

DIFFERING ABILITIES

Puberty & Hygiene



SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES:

1. Handout 1: Ask a Parent/Guardian
2. Handout 2: Advice Corner
3. Handout 3: Changes
4. Handout 4: Menstruation Checklist
5. Handout 5: Puberty Kit Assessment
6. Cards 1: Puberty Changes
7. Answer Key 1: Puberty Changes
8. Answer Key 2: Advice Corner
9. Answer Key 3: Changes
10. Answer Key 4: Menstruation Checklist
11. Hands on materials: Puberty Kit (requires assembly)
12. Teacher References:
 - i. Facts About Puberty – Male
 - ii. Facts About Puberty–Female
 - iii. Elementary Question Box Questions
 - iv. Junior High Question Box Questions



- Ensure that ground rules are established before starting your classes. 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.
- Keep in mind that students living with physical, developmental or other disabilities are also going through physical, emotional and social changes during this time. They may have very different interpretations or concerns with regards to what is happening to their body. For example, a student using a wheel chair may need extra consideration during the time she is menstruating.



EXPERIENCE

Students will share the puberty changes they have experienced and what changes they anticipate. Students will also identify support systems to assist them during puberty.

Choose one or two of the following options that best suit the level of your students.

OPTION 1: NEWSPRINT DISPLAY

1. Write the following titles on separate pages of newsprint, and post them on the wall:
 - a. The great things about growing up
 - b. The hard things about growing up
2. As a class, come up with an example or two for each heading that your students have experienced or are anticipating. (An example of a difficult change could be period cramps. A great change could be more independence).
3. Discuss that some changes may fit in both categories. (For example, “more responsibility” can be seen as both great (I get to baby-sit!) or hard (I have to baby-sit)).
4. Then have students walk around the room to write their remarks under each title.
5. Debrief with your students:
 - a. Are there any changes listed that probably won't happen to people when they are developing? (It is important to dispel myths or changes students identify that will not occur. For example, students may have listed a change such as “I can not do gym when I have my period”).
 - b. Why are some changes hard? Great? (Difficult changes don't have to be a problem. There are ways to cope with change).
 - c. What can we do to make growing up easier? (Focus on student strengths).
 - d. What changes are hard for young men? What changes are easy?
 - e. What changes are hard for young women? What changes are easy?
 - f. What would you tell a friend who is going through puberty to help them feel good about their changes?
6. Finally, have students brainstorm things they are already good at that will help them with puberty. Assist students to identify support systems (family, teachers, etc.) who can provide help and support.

OPTION 2: ASK A PARENT/GUARDIAN

1. Distribute the Handout 1: Ask a Parent/Guardian for students to complete as a homework assignment.
2. The next day, collect the tear-off slips to indicate that the student completed the activity.
3. Use the following questions to debrief this activity with your students. Remind students not to share any personal information or stories about their parents/guardians.
 - a. How can you handle hard changes during puberty?
 - b. What do you look forward to during puberty?
 - c. Who are the people who can support you during puberty?



Keep in mind that all students do not live in a “traditional” family nor do they have equal opportunities for open discussion with their “family.” 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.



INFORMATION

Students will determine what changes are unique to boys and girls and changes that are common to both.

Choose one or two of the following options that best suit the level of your students.

OPTION 1: BOYS, GIRLS, BOTH

1. Write the following headings on the board or post the following headings on the wall:
 - a. Males
 - b. Females
 - c. Both
2. Distribute Cards 1: **Puberty Changes**, one to each student.
3. Have students place each card under the heading which best fits the puberty change described.
4. As a class, review the card placements, and make the necessary changes according to Answer Key 1: **Puberty Changes**. Explain changes that your students do not understand.
5. Debrief with the following process points:
 - a. These changes are normal.
 - b. Changes happen at different times for different people.
 - c. Changes can begin as early as 8 and continue until after 18.
 - d. This process is called “Puberty.”
6. Brainstorm with your class some myths about puberty changes. Write these up on the board under the appropriate category.
7. Ask your students who we can ask for correct information if we have questions or concerns about puberty change? (Parents, teachers, doctors, nurses, etc.)



It is important that every student learn about both male and female self care. All students will benefit from knowing how each other’s body works. If your students are extremely uncomfortable learning this material in a mixed group, you may choose to separate the boys and girls.

OPTION 2: MALES AND FEMALES-CARE OF THEIR BODIES

STEP ONE: MALE SELF CARE

1. Discuss the following questions with your students:
 - a. What are some of the good things about being a male?
 - Encourage students to provide appropriate comments.
 - b. What starts happening more often to a young man's penis at puberty?
 - Young men start having erections.
2. Explain erections to your students. Explain that usually the penis is soft and hangs down, but a penis can also get big and hard. This is called an erection.
3. Point out that erections are normal and a part of growing up. They happen for many reasons or for no reason at all. It can happen when you least expect or want it. It can be embarrassing when it happens.
4. Stress that erections are private. It is important to know what to do when a young man has an erection. Ask your students if they have any ideas of what a young man should do if he has an erection in a public place. If your students are unable to come up with ideas, provide them with some suggestions:
 - a. If a young man has an erection when he is around other people, he should try to go to a washroom to readjust his penis in private.
 - b. If he can not go to a washroom, he should sit down. Erections are not as noticeable when seated.
 - c. He can put a book or a coat over his lap.
 - d. He can sometimes control his erections by what he thinks about. Thinking of something boring can help erections go away faster.
5. Then read the following situations and have your students tell what they would do in each case. Their responses need to be appropriate.
 - a. A young man is sitting at his desk at school and suddenly has an erection. (Stay seated. No one will probably notice since he is sitting down.)
 - b. A young man has an erection when he is at a school dance. He is standing alone along the side of the wall. (Sit down for a moment.)
 - c. A young man has an erection when he is about to get in the lunch line in the cafeteria. (Go to the washroom or hold his coat in front of himself for a minute.)
 - d. A young man is home alone watching TV when he has an erection. (He is not in public, so he does not need to do anything.)
 - e. A young man has an erection when he is standing by the side of the pool. (Jump in.)
6. Discuss that there is another thing that happens during puberty. Young men may have "wet dreams". Explain that sometimes when a young man is asleep, he has an erection. Then a small amount of white sticky stuff, called semen, may come out of the penis. If a young man wakes up and he has white sticky stuff on his pyjamas or underwear, he knows he has had a wet dream. Stress that wet dreams are normal.
7. Further explain that if a young man has a wet dream, he should wipe himself off with a tissue or damp wash cloth. Then he should change his pyjamas or underwear and put the sticky ones into the dirty clothes hamper.
8. Then discuss "circumcision" with your students. When a baby boy is born, there is a

flap of skin over the tip of the penis. Some parents decide to have a doctor cut off this piece of skin and some decide to leave it on. If the flap of skin is removed, it means the penis is circumcised. It is normal either way. Both types of penises can do their jobs. Young men who are not circumcised, should clean beneath the foreskin of the penis regularly. Do not force the foreskin back to clean. Gently push it back.

9. Finally, discuss “jock itch” with your students. Sometimes sweaty underwear or jockstraps can lead to a scaly, itchy rash in the genital area. It is important to keep yourself clean and the skin dry. It can be treated with an anti-fungal cream available at the drug store without a prescription. If the problem persists, see your doctor.

STEP TWO: FEMALE SELF CARE

1. Begin by asking what students know about ‘periods’.
2. Explain that about once a month for a few days, girls who have reached puberty have a period. The lining of the uterus builds up every month to prepare the body to nourish a baby. If a baby is not conceived, 4–6 tablespoons of blood is shed through the vagina as it is not needed. This is called “a period” or “menstruation”. This is a normal part of life for a woman, and it needs some body care that we will discuss today.
3. Discuss the following questions with your students:
 - a. What are some of the good things about being a female?
 - Encourage students to provide appropriate comments.
 - b. How does a young woman know when she will get her first period?
 - Menstruation can begin as early as 8 or as late as 16. Every girl has her own internal clock.
 - Generally, a girl can expect her first period about 1 to 2 years after her breasts first start to develop, and soon after there is some hair under the arms and in the pubic area.
 - Vaginal discharge is a sign that menstruation may begin soon.
 - At first, the period can be irregular and there may not be much blood.
 - c. What are some things that might worry a young woman about menstruation?
 - Cramps, blood, smelling different, PMS, occurring at school when you have no pads.
4. Then ask your students the following questions:
 - a. How many people have seen ads/commercials on TV about pads or tampons?
 - b. How many people have talked to their parents/guardians about this?
 - c. How many people have seen commercials about pads with wings? What are the wings for?
5. Using the Puberty Kit (see discussion about the Puberty Kit in the Application section of this lesson plan), show the students some menstruation pads and tampons. Discuss these items as described. Let your students know that various sizes are available and it is best to use the unscented ones. Young women should talk to a parent / guardian about what’s best to use. Also, tampons are often not

- used by young women when their period first starts.
6. Lay the menstrual items out on a table so your students can touch and feel them. If possible, use a sample pad and a pair of women's underwear to demonstrate how to take off the sticky strip on the back of the pad and show how it fits into a pair of underwear.
 7. Be sure to discuss how to dispose of these items (i.e. wrap in toilet tissue and dispose in garbage; don't flush in toilets).
 - a. For some groups, you may have to demonstrate how to dispose of used materials properly. To do this, take toilet paper and a pad. Demonstrate how to fold a pad and then how to roll it in toilet paper.
 - b. Also, buy a supply of menstrual care items and have students practice proper wrapping and disposal of pads and tampons.
 - c. Then take your female students into the restroom and show them (or see if they can figure it out) where to dispose used pads. Discuss where they should dispose pads at home too. Emphasize again that pads are never flushed down the toilet.
 8. Discuss how often to change pads/tampons (Every 3-4 hours, or more often if needed). Reinforce the need to wash hands both before and after changing a pad or tampon.
 9. Then, ask the following questions:
 - a. Why should a young woman who is old enough to have a period always have a pad or a tampon with her?
 - b. Where could she keep it?
 - c. What could a young woman do who starts her period at school and doesn't have a pad or a tampon with her?
 - d. How can she ask for one? Who could she ask?
 10. Have your female students practice going to the office (with an assistant / teacher) to ask the secretary for a tampon or pad.
 11. Read the following situations and have your students tell what they would do in each case.
 - a. A young woman looks on her calendar and sees that her period is suppose to start this week. (She should put 2 pads or tampons in her purse or backpack.)
 - b. A young woman starts her period for the first time when she is at home. (She should go put on a pad and tell her parents/guardians).
 - c. A young woman has her period and some blood gets on her underwear. (At home she should change her underwear and put on a new pad. At school, she should try to wipe the blood with toilet paper and then put on a new pad).
 - d. A young woman is in class and she thinks she feels her period start. (She should ask to go to the washroom and when she gets there, she should put on a pad).
 - e. A young woman starts her period and the blood soaks through her clothes. (Reassure your students that this sometimes happens to almost all women. It can be embarrassing but all women understand how this can happen. She should get a teacher, school nurse, parent or guardian to help her).
 12. Also, let your students know that remedies such as a hot water bottle, a heating bag or moderate exercise relieve cramps. If severe cramps persist, it may be helpful to see a doctor. Demonstrate to your students how to place a heating bag on the

abdomen to ease cramps.

13. Finally, let your students know that PMS can occur any time in the two weeks before menstruation. It can make a woman feel moody, irritable, have tender breasts or bloating. Exercising and avoiding caffeine and salt can minimize the symptoms of PMS.



APPLICATION

Students will learn about items that available to assist with puberty and personal hygiene. They will also understand what is normal in development.

Choose one or two of the following options that best suit the level of your students.

OPTION 1: PUBERTY KIT

The Puberty Kit is a tool used to assist in teaching about puberty and personal hygiene. It is important for the teacher to be familiar with the kit's contents and discussion points for each item before doing the activity. Included here is a list of the kit's contents, discussion points about each item, and a suggested procedure for introducing the Puberty Kit. Teachers can put this kit together by collecting these items or using pictures and putting them in a box.

PUBERTY KIT CONTENTS LIST AND DISCUSSION POINTS

Antiperspirant: Used in addition to daily washing of the underarms, antiperspirant stops sweat from forming. Ask your parents/guardians which type to use. (See deodorant).

Baking Soda, Baby Powder or Cornstarch: Can be used as an inexpensive, absorbent foot powder to help with odour.

Ball Cap: Hats are good protection from the sun's heat and damaging rays. Hats or caps can become dirty. Wash them or change hats to keep dirt from the face or hair.

Deodorant: Used in addition to daily washing of the underarms, deodorant stops the sweat from smelling. Ask a parent or guardian which type to use. (Also see antiperspirant).

Hot Water Bottle: Warmth may help to soothe menstrual cramps.

Men's Boxers & Briefs: Men may choose to wear boxers or briefs. Cotton underwear allows the skin to 'breathe' and keep moisture away from the body. Underwear should be comfortably loose. The scrotum moves close to or away from the body to promote the growth of healthy sperm. It is important to change underwear every day.

Menstrual Pads in baggies: There are a variety of pads available for women to use, with different absorbencies. Keep pads in a backpack, locker, purse, or bag. Change and dispose of used pads often (wrap in toilet paper and put in garbage). Another

excellent use of pads is to absorb blood from a wound, and can be kept in first aid kits.

Menstrual Pad with Wings” in baggie: Pads are available at pharmacies and grocery stores and come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Choose pads that are unscented. Pads attach to the inside of underwear by sticky strips. The wings wrap around the leg openings of the underwear. Pads catch menstrual flow.

Panty liner in baggie: Similar to pads. Used to catch light menstrual flow or vaginal discharge.

Razor in baggie: Some men shave their facial hair and some women shave the hair on their legs and underarms. Talk to a parent or guardian to find out what might be best for you.

Shampoo: Wash hair regularly to clean away the oil and dirt. Some people wash their hair every day, some less often.

Shaving Foam: Shaving with moisture feels better. Some people use shaving foam, or use soap and water.

Soap (bar soap): A mild, unscented soap in bar or liquid form is used for showering or bathing daily and for washing the face twice daily. Scented, deodorant soaps can cause dry skin for some people.

Socks: Wash feet and change socks every day.

Tampons in baggie: There are 3 types of tampons in the Puberty Kit, with & without applicators. Best not to use tampons until you are a teenager. Tampons need to be changed often (at least every 4–6 hours). To dispose of used tampons & applicators, wrap them in toilet paper and throw them in the garbage. You may need parental support to help remind you to remove them. Avoid super-absorbent tampons. Using tampons incorrectly and leaving them in too long can make you sick.

Toothbrush, Floss, & Toothpaste: Brush teeth at least twice a day. For fresh breath also brush the tongue. Floss once a day.

Washcloth: A clean sponge or washcloth can be used twice daily to wash the face with warm water and mild soap. No other skin care products are necessary unless advised by a doctor or parents.

Women’s Cotton Underwear: Cotton underwear is more comfortable than synthetic underwear as this natural fibre allows the skin to ‘breathe’. Trapped moisture could cause infections.

PROCEDURE:

1. Introduce the Puberty Kit. Tell the students that you are going to use it to teach them about things that they can use to help them with the challenging parts of puberty.

2. Have students (or pairs of students) choose an item from the kit. You may consider giving students items, which would allow you to be sensitive to student needs, or to cluster products (*i.e., washing items such as shampoo, soap and washcloth could go together*).
3. Have students brainstorm answers to these questions:
 - a. What is the item?
 - b. How would the item be used?
 - c. How does this item relate to puberty changes?
 - d. Is this item for a male, female or both?
 - e. Why is it important to use these products?
4. Have your students present each item to the class. Add comments to the discussion when needed. Students who are unsure about what the item is or how it would be used can simply state that they do not know.
5. Allow students to pass the items around so that they have a chance to examine them.
6. In some circumstances, it may be necessary to demonstrate how to use an item. For instance, demonstrate how to roll or spread on deodorant by doing so on the back of your hand or on a piece of paper.
7. Debrief this activity using the following questions:
 - a. What items from the kit are most helpful for shaving? Menstruation? Preventing acne? Smelling good? Looking good? Feeling good?
 - b. Where can you find or buy most of the items in the puberty kit?
 - c. Who can you talk to about getting items in this kit?

Adapted from: Alberta Health Services, Sexual and Reproductive Health: Elementary Puberty Kit. .

OPTION 2: “AM I NORMAL?” FOR MALES AND FEMALES

It is important to know that different sizes, shapes, skin colours, and ways of moving are normal. Height, weight, skin, and foot sizes are different from person to person. Penises vary in size, shape, colour, circumcised and uncircumcised. Likewise, breasts develop at different rates and are different sizes. Body hair varies in colour, amount and texture. We are each unique.

1. Say to your students:

“Young people change a lot during puberty and often young people have lots of questions about what’s happening. Sometimes the changes are confusing and you may wonder if what’s happening to your body is normal. Here are some questions asked by young people about changes in their bodies”.



You may encourage students to use the Question Box. You may want to click on Teaching Tools—[Examples of Questions](#) to help you answer questions students may have, and raise those that you find relevant in addition to those found here.

2. The following commonly asked questions might help you lead your class discussion. They are divided into topic areas by sex.

MALES:

Penis:

- a. **“I’m 14 years old and I am concerned because my penis seems small. How big should my penis be at my age?”**
- *Penis size is a common concern for young men your age so you are not alone. It is difficult to say what the average penis size is for a 14-year-old. This is because during adolescence penis growth is different from one person to the next. Usually by about age 18, the penis reaches adult size. The average size of an adult man’s penis is about 3 and a half to 4 inches long when soft, and 5-7 inches long when hard (erect).*
- b. **“I am 13 years old and not circumcised. I’m wondering if this is a problem.”**
- *Circumcision is an operation where a doctor cuts away a fold of skin (foreskin) from the top of the penis. Some males are circumcised, some are not. Either way is okay. If you are not circumcised, it is important to gently pull the foreskin back and clean under it whenever you bathe or shower so you don’t get an infection.*
- c. **“I am 13 years old and have been getting a lot of erections lately, even when I wake up in the morning. Am I normal?”**
- *What you have described is normal for a boy your age. Males get erections (that is, their penis gets hard and bigger) throughout their lives, but while going through puberty, they tend to get erections more often. Erections can happen with or without touching. While this can be embarrassing, it is normal. Puberty can be exciting but stressful. It often helps to talk to a parent/guardian about some of these issues.*

Testicles:

- a. **“I’m 15 years old and am worried because my left testicle hangs lower than the right testicle. Am I normal?”**
- *It is normal for the left testicle to hang lower than the right testicle. (The left spermatic cord tends to be longer than the right.)*
- b. **“I am 15 years old and am concerned because I think my left testicle is bigger than the right. Am I normal?”**
- *Having one testicle bigger than the other is common. Sometimes one testicle grows a bit faster than the other does. The size of your testicles may even out over time, or they may not. Either way is fine. If you continue to be concerned about the size of your testicles, it is a good idea to see your doctor.*

Breast development:

- a. **“I’m a 13-year-old boy and I am worried because I have breasts. Am I normal?”**
- *Almost half of all boys have a short-lived swelling of the breasts during*

puberty because of hormones. This swelling goes away over time. Although breast swelling is normal for boys, if you are concerned, it is a good idea for you to talk to your doctor.

FEMALES:

Breasts:

a. “I’m 13 and I’m flat as a board. Am I normal?”

- *Breast size is a common concern for young women your age. There is no set time for when a young woman’s breasts will start to grow and develop. Breasts start to increase in size between the ages of 9 and 15 and continue to grow until about age 19 or older. Considering you are only 13 years old, your breasts will continue to grow although it is impossible to know how much. Try your best to be patient with your body and not compare yourself to others.*

b. “I’m 14 years old and have one breast larger than the other. Am I normal?”

- *Some young women have one breast that is a bit larger than the other because it is growing a bit quicker. It usually isn’t very noticeable. Often a young woman’s breasts will even out by the time puberty is over. Sometimes they don’t. Either way is normal.*

c. “I’m 15 years old and noticed that I have grown a hair on my nipple. I was wondering, am I normal?”

- *It is perfectly normal for hair to grow on any part of the body.*

Periods:

a. “Is something wrong if it has been 4 months since my last period? Am I normal?”

- *Although the average menstrual cycle is 28 days long (from the start of one period to the start of the next), it is not uncommon for teenage young women to have irregular periods. Some teenage girls have periods spaced several months apart and others have periods spaced 2 or 3 weeks apart. If it has been a while since your last period, it is important to see a doctor, as sometimes it is a sign that there is a problem.*
- *Amenorrhea (absence of menstruation) has many causes including pregnancy, abnormalities in the structures of the reproductive system, hormonal abnormalities, growths such as cysts and tumours, excessive exercising, and psychological problems such as stress. Amenorrhea may also be a symptom of the eating disorder anorexia nervosa.*

b. “I’m 14 years old. I think I have a huge problem. For about 2 years now, I’ve been having vaginal discharge every day. The discharge doesn’t smell or itch, and it does not cause me any pain. What’s wrong with me? Am I normal?”

- *It is normal to have vaginal discharge every day, as long as it does not*

smell bad or cause you any pain or discomfort. If the discharge from your vagina smells bad or you have burning or itching, it is a good idea to see your doctor. The teenage years can be exciting and stressful at the same time. It is often helpful to discuss your concerns with a parent or guardian.

Hair growth:

- a. **“I’m 13 years old and have noticed that I have some dark hair growing on my arms and upper lip. Is this normal? What can I do about it?”**
- *It is normal to have hair growing on any part of the body. There are different ways to remove unwanted hair. Some teenagers shave hair, whereas others wax or pluck unwanted hair. It is important to understand that once you start removing hair, it grows back darker and thicker. It is important for you to speak with a parent or guardian to help you decide what to do.*

BOTH:

Pimples:

- a. **“I’m 15 years old and I have pimples on my back. Am I normal?”**
- *It is normal to get pimples anywhere on the body. During puberty the oil glands in the skin become more active. This can cause a person to have some skin outbreaks and develop pimples. Washing the infected area can sometimes help since it removes oil from the skin and keeps the pores open. If your pimples become worse, you may want to talk to your parents or guardians about seeing a doctor for medication that will help clear it up.*

Pubic hair:

- a. **I am 13 and a half, and I have very little pubic hair. Am I normal? Is there anything I can do to speed up my hair growth?”**
- *Growth of hair on the body usually starts between the ages of 11 and 14. Hair can continue to grow until a person reaches about 20. The amount of hair a person has is very different from one person to the next. During puberty, it is important to remember that every person develops at his or her own rate. There is nothing you can do to speed up hair growth. Puberty is an exciting but stressful time. It might be helpful for you to talk to a parent or guardian about some of your concerns.*

Body shape:

- a. **“I am 14 and a half years old and have not developed hips/shoulders/breasts at all. In fact, my body is as straight as a stick! Am I normal?”**
- *Changes in body shape begin between the ages of 12 and 19 and may continue until the person is in her early 20’s. Considering your age, chances are your body will continue to change and become ‘curvier’ or broaden. Try your best to be patient with your body and not compare yourself with others. Puberty is an exciting but stressful time. It is often helpful to discuss some of these issues with a parent or guardian.*

Emotions:

- a. **“I am 12 years old. Some days I feel sad and want to cry, other days I feel like everyone is getting on my nerves, and other days I’m happy. Am I normal?”**
- *The stress and different feelings that you have are probably due to hormones. Hormones are made by your body and can cause you to feel a wide range of emotions that were never there before. This is perfectly normal since you are probably going through puberty. Puberty is an exciting but stressful time. It is often helpful to discuss some of these issues with a parent or guardian.*

OPTION 3: VIDEOS



Using videos as part of teaching about Puberty and Hygiene can be very helpful. Teachers often have access to some excellent videos through their local school board or public library. Listed here are some titles of good videos on this topic that may be available to you.

Boy to Man, 4th Edition

This video helps preteen boys understand the emotional and physical changes of puberty.

Girl to Woman, 4th Edition

This video helps preteen girls understand the feelings (physical and emotional changes) they have as their bodies prepare them for adulthood.

Puberty for Boys: Amazing Changes Inside and Out

As boys grow into young adults, they are expected to do it alone. This program helps to understand all the new physical, psychological and emotional changes that they may soon experience. Two experts, a medical doctor and an adolescent psychologist, provide the solid foundation facts. Dozens of teen boys ages 16 and 17 serve as positive role models for students.

Puberty for Girls: Amazing Changes Inside And Out

The time of tremendous physical, psychological and emotional change can be very exciting, but also scary, confusing and painful. This program, often funny, sometimes touching, always honest, helps student understand what soon will be happening to their bodies as well as their feelings and thoughts. A doctor explains how the hormones trigger the rapid growth and development of our bodies while beautiful animation shows the growing body. An adolescent psychologist help students understand they are not alone, that relationships with friends, parents, school and even with their own self-image may soon change along with their changing bodies.

Puberty Happens

Reacting to the onset of puberty; Emily gets her first period. A docu-drama based on fictional single-mother/daughter pair Rachel and Emily. (You, Me and the Kids – the Teen Years)



ACTION

Students will learn to cope with puberty and become comfortable with puberty changes.

Choose one or two of the following options that best suit the level of your students.

OPTION 1: ADVICE CORNER

1. Distribute Handout 2: **Advice Corner**. This is an activity that students will complete with their parents or guardians at home.



Keep in mind that all students do not live in a “traditional” family nor do they have equal opportunities for open discussion with their “family.” 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.

2. For the next class, review the answers using Answer Key 2: **Advice Corner** and debrief with the following questions:
 - a. What did this activity teach you about puberty?
 - b. What are some other questions that young people might have about puberty?
 - c. Who are people you can ask for help during puberty?
 - *It is important to identify two types of supports: social supports (family and friends), support services available at the school (guidance counsellors, teachers, etc.), and community supports (religious institutions, health clinics, nurses, doctors, etc.)*
 - d. What can we do to make growing up easier?
 - *Focus on our strengths.*

OPTION 2: CARE OF SKIN

1. Give each student a white Kleenex.
2. Have your students rub their forehead and chin with it. Then get them to look at the Kleenex.
3. Explain to your students that dirt builds up on the face and it needs to be washed. The dirt can clog the pores and cause skin problems.
4. Using a face cloth and soap, demonstrate with the proper way to wash the face. If appropriate, have students practice washing their faces.
5. Also explain that washing their hair regularly can be helpful.
6. Finally, help students realize that sometimes even though they keep their faces clean and eat good food, they can still have an acne/pimple problem. This can be because they were born with skin that is prone to acne/pimple problems.



ASSESSMENT

Choose one or two of the following options that best suit the level of your students.

OPTION 1: CHANGES:

1. Distribute Handout 3: **Changes** to complete it for homework or during class.
2. You can also divide your class into small groups to complete together.
3. Correct the handout using Answer Key 3: **Changes**.

OPTION 2: MENSTRUATION CHECKLIST

1. Have your students complete Handout 4: **Menstruation Checklist**.
2. Correct the handout using Answer Key 4: **Menstruation Checklist**.

OPTION 3: PUBERTY KIT ASSESSMENT

1. Set up fifteen numbered stations in the classroom. At each station, randomly place items from the Puberty Kit.
2. Distribute Handout 5: **Puberty Kit Assessment** to your students.
3. In pairs, have students put the correct number of the station in the blank next to each item.
4. Once they have identified the item by filling in the number of the station, students are to check off the boxes of the descriptors that apply to the item.
5. The first pair finished correctly is the “Champion”.

REFERENCES:

Alberta Health Services, Sexual and Reproductive Health. *Elementary Puberty Kit*. Siegal, Peggy C. (1991). *Changes in You: An Introduction to Sexuality Education Through an Understanding of Puberty*. James Stanfield Company, Inc.
The Calgary Health Region would like to acknowledge the Calgary Catholic School District for its contribution to this resource.

Student Name: _____

ASK A PARENT/GAURDIAN

Puberty can be hard. It helps to have a parent/guardian you trust to talk to about your questions or concerns. All adults have gone through the changes of “growing up”.

Having your parent/guardian share his or her stories about growing up will help you during puberty.

- Take this handout home. Share it with a parent/guardian, and ask if you can complete it together.
- Schedule a time with your parent/guardian for the interview. Give your parent/guardian this handout so that they can think about the answers before the interview.
- Interview your parent/guardian using the questions provided. Allow at least a half-hour. Do not write down his or her responses.
- Both you and your parent/guardian sign the tear-off slip at the bottom of the page when the interview is complete. This tear-off slip can be handed in to show that you have completed the activity.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What was your first sign that you had started puberty? How old were you?
2. What was the best thing about puberty?
3. What was hard about puberty?
4. How did you handle the hard parts of puberty?

Sign and tear off and hand in this slip only

We completed the “Ask a parent/guardian interview”

Student

Parent/Guardian

Student Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

ADVICE CORNER

Your friends need advice about the changes they are going through. What will you tell them? Together with a parent or guardian, answer the questions below. Write your answers in the space provided.

Q: I don't like my hair because it is too oily. What can I do?

A:

Q: I don't want to shave yet, but other people keep telling me I should. What should I do?

A:

Q: I feel so bad my friends told me that I stink after gym class. What can I do?

A:

Q: I am embarrassed about talking to my parent/guardian about buying my first bra. What should I do?

A:

Q: My skin always breaks out in pimples. I bought some cream, but it's not working. Can a doctor give me a pill for this?

A:

Q: I get really bad cramps when I get my period. What should I do?

A:

Q: Some of my friends started to use tampons instead of pads when they menstruate. Should I use tampons or pads when I menstruate?

A:

Q: This person on my track team has feet that smell bad after every practice. Should I tell this person to see a doctor?

A:

CHANGES

Many changes happen to young men and women during puberty. Some of the changes are listed below. For each change, decide whether it happens only to males, only to females, or if it happens to both.

PUT AN “X” IN THE CORRECT COLUMN

Puberty Changes	Girls	Boys	Both
Pimple may happen			
Period begins			
Mood swings may happen			
Shoulders get wider			
Hips get wider			
Pubic hair and underarm hair grows			
Crushes may develop			
Breast get bigger			
Sweat more			
Testicles get bigger			
Body odour			
Penis get bigger			
Hair grows on the face			
Wet dreams start happening			
Voice changes			

Name: _____

MENSTRUATION CHECKLIST

Directions:

Please read the statement carefully. If the statement is true, place a check mark in the **YES** column. If the statement is false, place a check mark in the **NO** column.

STATEMENT	YES	NO
A girl should wash her hands before and after changing her menstrual pad or tampon.		
A used menstrual pad should be flushed down the toilet.		
When a girl is menstruating, she should change her menstrual pad every two days.		
A girl who is old enough to menstruate should always have a pad or tampon with her.		
If a girl starts her menstrual period at school, and does not have a menstrual pad or tampon, she can ask the secretary for one.		
All teenage girls get menstrual periods every four weeks.		
It is normal to have a foul smelling discharge from the vagina.		
If a menstrual pad has wings, it is able to fly.		
When a girl is menstruating, she cannot play sports.		
It is a good idea to put a menstrual pad in a first aid kit because it can be used to stop deep cuts from bleeding.		

PUBERTY KIT ASSESSMENT

Directions: Put the correct number of the station in the blank next to each item. Then check off the boxes of the descriptors that apply to the item.

<p>_____ antiperspirant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> used by both men and women <input type="checkbox"/> used by women <input type="checkbox"/> used by men <input type="checkbox"/> for smelling good <input type="checkbox"/> for menstruation and or first aid <input type="checkbox"/> for preventing acne/pimples <input type="checkbox"/> for looking good <input type="checkbox"/> for feeling good <p>_____ baby powder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> used by both men and women <input type="checkbox"/> used by women <input type="checkbox"/> used by men <input type="checkbox"/> for smelling good <input type="checkbox"/> for menstruation and or first aid <input type="checkbox"/> for preventing acne/pimples <input type="checkbox"/> for looking good <input type="checkbox"/> for feeling good <p>_____ ball cap</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> used by both men and women <input type="checkbox"/> used by women <input type="checkbox"/> used by men <input type="checkbox"/> for smelling good <input type="checkbox"/> for menstruation and or first aide <input type="checkbox"/> for preventing acne/pimples <input type="checkbox"/> for looking good <input type="checkbox"/> for feeling good <p>_____ deodorant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> used by both men and women <input type="checkbox"/> used by women <input type="checkbox"/> used by men <input type="checkbox"/> for smelling good <input type="checkbox"/> for menstruation and or first aid <input type="checkbox"/> for preventing acne/pimples <input type="checkbox"/> for looking good <input type="checkbox"/> for feeling good 	<p>_____ hot water bottle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> used by both men and women <input type="checkbox"/> used by women <input type="checkbox"/> used by men <input type="checkbox"/> for smelling good <input type="checkbox"/> for menstruation and or first aid <input type="checkbox"/> for preventing acne/pimples <input type="checkbox"/> for looking good <input type="checkbox"/> for feeling good <p>_____ men's boxers & briefs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> used by both men and women <input type="checkbox"/> used by women <input type="checkbox"/> used by men <input type="checkbox"/> for smelling good <input type="checkbox"/> for menstruation and or first aid <input type="checkbox"/> for preventing acne/pimples <input type="checkbox"/> for looking good <input type="checkbox"/> for feeling good <p>_____ menstrual pads in baggies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> used by both men and women <input type="checkbox"/> used by women <input type="checkbox"/> used by men <input type="checkbox"/> for smelling good <input type="checkbox"/> for menstruation and or first aid <input type="checkbox"/> for preventing acne/pimples <input type="checkbox"/> for looking good <input type="checkbox"/> for feeling good <p>_____ razor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> used by both men and women <input type="checkbox"/> used by women <input type="checkbox"/> used by men <input type="checkbox"/> for smelling good <input type="checkbox"/> for menstruation and or first aid <input type="checkbox"/> for preventing acne/pimples <input type="checkbox"/> for looking good <input type="checkbox"/> for feeling good
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DIFFERING ABILITIES: PUBERTY AND HYGIENE HANDOUT 5

shampoo

- used by both men and women
- used by women
- used by men
- for smelling good
- for menstruation and or first aid
- for preventing acne/pimples
- for looking good
- for feeling good

shaving foam

- used by both men and women
- used by women
- used by men
- for smelling good
- for menstruation and or first aid
- for preventing acne/pimples
- for looking good
- for feeling good

soap

- used by both men and women
- used by women
- used by men
- for smelling good
- for menstruation and or first aid
- for preventing acne/pimples
- for looking good
- for feeling good

washcloth

- used by both men and women
- used by women
- used by men
- for smelling good
- for menstruation and or first aid
- for preventing acne/pimples
- for looking good
- for feeling good
-

womens cotton underwear

- used by both men and women
- used by women
- used by men
- for smelling good
- for menstruation and or first aid
- for preventing acne/pimples
- for looking good
- for feeling good

tampons in baggies

- used by both men and women
- used by women
- used by men
- for smelling good
- for menstruation and or first aid
- for preventing acne/pimples
- for looking good
- for feeling good

toothbrush and floss

- used by both men and women
- used by women
- used by men
- for smelling good
- for menstruation and or first aid
- for preventing acne/pimples
- for looking good
- for feeling good

PUBERTY CHANGES

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)

Start sweating

Breasts develop

Hips get bigger

Shoulders get wider

Penis grows bigger

Testicles get bigger

Wet dreams

Erections happen out of the blue (penis gets hard)

Periods (Menstruation)

Mood swings

Start producing vaginal discharge

Can have crushes on someone

Friendship becomes more important

Sometimes feel lonely and confused

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

Want more independence

Think about the future

Concerned about looks (appearance)

PUBERTY CHANGES ANSWER KEY

Puberty Changes	Boy	Girl	Both
Grow taller			X
Skin gets oily			X
Acne (pimples)			X
Voice changes			X
Hair grows on face	X		
Hair gets oily			X
Hair grows in underarms			X
Hair grows on genitals (pubic hair)			X
Start sweating			X
Breasts develop*			X
Hips get bigger		X	
Shoulders get wider	X		
Penis grows bigger	X		
Testicles get bigger	X		
Wet dreams	X		
Erections happen out of the blue (penis gets hard)	X		
Periods (Menstruation)		X	
Mood swings			X
Start producing vaginal discharge		X	
Can have crushes on someone			X
Friendship becomes more important			X
Sometimes feel lonely and confused			X
Stronger feelings of wanting to be liked and to “fit in”			X

DIFFERING ABILITIES: PUBERTY AND HYGIENE ANSWER KEY 1

Want more independence			X
Think about the future			X
Concerned about looks (appearance)			X

ADVICE CORNER ANSWER KEY

Your students may come up with a variety of answers for each of these questions but here is a guideline to make sure students are clear on the facts to be included their answers.

Q: I don't like my hair because it is too oily. What can I do?

A: During puberty, it is normal for your hair to be oilier than it used to be. It is important to wash your hair often to remove oil and dirt. Some people must wash their hair every day, whereas others wash their hair less often.

Q: I don't want to shave yet, but other people keep telling me I should. What should I do?

A: Not all boys shave the hair on their face, and not all girls shave the hair on their legs and underarms. Shaving is a personal choice. It is important for boys and girls to speak with a parent/guardian about shaving.

Q: I feel so bad my friends told me that I stink after gym class. What can I do?

A: During puberty, boys and girls sweat more, especially after physical activity. Sweating often causes a person to have a strong body odour. Usually the smell comes from the underarms. Washing your underarms after gym class may be helpful, but using deodorant or antiperspirant can also help. Deodorants work by covering up the odour with another scent. Antiperspirants work by closing off the sweat glands (no sweat equals no smell). Talk a parent or guardian to find out what might be best for you to use. It is also helpful to bring your gym clothes (socks, T-shirt, shorts) home to be washed regularly. Wearing dirty gym strip could be another reason for smelling after gym class.

Q: I am embarrassed about talking to my parent/guardian about buying my first bra. What should I do?

A: Asking your parent/ guardian to buy you your first bra can be embarrassing for some girls. Girls who are embarrassed to speak with their parent/ guardian about this issue could try to find another trusted adult to talk with. Many times, parents/ guardians are waiting for you to bring up the topic because they do not want to embarrass you. It might be helpful to ask the following questions: "Would it be okay with you if I wore a bra?" or "When do you think I should start wearing a bra?"

Q: My skin always breaks out in pimples. I bought some cream, but it's not working. Can a doctor give me a pill for this?

A: During puberty, many boys and girls get oily skin, which can block the pores causing pimples. Washing your face at least two times a day with soap and water can help keep breakouts under control, but washing alone does not always help. If you have a severe case of acne that does not go away with regular washing, it is important to speak with a parent/ guardian about seeing a doctor. A doctor will sometimes prescribe medicine that can help clear up skin breakouts.

Q: I get really bad cramps when I get my period. What should I do?

A: During menstruation, some girls have menstrual cramps whereas others do not. Some things you can do to make your cramps less painful are: take a warm bath; do gentle exercises; or put a heating pad on the abdomen. There are some types of medications, such as ibuprofen, that can help lower the pain. But be sure to talk to a parent/ guardian before taking any medication. If your cramps are always very painful, you should see your doctor.

Q: Some of my friends started to use tampons instead of pads when they menstruate. Should I use tampons or pads when I menstruate?

A: During your period, you can use either pads or tampons to absorb your menstrual flow. Most young women find it easier to use pads at first and wait until they are older to use tampons. If you do decide to use tampons, it is important to change the tampon often (at least every 4-6 hours) because you can get a very serious infection if you do not. If you cannot change the tampon often or if you tend to forget easily and there is a possibility that you could accidentally leave it in, it is better to use pads. It is important to speak with a parent/ guardian about which are best for you to use.

Q: This person on my track team has feet that smell bad after every practice. Should I tell this person to see a doctor?

A: It is not necessary to see a doctor because of smelly feet. It is important to tell your friend that smelly feet can be easily managed by changing his or her socks every day. Your friend might also want to occasionally take the insoles out of his or her runners and wash them. Your friend can buy sprays that help with foot odour, but often placing a small amount of baking soda on the feet or in the runners can be helpful.

CHANGES ANSWER KEY

Puberty Changes	Girls	Boys	Both
Pimple may happen			X
Period begins	X		
Mood swings may happen			X
Shoulders get wider		X	
Hips get wider	X		
Pubic hair and underarm hair grows			X
Crushes may develop			X
Breast get bigger			X
Sweat more			X
Testicles get bigger		X	
Body odour			X
Penis get bigger		X	
Hair grows on the face		X	
Wet dreams start happening		X	
Voice changes			X

MENSTRUATION CHECKLIST ANSWER KEY

STATEMENT	YES	NO
A girl should wash her hands before and after changing her menstrual pad or tampon.	X	
A used menstrual pad should be flushed down the toilet.		X
When a girl is menstruating, she should change her menstrual pad every two days.		X
A girl who is old enough to menstruate should always have a pad or tampon with her.	X	
If a girl starts her menstrual period at school, and does not have a menstrual pad or tampon, she can ask the secretary for one.	X	
All teenage girls get menstrual periods every four weeks.		X
It is normal to have a foul smelling discharge from the vagina.		X
If a menstrual pad has wings, it is able to fly.		X
When a girl is menstruating, she cannot play sports.		X
It is a good idea to put a menstrual pad in a first aid kit because it can be used to stop deep cuts from bleeding.	X	