

Lesson 2:

Puberty



Learner Outcomes

Students will:

- Identify life stages with a focus on being a teenager
- Define puberty and the changes that people go through
- Discuss basic skills for coping with puberty changes

These outcomes are related to the Alberta curriculum sexuality outcomes and **require parental notification**.

This lesson is related to the Physical Education and Wellness Learning Outcome
Grade 4: Students explain how development and puberty are connected.

How To Use

Teachers and staff know their students best: before teaching this lesson, consider the individual goals of each student. The overall aim is for students to be healthy and safe while having the best personal and social experiences possible. Avoid assuming that a student doesn't need or want this information.

All the Differing Abilities (DA) lesson plans can be adapted to the needs of individual students and groups. The lessons are scripted, meaning there are answers and explanations for every question asked. The questions, answers and discussion points are prepared for you using plain and simple language at a level best suited to students with DA.

Text in italics is the script designed to be read directly to students. Possible answers to questions, activity instructions and other teacher information, are not in italics.

Classroom Activities

- A. Group agreements and Check-in
- B. Puberty is Growing Up
- C. Life Stages

- D. Body, Feelings and Relationships Changes
- E. Coping Skills for Puberty
- F. Question Box
- G. Closure

Required Materials

Puberty photos

Puberty activity cards

Background Information for Teachers

The [goal of sexuality education](#) is to support students to:

- build knowledge, skills, and attitudes to lead sexually healthy lives.
- explore values consistent with physical, social, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being.
- identify strategies to talk about sexuality and access natural supports (e.g., parents) and community supports (e.g., healthcare providers) as needed.

Language and terms

Talking about anatomy, physiology, and sexual development in terms of people, parts and processes is more accurate and clearer than talking about it in terms of assigned sex (female and male) or gender identity (girl and boy). For example, not everyone who gets periods is a girl, so saying “when someone gets their period” is more accurate than saying “when a girl gets her period.” This also helps make sure that everyone is included in the discussion, including trans, nonbinary and intersex youth.

However, some students may find this language confusing and will benefit from using gendered terms more frequently e.g., “when a girl gets her period, she may choose to use period underwear”. It’s important for students to be clear about what may happen to them and saying people who get periods may be too abstract, resulting in confusion. Terms can be used together when explaining concepts e.g., ““when someone is first starting to get their period, it may be irregular. Not all girls have a regular period at first.”

Students may have questions about their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE). Teachers play an important role in helping students feel seen and affirmed when they come to school so that they feel good about their gender expression and identities. These lessons use inclusive language and acknowledge different identities and relationships to acknowledge all students as they develop their sexuality. Learn more about [gender identity and expression](#).

A. Group agreements and Check-in

Ensure [group agreements](#) (ground rules) are established before beginning this lesson. For classes that have already established group agreements, quickly reviewing them can help ensure a successful lesson.

Start with a check-in activity as appropriate for the group. You may want to answer the question box questions from the last class as part of the check-in.

B. Puberty is Growing Up

Introduce the ideas of puberty and puberty changes by leading this group discussion with your students.

1. *Last time, we talked about bodies, named some private parts, and talked about questions some people have about their bodies. Today, we're going to talk about growing up. This is sometimes called puberty.*
2. *What is puberty?*
Puberty is when someone grows from a child to an adult. It happens to everyone.
3. *Raise your hand if you are growing into an adult.*
4. **Everyone** goes through puberty, even if they don't want to. You will go through puberty when it is right for you; everyone is different. You can't speed it up or slow it down.
5. *How do you feel talking about growing up?*
Excited, scared, embarrassed, nervous, not ready etc.
6. *Everyone feels differently. Learning about the changes will help you as you grow up into a teen and an adult.*

C. Life Stages

Identifying life stages can help students understand how they grow up and what comes next for them. Understanding life stages is a building block to support them to understand the process of puberty.

Consider inviting students to bring photos of themselves and family members at various life stages.

1. Before class, print the **Life Stages Photos**, and consider laminating them. Consider printing several sets so that each small group of students gets a set.
2. Distribute the photos. Students can look at the photos in pairs, small groups or as a class.
3. *Look at the photos. How old you think the people in the photos are? Are they younger or older than you? What do we call people this age?*
4. *Place the photos in the order of life stages:*
baby, child, teen, adult, senior-elder
5. Use the points below to discuss the different life stages. Talk about how roles, activities and feelings change at each stage.

Babies

- *No one can really remember what it was like to be a baby.*
- *Who has photos of themselves as a baby? Look how small you were! You have grown a lot.*
- *What do babies do? How do they show us how they are feeling?*
cry to communicate, eat, poop, need lots of help, maybe learn to crawl/walk and talk.

Children

- *Sometimes, people call them kids.*
- *How old are children? 2 or 3 - 12 years old.*
- *Are you still a child?*
- *What do children do every day?* Play, fight with their siblings maybe, do chores, play sports.
- *Why do they go to school?* To learn and get ready to be an adult.
- *What is fun about being a child?* Playing on the playground, story time, building Lego.

Teenagers

- *How old are teenagers? 13-19. Let's count out loud together: 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19.*
- *Who in our group is a teen? Raise your hand.*
- *What's the best thing about being a teenager?* More freedom than kids, get to try new things.
- *What do teenagers do with their time?* Go to school, listen to music, hang out with friends, play computer games, maybe date.

Adults

- *Who are the adults in your life?*
- *What do adults do with their time?* Work, do chores, drive kids around, look after seniors, exercise, do hobbies.
- *What is the best thing about being an adult?* Job to earn money, learning to drive, independence.

- *Are all adults married? Are all adults parents?*

Seniors/elders

- *What do seniors do?* Some are grandparents, some may work, some may be retired, which means they leave their job and no longer work for a paid job, and some volunteer.
- *Where do seniors live?* At home, with their spouse or alone, with family, or in a facility with other seniors.

D. Body, Feelings and Relationships Changes

There are myths related to gender stereotypes and who is affected by emotional changes more. For example, it's a myth that only girls think more about their appearance and that only boys want more independence. It's important to challenge these gender stereotypes and replace the myths with accurate information such as "different people may experience these changes in different ways".

Students often hear puberty myths from family and friends. This activity facilitates open discussion about hopes, fears and myths, gives accurate information, and may provide reassurance. Select cards to suit learning needs and level. Emotional and social changes may be more difficult concepts to understand, especially for students with limited social skills, so these cards may require more discussion.

Trans and nonbinary youth may need extra support during puberty. Before puberty, children's bodies don't have publicly visible differences based on assigned sex. Puberty changes can make gender expression and self-acceptance more challenging for everyone, especially trans or nonbinary youth. All youth need support accessing the services they need to feel great about, and take care of, their body.

1. Before class, print the **Puberty Changes** headings and picture cards.
2. *When people start to become teenagers, they will start to notice changes:*

Body changes: *What are some of the changes you may have seen happening to your body?* Getting taller, body odour, oily hair and skin, underarm hair, hair on genitals

Feelings changes: *What are emotions?* Feelings and mood
What are some changes that might happen to your feelings?

What are relationship changes? Social or relationship changes: things like spending more time with friends, wanting more independence from family.

3. *Everyone goes through puberty at different speeds, in a way that's right for them. Your friends might be taller than you or have started to develop wider shoulders or breasts before you, and that's okay. It can feel uncomfortable and scary to have body changes that are different to others. Everyone has their own body clock set for them, we can't speed it up or slow it down.*

4. *We are going to look at several different kinds of changes that people go through during puberty, and talk about each one.*
5. Post the headings on the wall/board in 3 columns

Body
Feelings
Relationships

Some students may giggle and 'act out' about the topic, words or images; that's okay. Bring back to the group agreements to encourage respectful interactions.

6. Hand out the puberty changes cards to the class. Decide where each card should be placed as a group, in pairs, or individually.
7. Students may need prompts by using the pictures on the cards as visual cues or asking them to think about older teens they know who have gone through puberty.
8. As a class, review the card placements, and make the necessary changes according to the answer key below. Explain changes that students do not understand.

ANSWERS

Type of Change	Change
Relationships	Friendships become more important Interested in dating Want more independence Looking for new experiences
Feelings	Mood swings Sometimes feel lonely and confused Stronger feelings of wanting to be liked and fit in Think more about looks (hair, clothes, make-up) Start having sexual thoughts Start having sexual feelings Thinking about your identity Thinking about the future
Body	Acne (pimples) Breasts develop* Erections when you don't expect them Sperm released from penis (ejaculation) Grow taller Hair gets oily Hair grows on genitals (pubic hair) Hair grows on underarms Hair grows on face

	<p>Hips get bigger</p> <p>Start having periods (menstruation)</p> <p>Wet dreams</p> <p>Start releasing eggs from the ovaries (ovulation)</p> <p>Penis grows bigger</p> <p>Shoulders get wider</p> <p>Skin gets oily</p> <p>Brain starts sending sex hormones around the body</p> <p>Start making sperm</p> <p>Sweat and body odour</p> <p>Testicles get bigger</p> <p>Start making more vaginal fluid</p> <p>Voice changes</p>
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* Most people experience some breast changes during puberty because of the production of sex hormones. Many of these changes are temporary, such as hard breast buds and tenderness. For females/people with ovaries, breast growth is typically permanent. For males/those with testicles, it is typically temporary.

E. Coping Skills for Puberty

1. *What are you looking forward to most about puberty?*
Getting taller and stronger, more independence, wearing make-up
2. *What are you looking forward to least about puberty?*
Acne, pubic hair, having more chores
Assure that these fears are normal and there are things they can do to help with these changes: we'll learn about hygiene and taking care of one's body next class
3. *Being healthy can help you feel good during puberty. What things help your body be healthy?*

Food: during puberty, youth might get hungrier as they grow. It is easy to reach for foods that are quick and taste/feel good at the time but may not help someone feel good long term. Take some time to talk with students about how food can fuel your body to go about your day with good energy levels, do fun activities etc.

Exercise: regardless of ability, it's important to do something physical every day. Ask students to tell you about activities and exercises they enjoy.

Sleep: students need sleep to help them grow and sometimes teens want to stay up later. Talk about set bedtimes and the importance of switching technology off.

Drink healthy fluids: bodies need good hydration to grow and work properly. Drink water most often. Milk is also a healthy drink. Save pop for sometimes drinks. Sports drinks, energy drinks and other drinks that contain caffeine should be limited or avoided.

4. *What are things that can help your mind and emotions be healthy? For example, how can you feel better when you are sad, over-excited, exhausted, upset, or angry?*

Find ways to deal with your feelings, which could feel like an emotional roller coaster - you may feel happy, excited, or excited one moment and then sad, angry, or frustrated another.

Listen to music, yoga, breathing, walking, sport, art, talking to someone.

5. *Growing up can be hard sometimes. Who can you talk to when you are not feeling good or something is bothering you?*

Parents, teachers, school staff, support worker

F. Question Box

Answer any questions from [question box](#) in the previous lesson. Have students submit any new questions and address them next class.

- Some students may need assistance from staff, either during the class or between classes, to record their questions.
- Hand out paper to each student.
 - Students who don't have a question can write something else on the piece of paper, such as something they learned or just a comment about their day.
 - When everyone writes something down, the people with questions feel safer writing them.
- Use a box or bag to collect the papers.
- Answer the questions during the **next class**. This allows you time to review the questions and prepare responses.

G. Closure

- *We talked about puberty and growing up today - how do you feel after talking about puberty?*
- *Who can you talk to about what we've learned today?*
- *Next class, we will talk about hygiene and how to take care of our bodies as they change.*













Grow taller





Skin gets oily



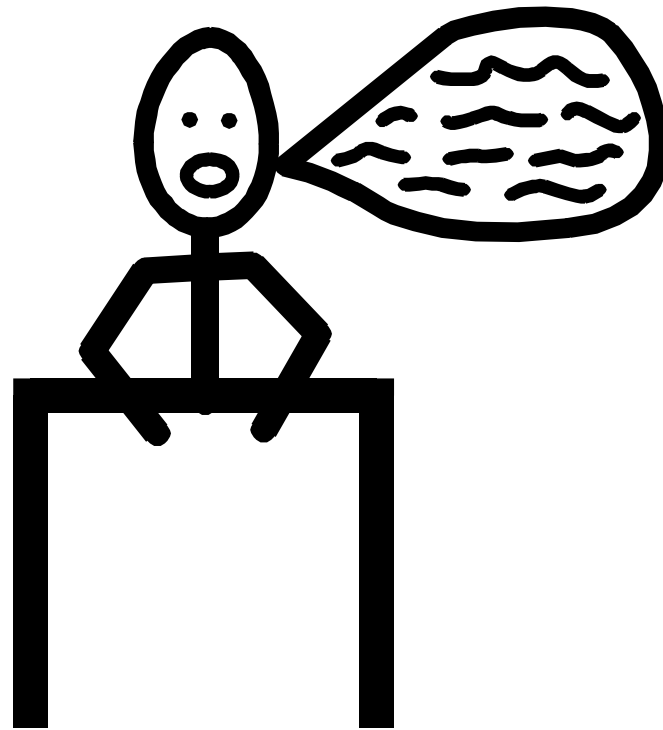
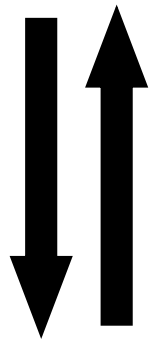


Acne (pimples)





Voice changes





Hair grows on face





Hair gets oily





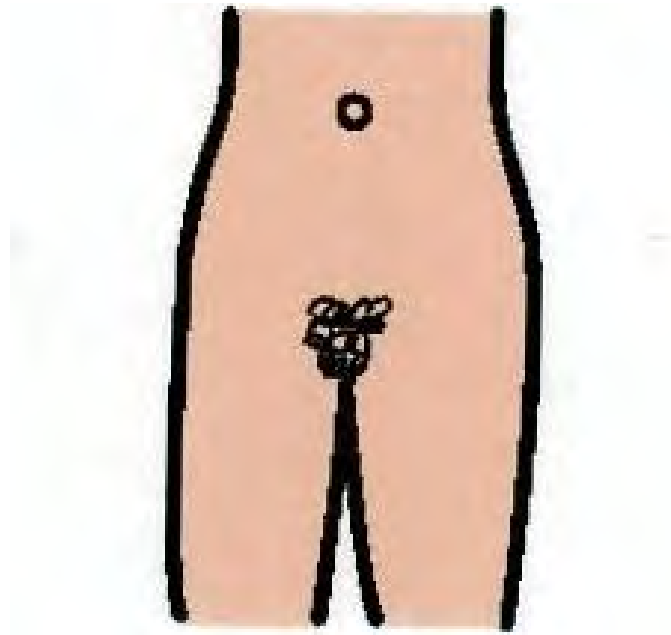
Hair grows on underarms





Hair grows on genitals

(pubic hair)



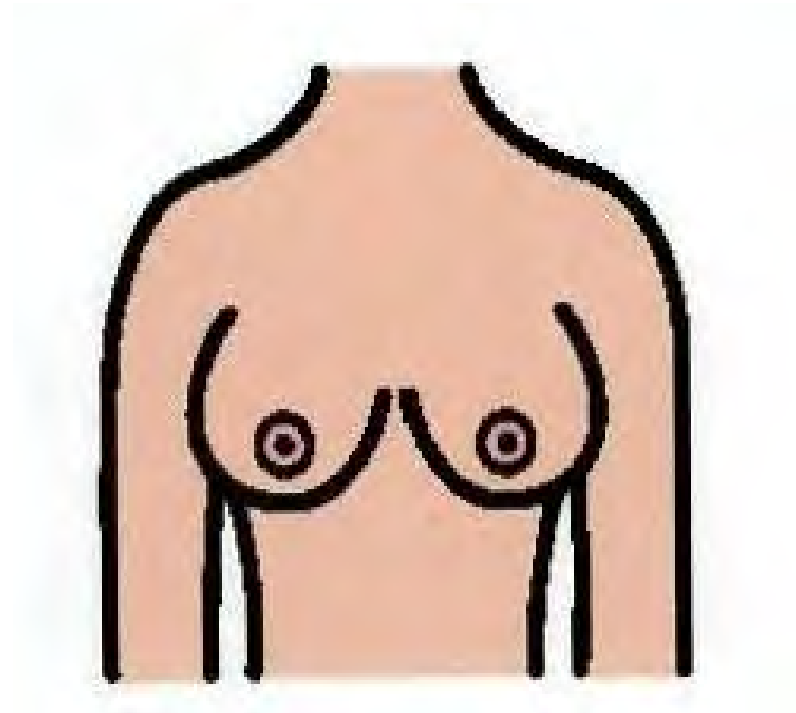


Sweat and body odour



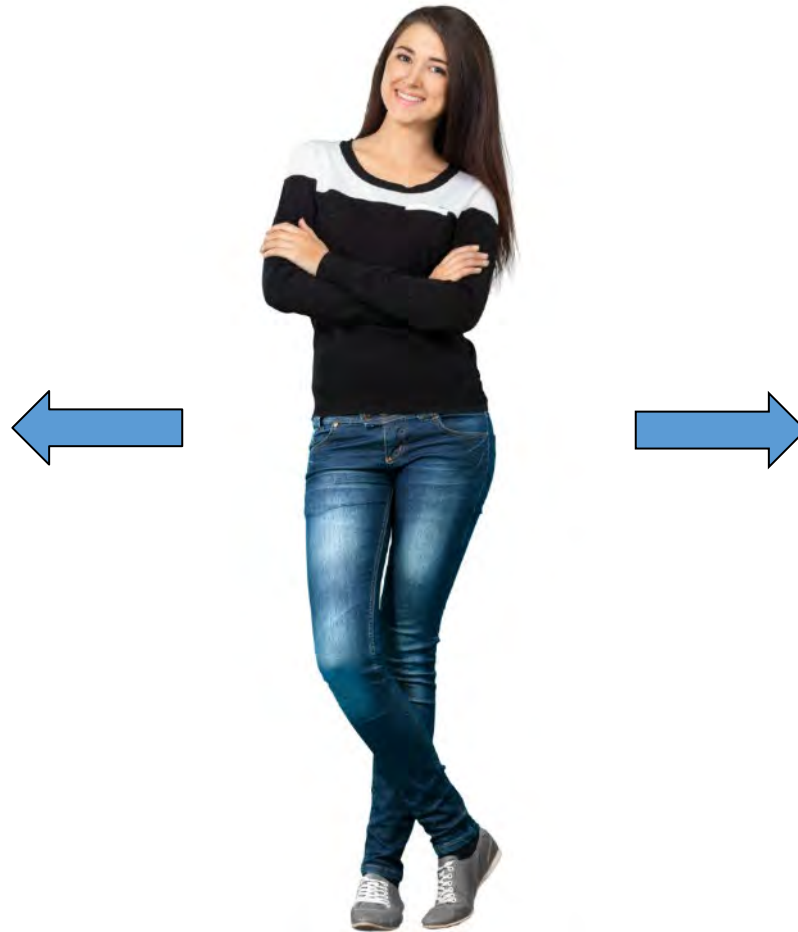


Breasts develop



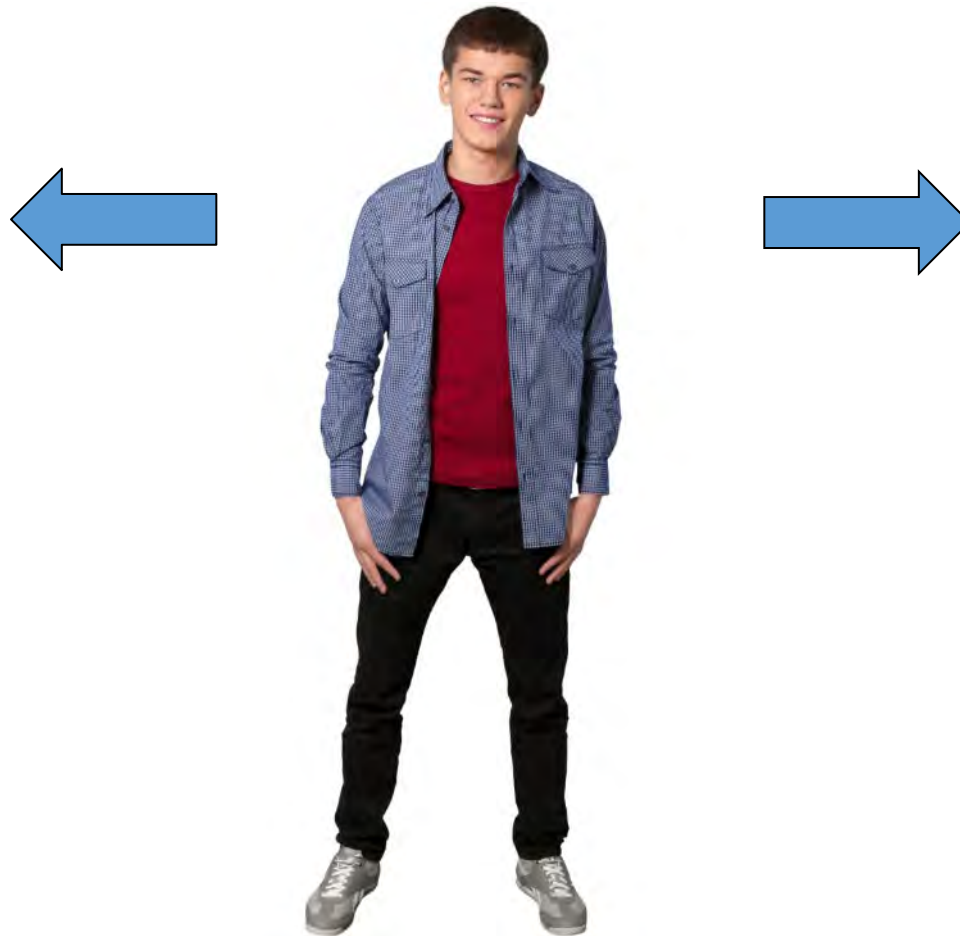


Hips gets bigger



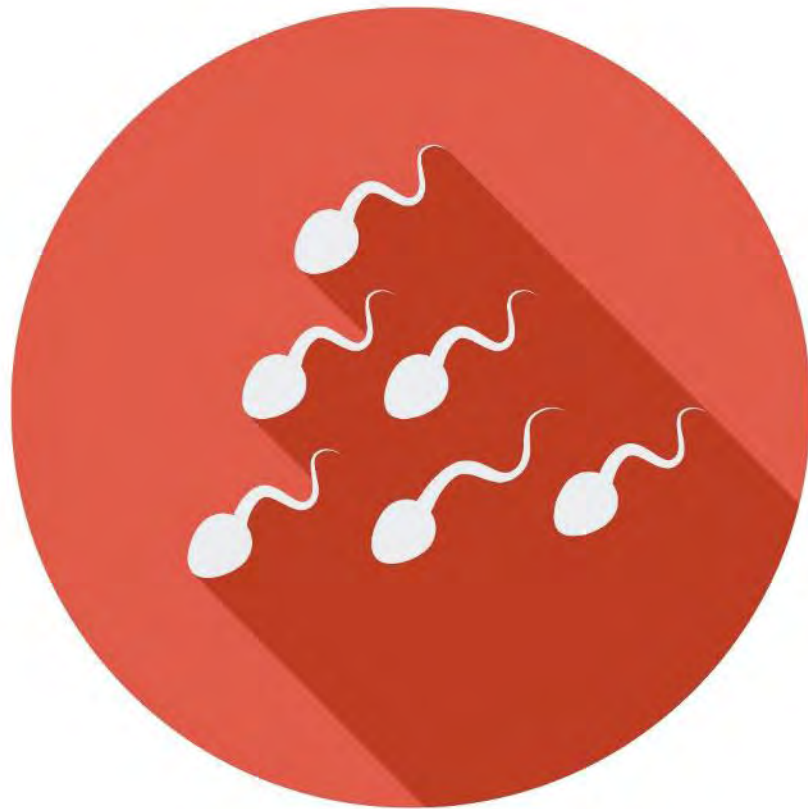


Shoulders get wider





Start making sperm



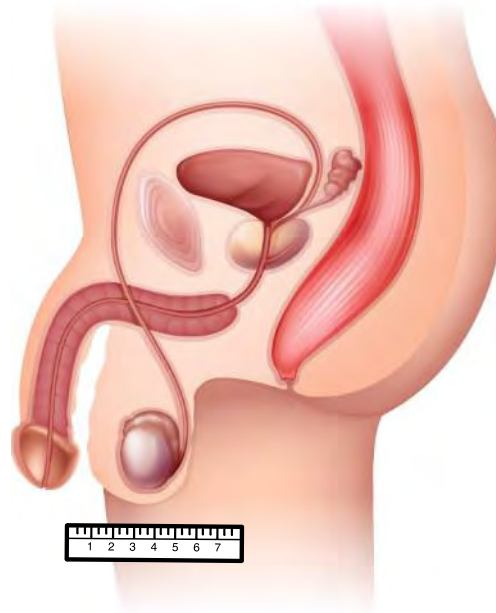


Penis grows bigger





Testicles get bigger





Brain starts sending sex hormones around the body





Wet dreams



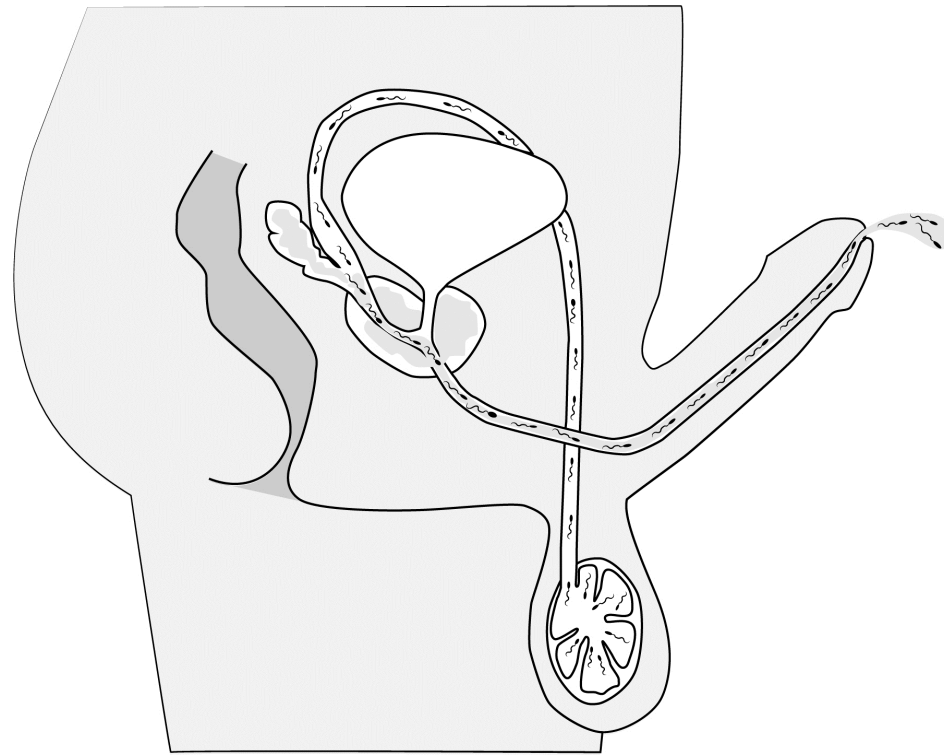


Erections when you don't expect them





Sperm released from penis (ejaculation)





Start releasing eggs from the ovaries (ovulation)





Start having periods (menstruation)



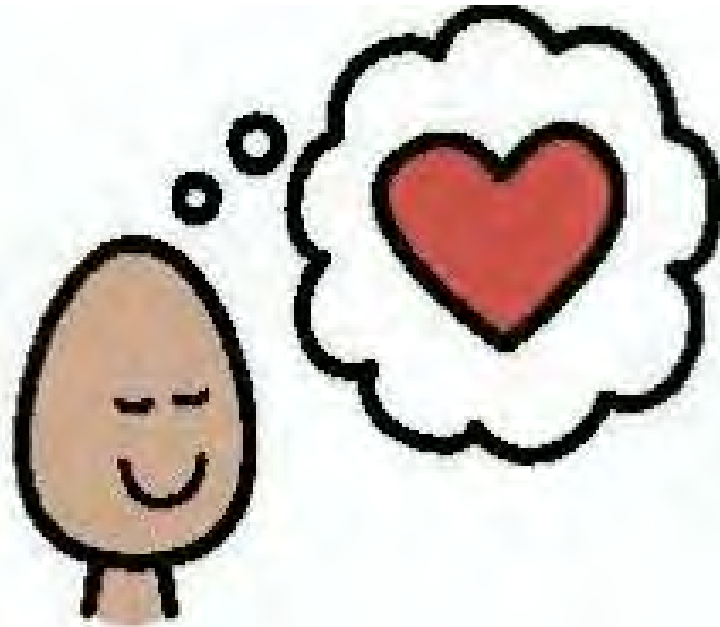


Mood swings



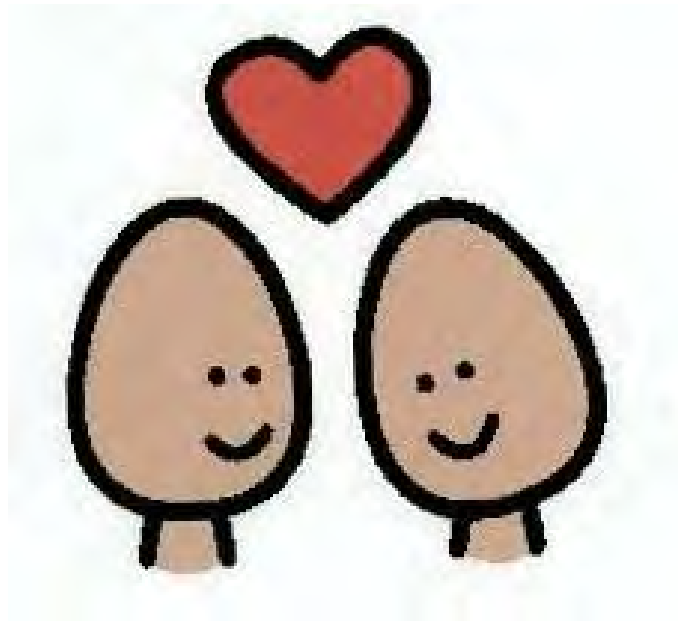


Start having sexual thoughts





Start having sexual feelings





Interested in dating





Friendships become more important





Sometimes feel lonely and confused





Stronger feelings of wanting to be liked and fit in





Want more independence





Thinking about your identity





Looking for new experiences





Thinking about the future





Think more about looks (hair, clothes, make up)





Start making more vaginal fluid



Puberty

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