

How Appearance Changes Over Puberty

Instructions and Book Text Key

Objective: Students will identify what kind of physical changes to expect during puberty and to understand these changes happen at different rates for different people and this is perfectly normal.

This activity is meant to generate discussion about different body types and to ensure that students are not to judge each other based on appearances. Puberty is something that everyone goes through but our individual experiences may be different from one another. It is important that students are sensitive to these changes and always treat others with respect. We have no control over how puberty will change our bodies and the misinterpretation of these body changes can contribute to issues with body image and self esteem.

Structure: Large group activity with questions and discussion as material is presented.

Time: 40 minutes

Instructions:

1. Distribute the Write a Book handout “How Appearance Changes in Puberty”.
2. Read the Book Text Key “How Appearance Changes in Puberty” slowly and carefully. As you read the words that are underlined will be filled in by students on their handouts.
3. Allow time for questions and discussions as you go.

Emphasize the following themes as you discuss the material:

- The age range for puberty changes are extremely varied.
- Differences should not be seen as “good” or “bad”. They are simply different and perfectly normal.

How Appearance Changes Over Puberty BOOK TEXT KEY

Dear Puberty Expert,

I know there is a lot to learn about how kids' bodies grow during puberty. I have some ideas but I don't know if they are right or true for everybody. I know kids get taller, but I'm pretty sure they grow in other ways too. Some kids in my class are already growing. I heard you had a class on this, and you might have the answers to some of my questions.

1. **Does everybody go through puberty sometime? Yes No**

2. **Will growth be more than just getting taller? Yes No**

As you develop you will also be filling out.

3. **Is everybody supposed to change at the same time?**

Everyone changes at different times, according to their own inner “body **clock**” or pre-determined schedule.

4. Do boys and girls change at the same time? Yes No

- GIRLS change: **sooner** same later
- BOYS change: sooner same **later**

5. So it's normal for many girls to be taller than many boys at our age? Yes No

6. I heard someone say my friend was having a "growth spurt." What's that?

Growth spurts are when you grow **faster** than ever before. During puberty, instead of growing about 2 inches per year, you may grow 4 inches or more per year. You may hear your family say, "You are growing out of your clothes too fast!" But, you can't help it.

7. Is it better to start puberty sooner, or better to start later?

Better sooner Better later **Not better either way**

8. Why doesn't everybody start puberty at the same time?

How and when we grow is not something anyone has control over. It is **predetermined** before birth. Whether you start your growth spurt earlier or later will not affect how big or small you will be in the end.

9. What if I'm really early or late in starting puberty? I don't want to be different.

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 is like the colour of your eyes, or how fast your hair grows. It's not something anyone should ever have to feel bad about. Even if it would be easier to change at the same time or in the same ways as your friends, differences are a **normal** and **necessary** part of life.

10. What if someone teases me?

It may mean they don't understand **puberty**, or they may be being mean. You could try **ignoring** or **educating** them. Or you could try telling a **friend** and getting their support. If that doesn't help, you should ask a trusted adult for help and support.

11. Please tell me all the details about puberty changes? Will I grow everywhere all at once?

Some parts of your body will grow **faster**, while other parts grow **slower**. It is different for everyone, but here is the usual order:

- First feet. Feet can be full-size long before you are!
- Then arms and legs.
- Then back bone and other bones.

12. What exactly will make me "fill out?" What should I expect?

It is **normal** to gain weight from increasing **body fat** and **bone mass** during puberty. In later teen years, you will also gain some **muscle**.

13. Isn't fat bad? Yes No

Many people have **incorrect** ideas about body fat. Sometimes body fat has been thought of as "bad", but this is not always true, and it is not **realistic**. People are naturally pre-disposed with different **body types**. When something in nature is "pre-disposed," it is like eye colour—it is not in anyone's control. Eating well and being active is 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. Because so many people have incorrect ideas about body types we will be talking more about this in later lessons.

14. **Girls develop earlier than boys. Are there other differences for girls? Yes No**

Let's Talk About Changes For Girls

1. How much weight can a girl gain during puberty?

While everyone is different, it is normal for girls to gain body fat during puberty. Girls may gain **20 pounds** or more in a year. This is a normal part of growing up.

2. Why do girls have more body fat than boys?

This is the beginning of the normal, healthy rounding-out of a girl's body as she grows into a young woman. Nature **intended** most adult women to carry more body fat than most boys and men. This is part of a woman's special design for bearing children and it should not be confused with being overweight. It is **natural** and **healthy** for a woman to have a more rounded figure than a man. Puberty is when this begins.

3. Where does the extra body fat go?

At first a girl may develop a layer of fat all over, like an extra layer under the skin. Then it will begin to be more obvious in certain parts: **breasts, hips, thighs**.

4. Do girls get taller before they gain weight, or rounder first?

Either way. Everyone is different. Some may get rounder first, and only later gain height. Others may get quite tall and thin first. Some girls will remain very thin all their lives, whether they are taller or shorter. Despite what people think, a very thin body **is not** the most common or natural shape for a woman.

5. Are there any other changes in girls that boys don't share?

Girl's pelvic bones (just above her hips) gradually begin to **widen**. This is essential for a woman to be able to be capable of having a baby when she is an adult. Wider pelvic bones are one of the reasons why women normally have bigger hips than men.

Lets Talk About Changes For Boys

1. Aren't men usually bigger than women? How can boys begin developing later than girls?

Once outward growth begins, boys quickly catch-up. Many boys eventually become **taller** and more **muscular** than girls.

2. Is it normal for boys to gain body fat during puberty too?

Often **Sometimes** Rarely

Some boys gain body fat before they get taller. However, as boys grow taller, they often stretch out their fatness into a taller, slimmer body. While there are natural differences, most fully developed men carry **less** body fat than most women.

3. What other changes occur for boys?

Later in puberty, **shoulders** can become wider and eventually more muscular. However, boys usually do not **fill out** their bodies until later teen years. Then, they will begin to look less like boys and more like men.

4. Anything else?

More than half of all boys will have some **breast** swelling in puberty. This is normal and does not mean he is developing breasts. It will go away in a few months. Boys need to know not to worry about this.

5. What happens to boys' voices during puberty?

When a boy's voice box has grown larger, usually by age 14 or 15, his voice becomes **deeper**. This may happen somewhat suddenly or in a gradual, less noticeable way. Some boys experience a "**cracking**" of their voice as they go through this change. Their voices may become high-pitched or "squeaky" unexpectedly.

6. Isn't that embarrassing? What if a boy gets teased?

There is no reason to be embarrassed, because it is simply part of growing up and is completely normal. This is something that all boys will go through and it is mean to tease someone when it is happening to them.

7. Aren't there some other outward changes for both boys and girls during puberty?

Yes No

Changes For Both Boys And Girls

1. What are some things in common for both boys and girls?

Boys and girls grow hair in new places: first **pubic** and **underarm** hair, then on **arms** and **legs**, and for boys, eventually **face** and **chest** hair. Also, two glands become more active: oil and **sweat**.

2. What about the glands?

When oil glands are more active, you may notice your hair gets oily faster. Also, many kids have some pimples or skin acne when they are further along in puberty. When sweat glands are more active you may notice you perspire more. Also, perspiration may have a more **grown-up** odour. When oil and sweat glands become more active, kids usually need to bathe or shower and wash their hair more often. You may want to ask a parent or guardian for deodorant.

3. It sounds like this puberty business goes on for a while. I guess it doesn't happen overnight.

That's **right**.

4. It also sounds like different parts of the body grow earlier or later—even more or less than other parts. If some bones grow faster than others, or I'm gaining body mass before I get taller—or the other way around—won't I look kind of funny or out of proportion?

Yes **No** Maybe

*You will not look funny! It is **important** to understand that the way you grow in puberty may not be even. For example, your arms and legs may grow long, while your backbone is still short. Your feet may be as big as an adult's, even 2 or 3 years before the rest of you grows taller. Your ears and chin may grow before the rest of your face.*



For a while you will look very different than how you will end up. One day you may look in a mirror and enjoy seeing the changes. Another day, you may not be so crazy about them. It may help you to know that many kids feel this way at one time or another. Most kids feel a little awkward or clumsy when some parts of their bodies are growing faster than other parts. Remember, you are not a finished product yet! That is why teasing about body changes is especially unfair and hurtful.

This is not a time to judge or worry about your physical appearance. It is a time to be amazed at the many wonderful changes your body is going through as you are growing up.