

Grade 8

Going Through Puberty



Learner Outcomes

W-8.3 Recognize and accept that individuals experience different rates of physical, emotional, sexual and social development

W-8.4 Develop personal strategies to deal with pressures to have a certain look/lifestyle; e.g. accept individual look

This lesson addresses all of the specific outcomes listed above. Instruction in human sexuality (***bolded and italicized*** outcomes) requires schools to provide notice to parents about the learning outcomes, topics and resources.

How To Use

This lesson plan contains several activities to achieve the learner outcomes above. You may choose to do some or all of the activities, based on the needs of your students and the time available. Some of the activities build on the ones that come before them, but all can be used individually.

For a quick lesson, combine activities A, C and F.

Classroom Activities & Timing

- A. Ground Rules (5-10 minutes)
- B. Footprints (15-20 minutes)
- C. Coping with Puberty Changes Role Play (30-45 minutes)
- D. Coping with Puberty Changes Kahoot! Quiz (20-25 minutes)
- E. Ask an Adult Interview
- F. Question Box (5-10 minutes)

See also the [Differing Abilities](#) lesson plans on Puberty.

Required Materials

CARDS: Role Play Characters

[KAHOOT! QUIZ](#) and ANSWER KEY: Grade 8 Coping with Puberty Changes

HANDOUT: Ask an Adult

MATERIALS: Paper in various colours, scissors

Background Information for Teachers

For more detail on puberty changes, see the lesson plans for [Grade 4](#) or [Grade 7](#).

Inclusive Language

Language is complex, evolving, and powerful. In these lessons, [inclusive language](#) is used to include all students, including those with diverse gender identities, gender expressions and sexual orientations. This includes the use of 'they' as a singular gender-neutral pronoun.

A person's sex can be assigned at birth as male or female. Some people are intersex (the reproductive, sexual, or genetic biology of a person is unclear, not exclusively male or female or otherwise does not fit within traditional definitions of male or female). Assigned sex is independent of gender.

Gender identity is a person's internal sense of identity as girl/woman, boy/man, fluid among genders or no gender (regardless of what sex they were assigned at birth).

For many people, their gender is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth (cisgender). For others, their gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. They may use terms like transgender, trans, non-binary, gender fluid, gender queer, agender or others, to describe their gender identity. The umbrella term 'trans' is primarily used here, to describe people whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth differ. While this umbrella term does not fit everyone, the intention is to be as inclusive as possible.

Puberty

Puberty is a time of rapid growth and development. Each individual experiences the changes of puberty at a unique rate. Often, the differences between students in the same grade 8 classroom can be remarkable. It is important to help students recognize and accept that these differences are normal and to encourage them to accept their own rate of physical, emotional, sexual and social development.

Typical changes of puberty

Type of Change	Change
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friendships become more important Interested in dating Wanting more independence Taking on more responsibility at home or school Looking for new experiences Thinking about your identity
Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mood swings Sometimes feel lonely and confused Stronger feelings of wanting to be liked Stronger feelings of wanting to fit in Concerned about appearance (looks) Sexual thoughts Sexual feelings
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acne (pimples) Breasts develop* Erections (penis gets hard) Ejaculation (sperm released from penis) Grow taller Hair gets oily Hair grows in armpits Hair grows on face Hips get wider Menstruation (periods) begins Nocturnal emissions (wet dreams) Ovulation (eggs released from ovaries) Penis grows bigger Pubic hair grows on genitals Shoulders get wider Skin gets oily Start making sex hormones Start producing sperm Sweat glands develop Testicles grow bigger Vaginal discharge Voice changes

*Most people experience some breast changes during puberty because of the production of sex hormones. Many of these changes, such as hard breast buds and tenderness, are temporary. For females/people with ovaries, breast growth is typically permanent. For males/those with testicles, it is typically temporary.

A. Ground Rules

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

B. Footprints

This activity allows students to visualize each person as an individual and accept that differences between individuals are expected.

1. Ask students to choose a piece of coloured paper.
2. Ask students to trace an outline of their shoe on the piece of paper. This step can be completed independently or with a partner.
3. Have students cut out their footprint.
4. Have students use large printing to write the word “Me” on their footprint.
5. Encourage students to write words that describe themselves on the rest of the space on the footprint. Encourage them to use words that describe all aspects of themselves, not just their appearance.
6. Provide a place in the classroom for each student to display the finished footprint.
7. Ask students to consider these questions but not answer them out loud:
 - **Do you ever wonder if you look as good as or better than someone else?**
 - **Do you compare your grades to someone else in the class?**
 - **Do you compare what you have to what someone else has?**
 - **Do you ever look at a picture of someone and compare yourself to that person?**
8. Ask the students to notice how they felt when considering these questions. Share that scientists think we compare ourselves to others when we aren't able to evaluate ourselves, our opinions or abilities.

9. Ask the class to share their thoughts on the following questions. Some possible answers are included.

Is comparing yourself to other people healthy or unhealthy? Why?

- Sometimes comparing yourself to others can be motivating or inspiring, but other times it can cause you to feel negatively about yourself

What makes people feel good about themselves?

- Doing something well
- Being kind, helpful or thoughtful
- Taking part in enjoyable activities
- Having supportive friends or family

What can people do to feel better about themselves?

- Try new experiences
- Work hard at accomplishing tasks you enjoy
- Learn from failure
- Take pride in success
- Take breaks from social media and technology
- Evaluate what you are comparing yourself too- if it's a photo or social media post, it is likely not real or the whole story
- Focus on yourself and comparing yourself to you
- Focus on what you have done or learned and the difference from when you started to where you are now
- When you see others who are 'better' than you, let them inspire or motivate you
- Appreciate what you have more than focusing on what you don't have
- Practice mindfulness techniques

What can people do to help others feel better about themselves?

- Give sincere compliments
- Be kind, helpful and thoughtful

C. Coping with Changes Role Play

Students explore different ways to cope with puberty changes and how people may experience puberty changes at different times than their peers.

1. Divide the class into groups of 2 or 3.

2. Give each group a set of **Role Play Characters** cards. Have each student take one of the cards and fill it out. For groups of 2, both students can fill out the third card together.
3. Give students time to fill in their cards with the information required. They should list at least 2 items for each part. Remind the group that they are playing a character, so they don't need to use personal information.
4. Ask the group to make up a skit that tells the story of these 3 friends and the puberty changes they are experiencing. During the skit, they each must mention at least 3 of the things they wrote on their card. Circulate around the room to listen to the conversations.
5. Have each group present their skit to you while the other groups rehearse.
6. As a class, debrief using the following discussion questions:
 - What are some ways to cope with feeling different from your friends?
 - What role do teasing and bullying play in puberty?
 - How can kids make coping with puberty easier for each other? Do you do these things? Why or why not?

D. Coping with Puberty Changes Kahoot! Quiz

This quiz can be a great review, wrap-up of the unit or a fun energizer in between other activities. For more information on using Kahoot!, visit kahoot.com

1. Open the Kahoot! Quiz: [Grade 8 Coping with Puberty Changes](#)
2. As a class, answer the quiz questions and discuss the answers together. You can play the quiz in individual or team mode.

E. Ask an Adult Interview

Students interview a supportive adult to find out a time when they struggled with comparing themselves to others and how they coped with the situation.

Keep in mind that not all students have equal opportunities for open discussion with family or other adults in their life. Although it is best for students to complete this assignment with a supportive parent or guardian,

it may not be possible. Be sensitive to the needs of your students and recognize that completion of this assignment may not always be possible.

Due to the sensitive nature of human sexuality topics, it is recommended that homework is reviewed or discussed but not graded.

1. Invite students to interview a parent, guardian or other supportive adult using the questions on the **Ask an Adult** handout.
2. During the next class, ask the students to discuss the following question:
 - What did you learn about handling difficult emotions?

F. Question Box

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

Addressing the questions at the next class allows you time to review the questions and prepare responses.

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?

Student Assessment

During the lesson, did students:

Knowledge:

- recognize that people go through puberty at different times and rates?

Skills:

- verbalize positive qualities in self and others?

Attitudes:

- understand that each person is unique?
- accept that differences between individuals are normal?
- accept that it is normal for teens to have different rates of puberty development?

Grade 8 Role Play Characters

Role A

You started puberty in grade 4 and are almost done. It was hard to be the biggest kid in grade 5, but now you have noticed that lots of other kids are catching up to you.

The changes you like the most about yourself are:

The changes you have been teased about are:

You wish that:

Role B

You started puberty last year. You were starting to wonder if you would ever go through puberty, but now that it has started, you are mostly glad.

The biggest changes you have noticed so far are:

You are worried others will tease you about these changes:

You wonder if:

Role C

You haven't started puberty yet. You don't like feeling like such a little kid, but you know there is nothing you can do to speed up puberty.

You are most looking forward to these changes:

You have noticed that other kids get teased about:

You hope that:

ANSWER KEY: Grade 8 Going through Puberty Quiz

Correct answers are in bold text.

1. Getting taller is a common change in puberty.

- **True**
- False

This is a physical change of puberty.

2. Growing hair in new places is a common change in puberty.

- **True**
- False

This is a physical change. The new places could be underarms, genitals, face, or legs.

3. Wanting more independence is a common change in puberty.

- **True**
- False

This is a social change of puberty.

4. Is it typical for many girls to be taller than many boys in grade 8?

- **Yes, because girls often start puberty a bit earlier.**
- No, boys are always taller than girls.

The average age for starting puberty is 8-14, so the average grade 8 class will have some kids who just started, and some who started a while ago. Boys as a group have a higher average height by the end of puberty, but that doesn't tell us anything about how tall any one person is or will be.

5. Is it better to start puberty earlier or later?

- Better earlier
- Better later
- **Not better either way**

Being different in body changes is not something that can be judged as good or bad. No one has control over when or how these changes occur. It's like the colour of your eyes or how fast your hair grows. Even if it would be easier to change at the same time or in the same way as your friends, differences are a normal part of life.

6. If you start puberty earlier, you will end up:

- smaller than everyone else.
- bigger than everyone else.
- exactly the same as everyone else.
- **who knows? When you start puberty doesn't affect your size.**

Grade 8 Going Through Puberty

How and when we grow is not something anyone has control over, it is determined by genes and hormones. Whether you start your growth spurt earlier or later will not affect how big or small you will be in the future.

7. When you start puberty is determined by:
- how much spinach you eat
 - **your genes and hormones**
 - your hair colour
 - how many push-ups you do

Starting puberty is usually controlled by your genes that tell your brain and body when to start releasing the hormones that start puberty. Some people take puberty blockers that delay the start of puberty.

8. During puberty, oil and sweat glands become more active which means:
- **body odour increases**
 - **deodorant and more frequent showering/bathing is needed**
 - **acne on the face and body is likely**
 - **hair needs washing more often**

All of these changes are typical for people during puberty.

9. It is perfectly fine to tease someone about the changes in their body due to puberty.
- True
 - **False**

No one can control the physical changes they are experiencing in puberty. Most kids feel a little awkward or clumsy when some parts of their bodies grow faster than others. One day you may look in the mirror and enjoy seeing the changes and another day you may not be so happy about them. You are not a finished product in puberty and for a while you may look very different than how you will end up. Instead of judging or worrying about your physical appearance, try to be amazed at the many changes your body goes through as you grow up. Teasing or making fun of someone for their physical appearance is never ok.

10. People often find it hard to deal with the social and emotional changes of puberty.
- **True**
 - False

Dealing with mood swings, conflict with parents, or not knowing how you fit into the world anymore can be much harder than a few zits or learning to shave. Other people may not always see the social or emotional changes you are going through. Feeling like you are the only one dealing with all these challenges can make the changes feel even harder. Each person experiences puberty differently but reaching out to friends, family or other supportive adults can help a lot.

Ask an Adult

Instructions

1. Take this handout home. Share it with a parent, grandparent, guardian, family member or other adult you feel comfortable talking to. Ask that person if you can complete it together.
2. Schedule at least half an hour for the interview. Give the adult this handout so that they can think about their answers before the interview.
3. Conduct the interview using the questions provided.

Questions

Tell me about a time when you felt bad when you compared yourself to someone else.

What did you do to feel better in this situation?