

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, [gender-neutral language](#) is used to be inclusive of all students, including those with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. This includes the use of 'they' as a singular gender-neutral pronoun. The lesson plans use the terms 'male' and 'female' when referring to biological sex (sex assigned at birth), such as when discussing reproductive anatomy. A person's reproductive system can be male, female or intersex (not clearly defined as either male or female).

People are assigned a sex at birth based on their reproductive anatomy. Sex assigned at birth is independent of gender identity. Gender identity is a person's internal sense of identity as female, male, both or neither, regardless of their biological sex assigned at birth.

For many people, their gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth (cisgender). Others may identify as being transgender or gender diverse if their gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. A person's gender identity can be girl, woman, boy, man, transgender, gender fluid, gender queer, agender or others. The intention in this material is to use language that reflects these many possibilities.

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.

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Typical changes of puberty

Happens to	Change
Everyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow taller • Skin gets oily • Acne (pimples) • Voice changes • Hair gets oily • Hair grows in armpits • Pubic hair grows on genitals • Sweat glands develop • Breasts develop* • Start making sex hormones • Mood swings • Sexual thoughts • Sexual feelings • Interested in having a boyfriend, girlfriend or partner • Friendships become more important • Sometimes feel lonely and confused • Stronger feelings of wanting to be liked • Stronger feelings of wanting to fit in • Want more independence • Thinking about the future • Concerned about appearance (looks)
Males	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hair grows on face • Shoulders get wider • Start producing sperm • Penis grows bigger • Testicles grow bigger • Nocturnal emissions (wet dreams) • Erections (penis gets hard) • Ejaculation (sperm released from penis)
Females	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hips get wider • Ovulation (eggs released from ovaries) • Menstruation (periods) begins • Vaginal discharge

*Breast development is related to an increase in the hormone estrogen. Males normally produce some estrogen in the adrenal glands and testes. Nearly one in two males experiences **temporary** enlargement of the breasts during puberty.

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 provides students with an opportunity to visualize that each person is 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 in small text 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.

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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, it is likely not real
- 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.

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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 work together to fill out the third card.
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 getkahoot.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,

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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?

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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?



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. Does everyone go through puberty?

- **Yes**
- No

Although everyone goes through puberty, the age they start and how long it takes varies widely between individuals.

2. Is it typical for many females to be taller than many males in grade 8?

- **Yes, because females often start puberty earlier.**
- No, usually in grade 8 males are taller.

The average age for starting puberty is 8-13 for females and 9-14 for males. Males have a higher average height by the end of puberty.

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

- Better earlier
- Better later
- **Not better either way**
- Better to never start puberty

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.

4. 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.**

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

5. When you start puberty is determined by:

- how much spinach you eat
- **your genes**
- your hair colour
- how many push-ups you do

You cannot control when you start puberty, it is controlled by your genes that tell your brain and body when to start releasing the hormones that start puberty.

6. During puberty, everyone grows hair in some new places, like:

- **underarms**
- face and chest
- **genitals**
- **arms and legs**

While all these changes are true for males, females don't generally grow hair on their face and chest during puberty.

7. 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 males and females during puberty.

8. In males, physical changes of puberty can include:

- **voice changes**
- **larger muscles**
- **temporary breast swelling**
- wider hips

Males generally get wider shoulders, not wider hips during puberty. Temporary swelling of breast tissue is very common in males and usually goes away on its own.

9. In females, physical changes of puberty can include:

- larger testicles
- **growing taller**
- **gaining body fat, especially on breasts, hips and thighs**

- **wider hips**

At first the body fat may be deposited all over the body, but later it will start to be more concentrated on the breasts, hips and thighs. Wider hips are the body's way of preparing for pregnancy and birth later in life.

10. 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 are growing faster than other parts. 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 will look very different than how you will end up. Puberty is not a time to judge or worry about your physical appearance, it is a time to be amazed at the many changes your body is going through as you are growing up. That is why teasing about body changes is especially unfair and hurtful.

11. Certain body types are better than others.

- True
- **False**

People are naturally predisposed to have different body types. When something in nature is 'predisposed', it's not in anyone's control—it's like eye colour. Eating well and being active are most important. No matter what people think, one body type is not better than another - just different. Saying someone is 'bigger' or 'smaller', 'shorter' or 'taller', should only be a way to **describe** a body type, never a way to **judge** a person as 'good' or 'bad', as if they were doing something 'right' or 'wrong'. This would be the same as judging someone because of their eye or skin colour. It is not correct or fair.

12. The changes of puberty are more than just changes to the body.

- **True**
- False

People go through social, emotional and cognitive changes during puberty. Although these changes can't always be seen by others, they are just as real as the physical changes.

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 or inferior in comparison with others.

What did you do to feel better in this situation?