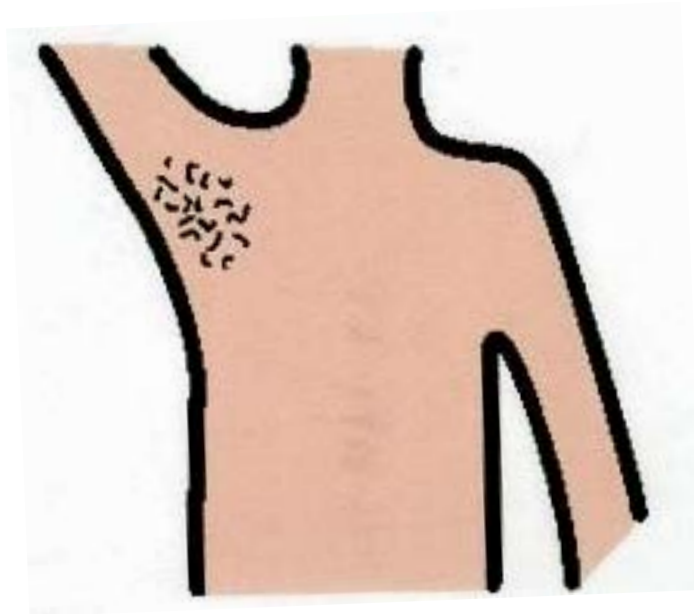
# Hair grows on face



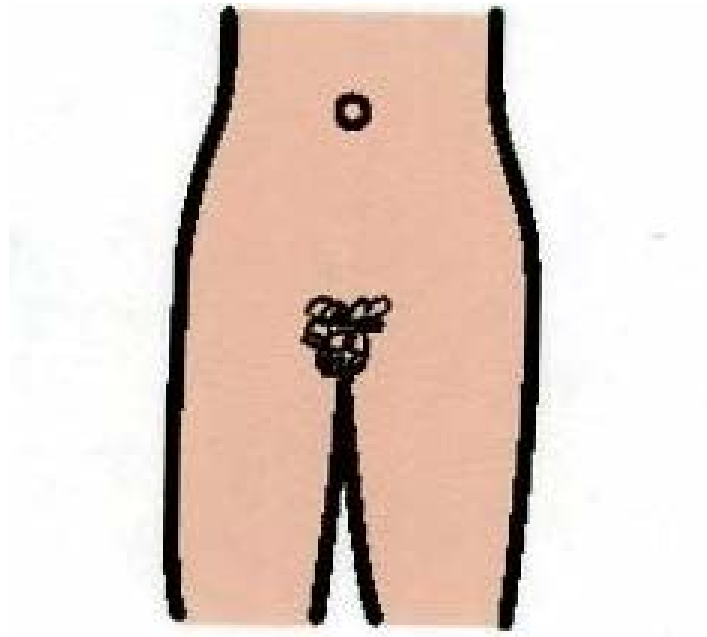
# Hair gets oily



# Hair grows in underarms



# Hair grows on genitals (pubic hair)

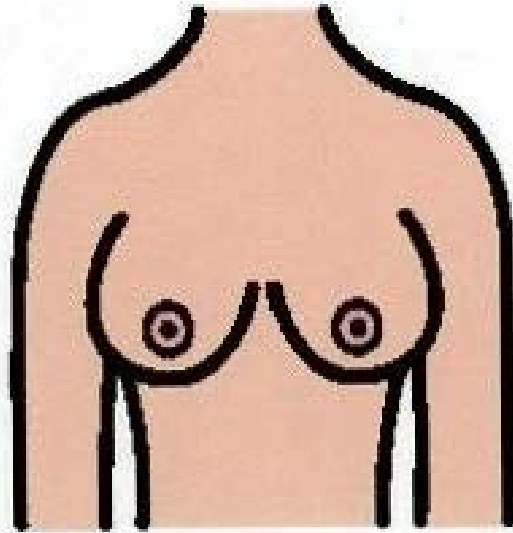




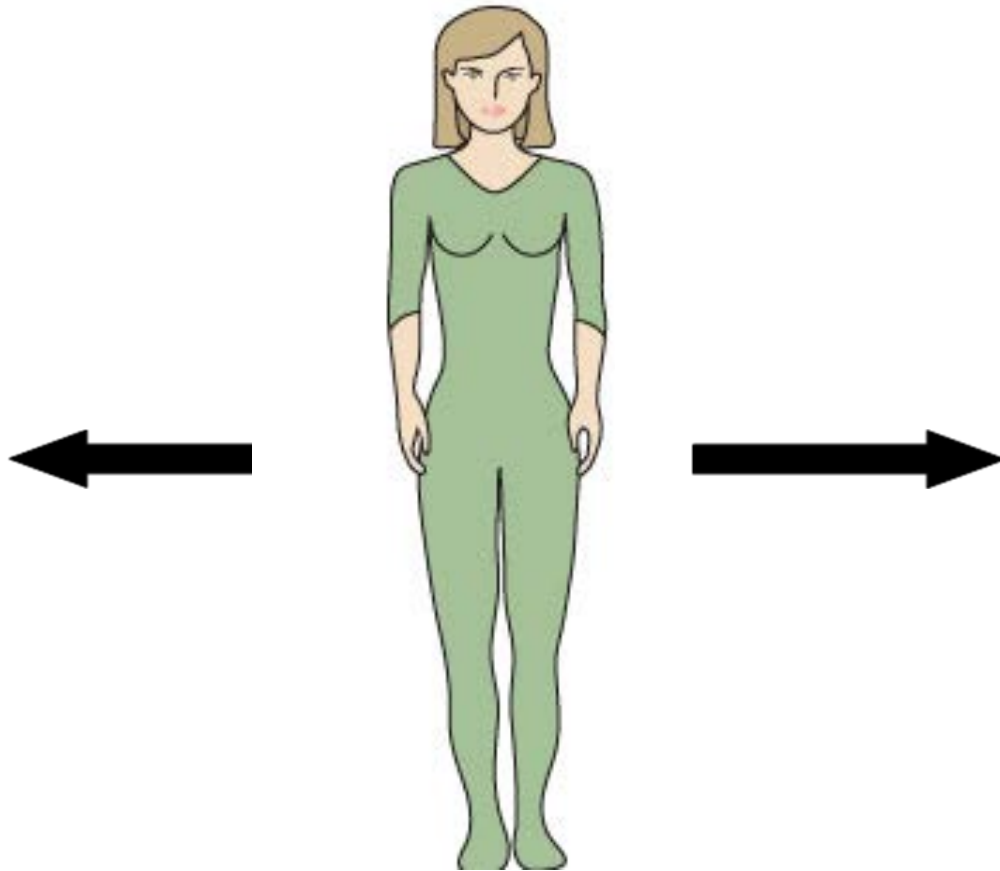
# Sweat glands develop



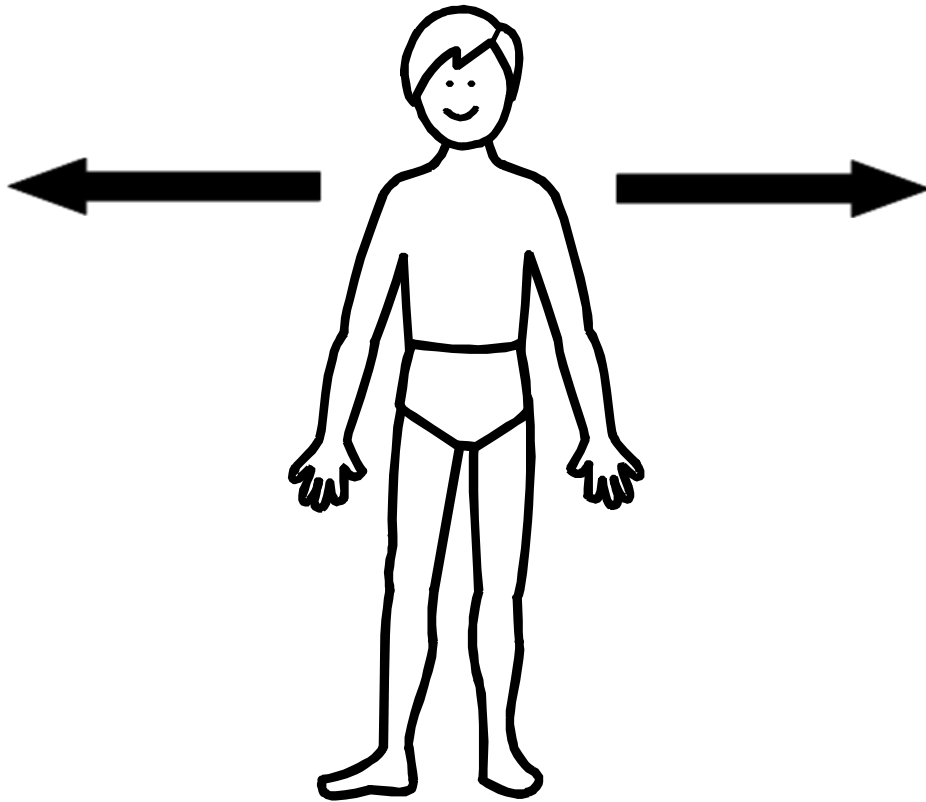
# Breasts develop



# Hips get bigger



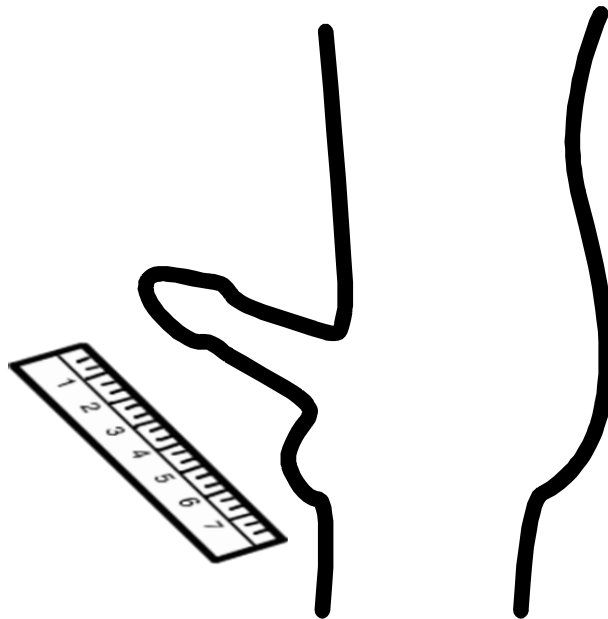
# Shoulders get wider



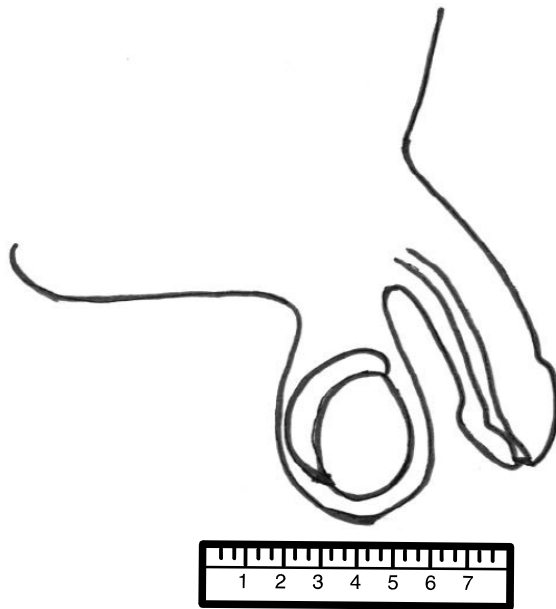
# Start producing sperm



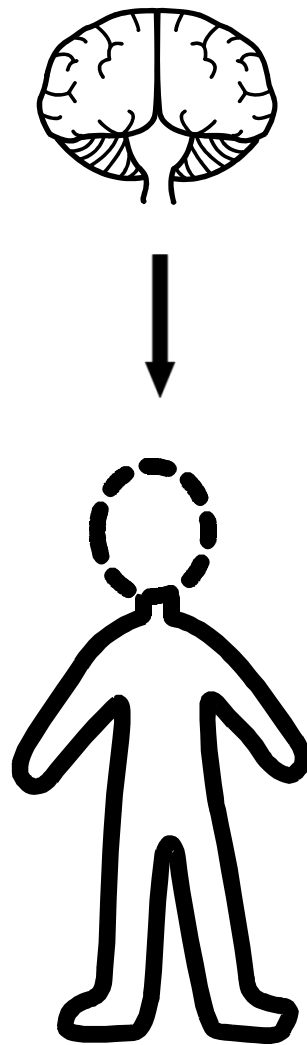
# Penis grows bigger



# Testicles get bigger

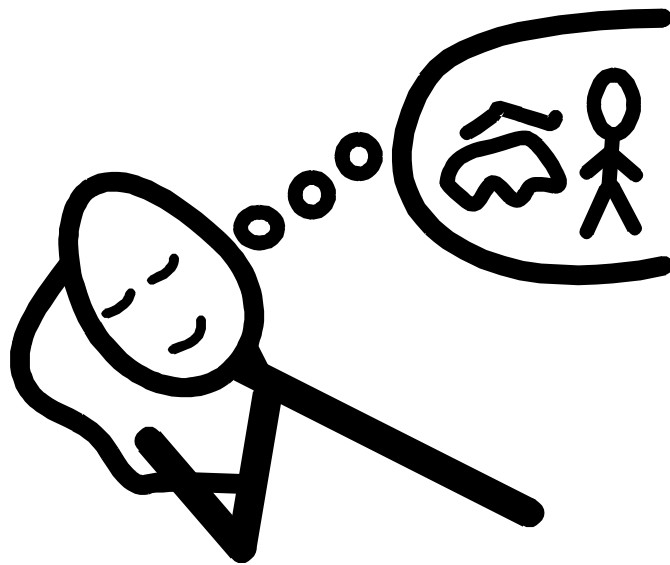


# Body starts producing sex hormones

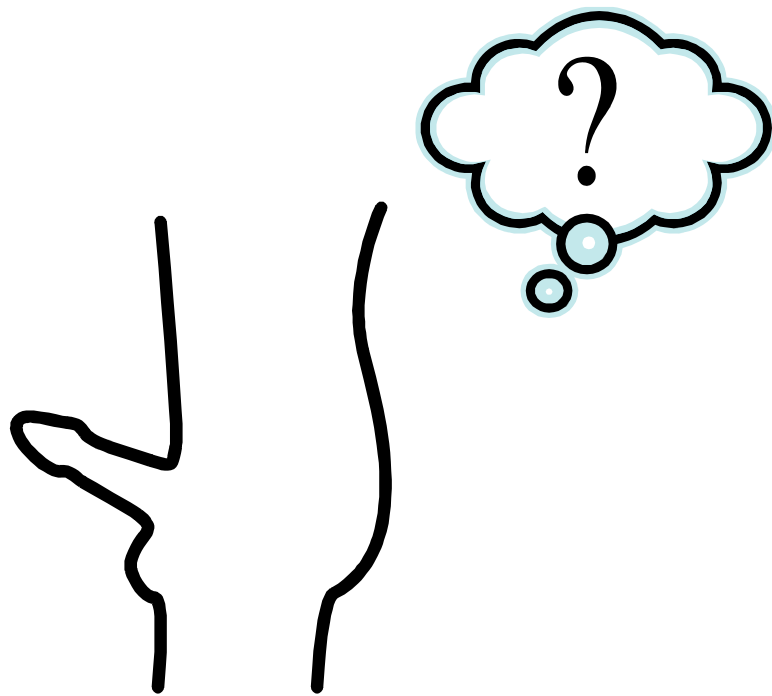




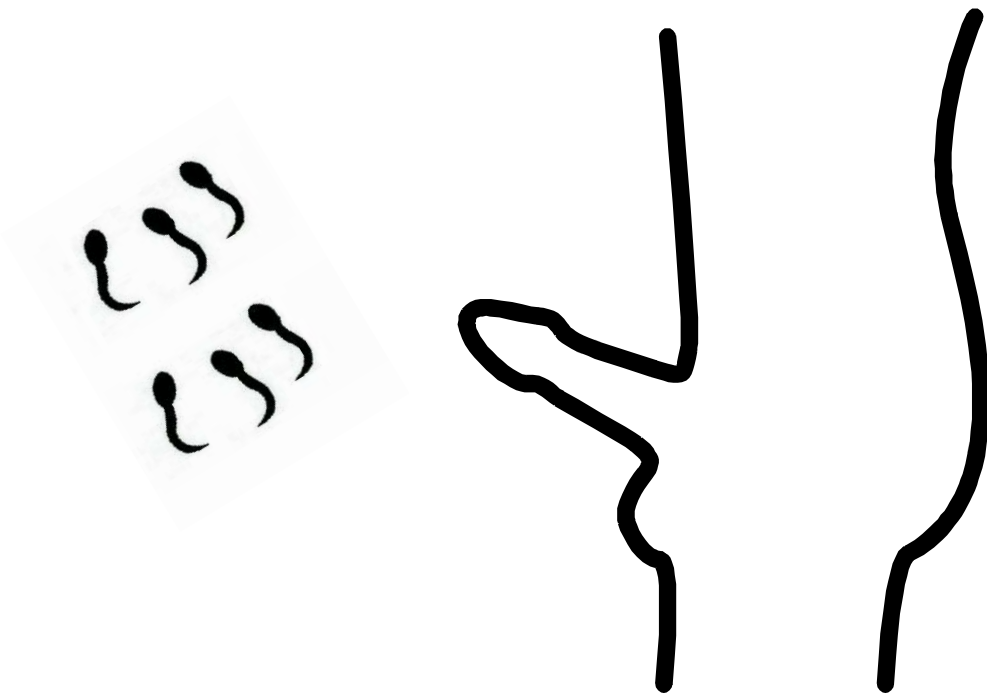
# Wet dreams



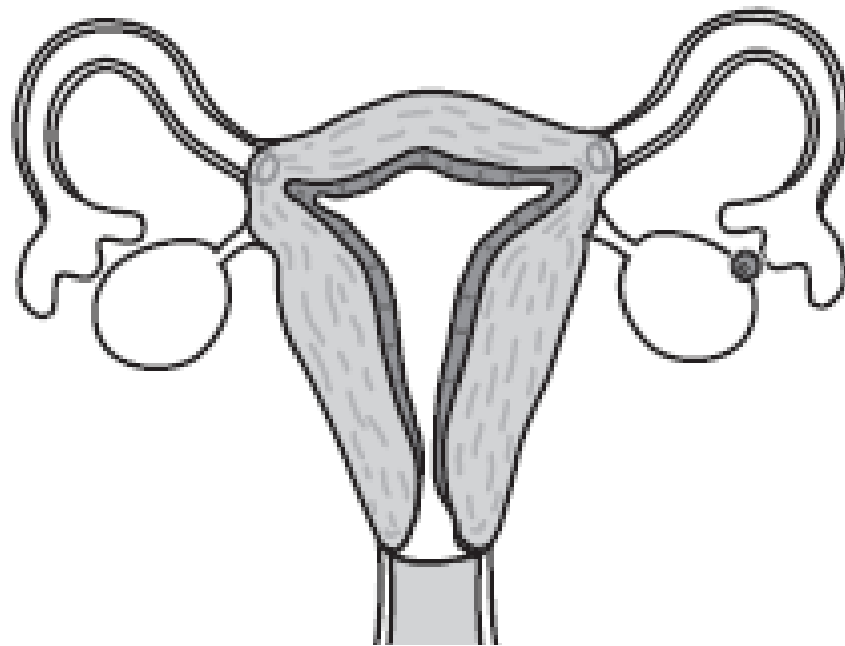
# Erections happen out of the blue



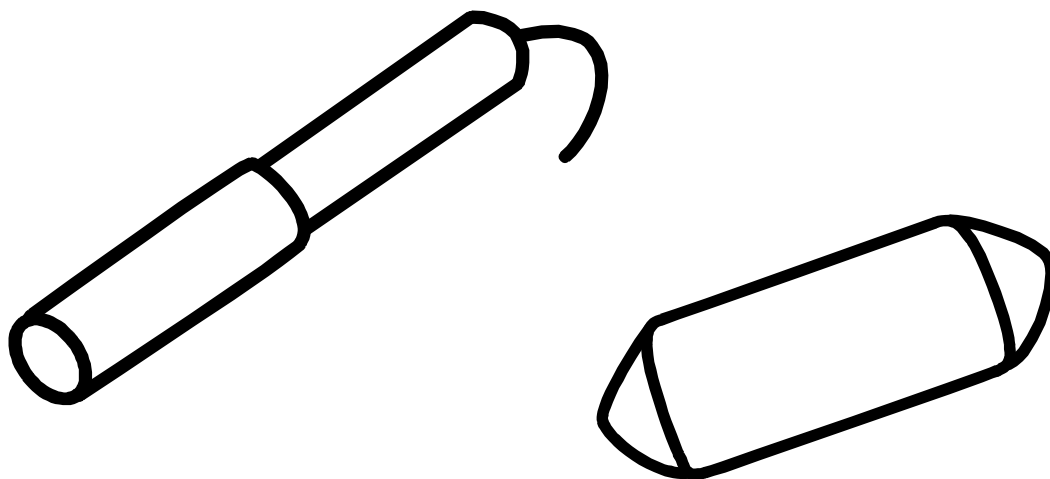
# Sperm can be released through penis (ejaculation)



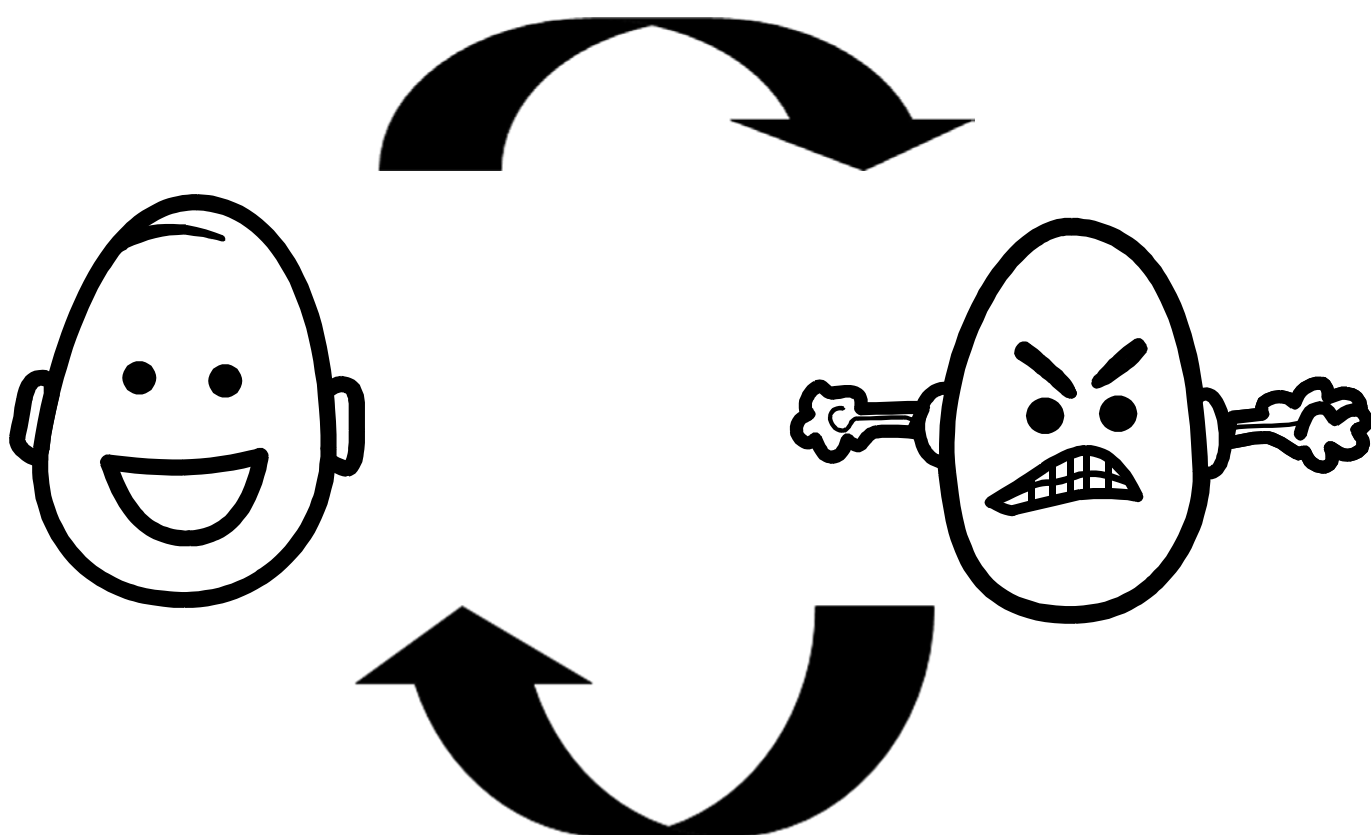
# Start releasing eggs (ovulation)



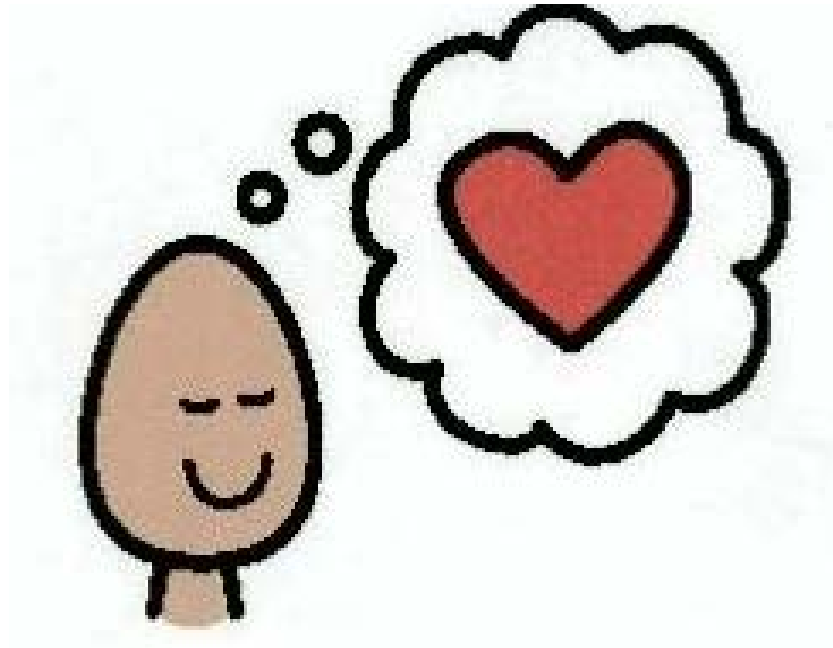
# Periods (menstruation)



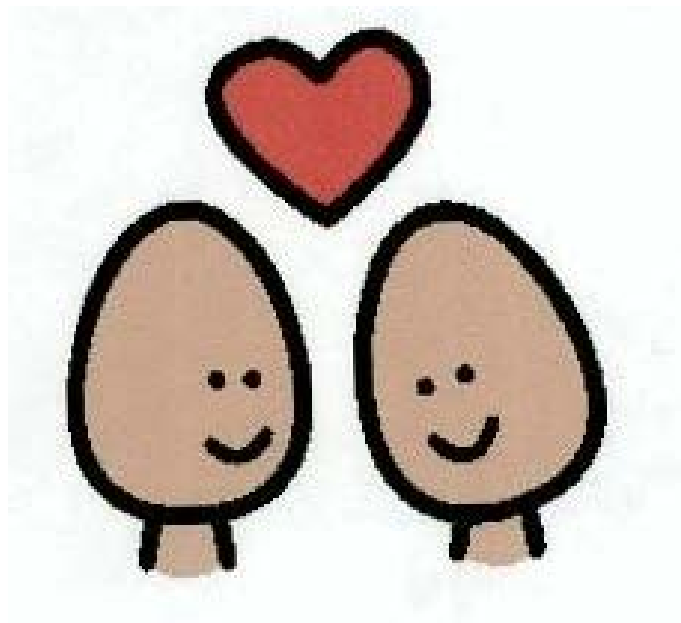
# Mood swings



# Start having sexual thoughts

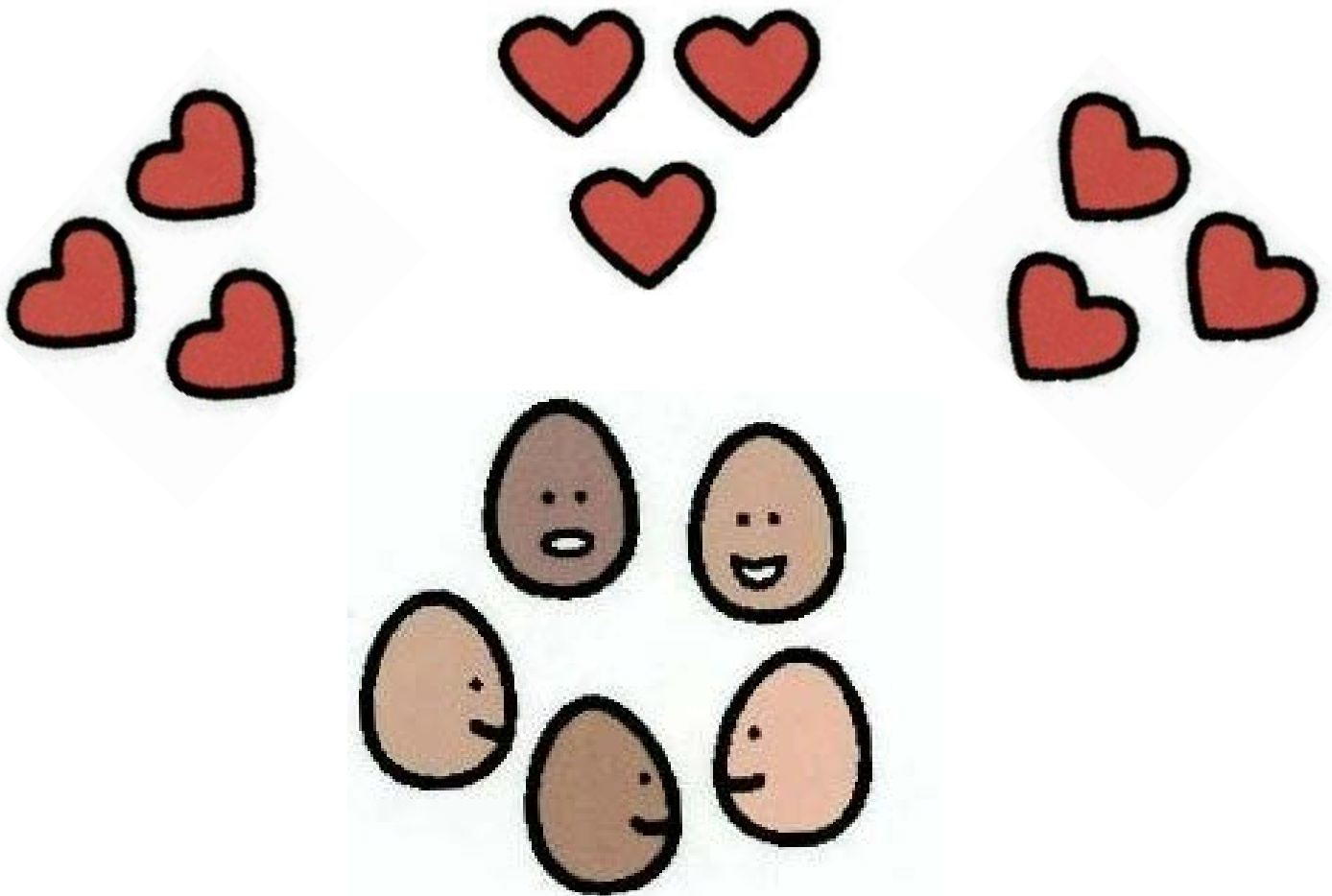


# Start having sexual feelings

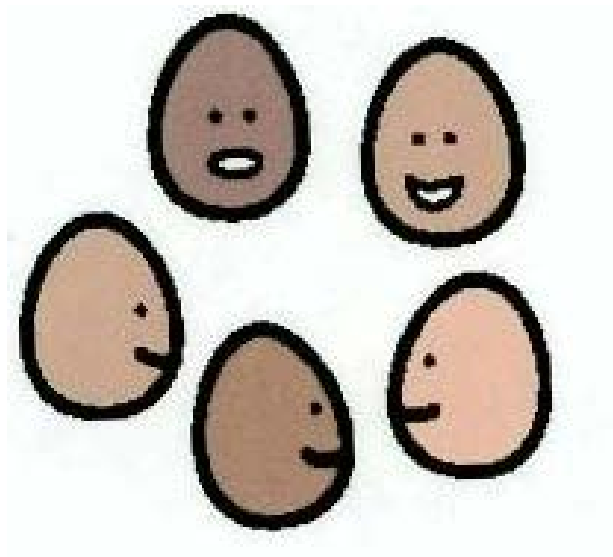




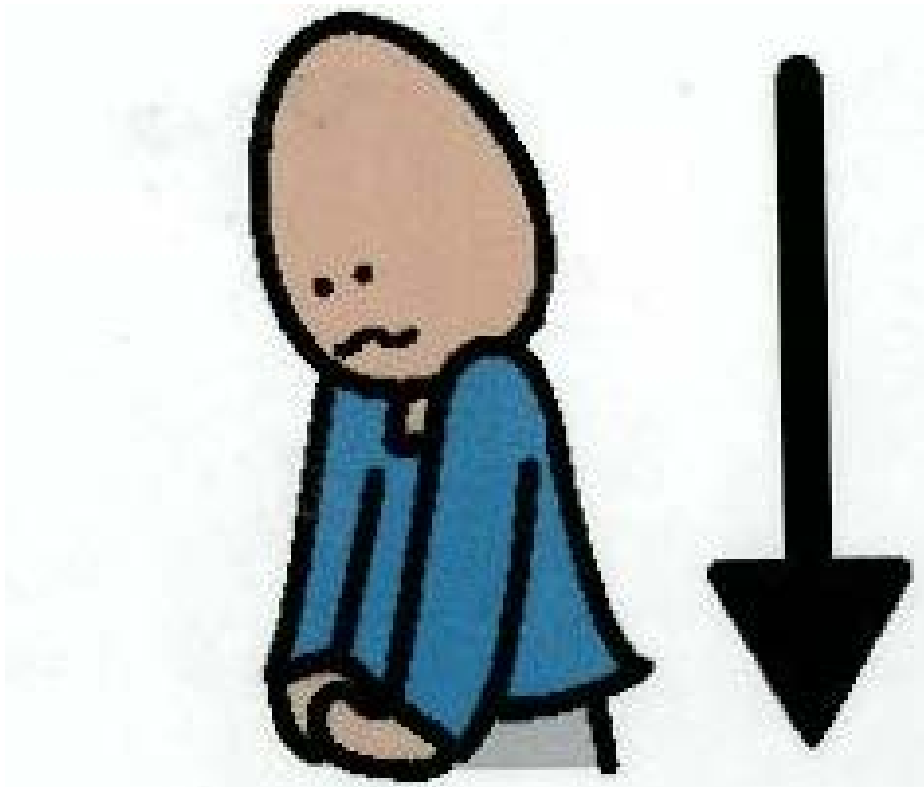
# Can become interested in having a boyfriend or girlfriend



# Friendship becomes more important



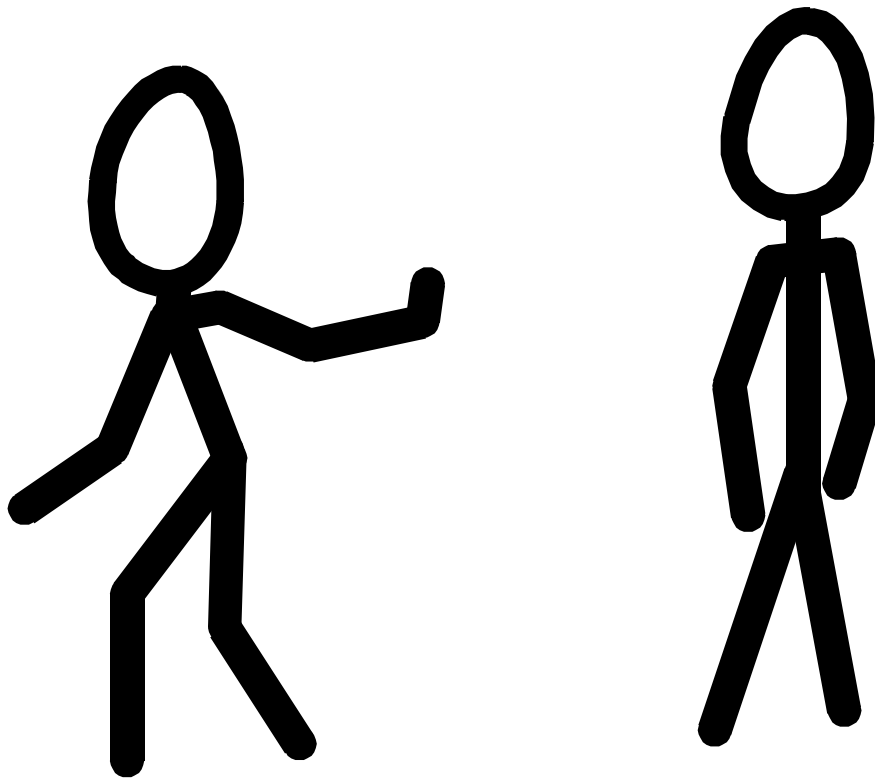
# Sometimes feel lonely and confused



# Stronger feelings of wanting to be liked and “fit in”



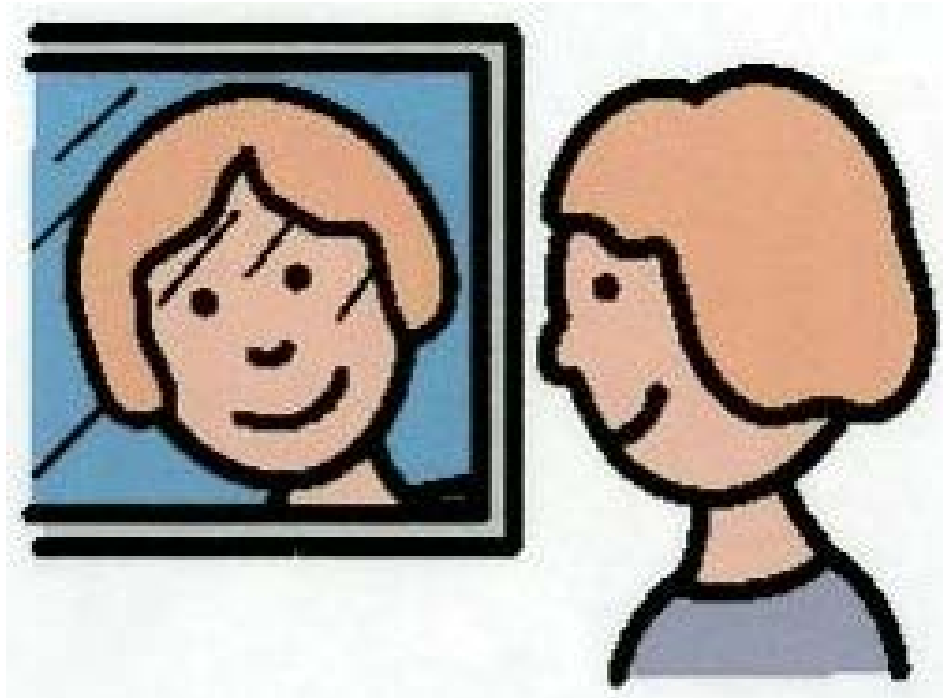
# Want more independence



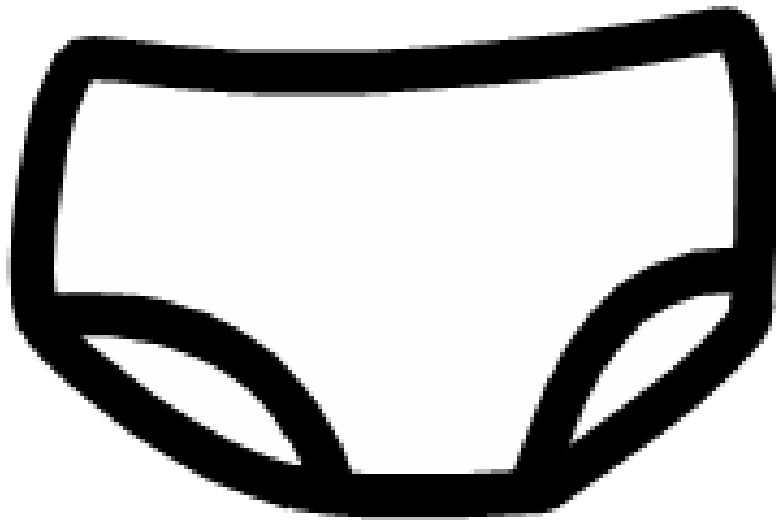
# Thinking about the future



# Concerned about looks



# Start producing vaginal discharge





## Puberty Changes Answer Key

### Girls

- Breasts develop
- Hips get bigger
- Start releasing eggs (ovulation)
- Periods (menstruation)
- Start producing vaginal discharge

### Boys

- Hair grows on face
- Shoulders get wider
- Start producing sperm
- Penis grows bigger
- Testicles get bigger
- Wet dreams
- Erections happen out of the blue
- Sperm can be released through penis (ejaculation)

### Both

- Grow taller
- Skin gets oily
- Acne (pimples)
- Voice changes
- Hair gets oily
- Hair grows in underarm
- Hair grows on genitals (pubic hair)
- Sweat glands develop
- Body starts producing sex hormones
- Mood swings
- Start having sexual thoughts
- Start having sexual feelings
- Can become interested in having a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Friendship becomes more important
- Sometimes feel lonely and confused
- Stronger feelings of wanting to be liked and “fit in”
- Want more independence
- Thinking about the future
- Concerned about looks