

Teaching Puberty: You Can Do It!

Human Development & Sexual Health

Curriculum Support for Grade 4

Lesson 1: Introduction to Puberty

Target Group: Grade 4

Suggested Time: 45-60 minutes

Learning Goals:

Today we are learning to:

- understand what puberty is all about
- describe physical and emotional changes that happen at puberty
- co-create ground rules to be used in puberty education classes
- discuss our feelings about puberty education classes
- state why puberty education is important
- use 'dictionary' words for all body parts

Suggested Materials:

- classroom dictionary
- SMART board or white/black board, as needed
- flip chart paper, as needed
- refer to glossary, diagrams, and additional resources in Grade 5/6 online materials, as needed
(http://www.toronto.ca/health/healthyschools/sexual_health.htm)

Reminder: It is important that schools inform parents and guardians about the delivery of this curriculum. This can be done through a number of ways: include it in a class newsletter, send home an information letter to parents or hold an information session for parents/guardians where the curriculum can be explained and the importance of this learning on the sexual literacy and empowerment of their children can be discussed. Toronto Public Health Sexual Health Promotion staff can help to provide a presentation and answer questions.

Overview

Human Development & Sexual Health classes help students learn about the physical and emotional changes that will happen to them over the next few years. For some students, this will be their first exposure to the topic. Therefore, there may be some children who do not know basic information and may be anxious about having to learn it.

Students may have different expectations about what will be discussed in these classes.

It is important for them to understand what the word 'puberty' means and why it is important to discuss this topic.

Teaching about puberty includes teaching about human sexuality. This does not mean just teaching about how bodies change and function. Human sexuality includes the following aspects: biological (sexual and reproductive anatomy), psychological (mental health and self-esteem), social (relationships and individual identity), spiritual (values and beliefs), and behavioural (how we express our sexuality).

Activity #1: Puberty Definition

Lead a discussion on the word 'puberty'. Start by having the class provide a definition for the word puberty.

Have a student look up the word in the classroom dictionary (or computer), and have them report back their findings to the class.

Teacher Prompt:

- "Why do you think we need to learn about puberty in school?"
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Additional Activity for Activity #1

- It is important for children to learn about puberty at this age because it will help them understand the changes that are or will be occurring, both within themselves and their peer group.

- Some students are going through puberty at a younger age than 20 years ago (The New Puberty: How to Navigate the Early Puberty in Today's Girls. Julianna Deardorff PHD and Louise Greenspan, MD. 2014).
- Some families are reluctant to discuss this topic and expect it to be taught in schools.
- This is a part of body science.
- Students have the right to learn accurate information.
- Increased knowledge may help promote body acceptance.
- See SIECCAN: Sexual Health Education in Schools: Questions and Answers; Updated 2015 Ontario Edition: Pg. 5: Why do we need Sexual Health Education in schools?

Activity #2: Ground Rules

Work with students to construct a list of ground rules that will increase their feelings of safety and comfort during puberty classes.

It is essential that the following ground rules be included:

- No personal questions or sharing of private information.*
- You have the right to pass on a question.
- No question is silly or stupid.
- Use dictionary words whenever possible.

Post the list in the classroom and refer to it as needed.

** There is a balance between encouraging students to talk about real life and over-disclosure of private information. Encourage students to use the phrase "Someone I know..." instead of the person's name if sharing information of a personal nature.*

Additional Information for Activity #2

- It may be helpful to frame the ground rules in a creative way, such as:
 - G**...Giggling is okay but laughing at others is not
 - R**...Respect for myself and others is important
 - O**...Option to pass on answering questions is available to all
 - U**...Use dictionary words when describing the body
 - N**...No question is a silly question!
 - D**...Do use "Someone I know..." instead of the person's name

Activity #3: Periods of Rapid Growth

Tell the students that there are 3 periods of rapid growth in human beings.

Ask the students to turn to their elbow partner and see if they can determine when these growth spurts occur. The following could be given to the students as hints.

Teacher prompts:

- "Does anyone know someone who was, or is, pregnant?"
- "Does anyone know someone who has a baby?"
- "Does anyone know someone who has had a big growth spurt this year?"

Using the teacher prompts below, have a class discussion on the 3 stages of rapid growth in human beings.

Teacher prompts:

- "During pregnancy – You start from a little dot this big (place a dot on the board). This cell grows and multiplies in size many times over nine months until the baby is ready to be born."
- "Infancy – From the time of birth, the baby will grow quickly and often triples its birth weight in the first year of life."
- "Puberty – Height, weight, and body shape change rapidly as children go through puberty."

Additional Information for Activity #3

- An increase in sleep is required during all these periods of rapid growth.
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Activity #4: Feelings about Puberty Classes

Lead a discussion regarding feelings about puberty classes and elicit student responses.

Teacher Prompt:

- "I've noticed a lot of giggling and have heard a few comments since you learned we were going to start puberty classes. I don't hear the same things when you find out that we are going to start geography or a new math lesson. "
- "Why do you think that is?"

Additional Information for Activity #4

- Students will be talking about parts of the body that are not seen in public and are often not discussed.
 - Feelings ranging from curious to comfortable or embarrassed to disgusted are common.
 - Some students grow up in families or cultures where body changes and/or sexuality are not discussed.
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Activity #5: Language Exercise

Draw a table on the board with 4 columns.

Label the columns as in the example below.

Using the word 'buttocks' as an example*, ask students to suggest no more than 2 words for buttocks that fall under the other categories: childhood, polite, and slang/street words.

Remind the students they will be encouraged to use 'dictionary' words in class.

Now look up the definition for the word 'elbow'.

See if students can come up with words in each category.

Was there a difference? Discuss.

Examples:

Dictionary	Childhood	Polite	Slang/street
buttocks	bum seat tush	backside derriere bottom	ass bum butt

Dictionary	Childhood	Polite	Slang/street
urinate	pee wee	going to the bathroom being excused	piss pee take a leak

**For this exercise be sure to use the more neutral words suggested. Avoid using words like penis or vagina as the slang/street words may be offensive, and sharing of childhood words may lead to embarrassment or ridicule.*

Additional Information for Activity #5

- Being familiar with language that they can use in public is important to enhance students' sense of self. Because language is such a powerful tool, it also helps them to develop greater confidence and empowerment.
- This activity will help the class learn about different categories of words. It is an activity that can be fun and help students feel more comfortable.
- There are a variety of words used for body parts and sexual activities. Some of these words are 'nice', some are 'funny', and some are considered 'rude' or 'disrespectful'. Some students will not know the socially appropriate words or may have learned only slang. Students need to know what words they can use in class and also understand why some language is unacceptable.
- It is important to acknowledge that we might have learned different words, and that's okay – it is helpful to know the words that medical practitioners might use. It is important that students not feel ashamed for their prior sexual health knowledge.
- Some students (i.e., trans* or intersex students) may not identify with the dictionary terms.
- Using dictionary words in class will familiarize students with the anatomical names for body parts.

Wrap Up for Lesson 1

- Summarize what was discussed in this lesson and ask for any questions.
- Encourage students to share what they have learned with a trusted adult.
- Write the *Kids Help Phone* contact information on the board (1-800-668-6868, www.kidshelpphone.ca) and remind students that contacting *Kids Help Phone* is free, confidential, anonymous, and that it can be a safe place to discuss concerns.
- Distribute 'Exit Cards' and give students a few minutes to complete them and hand them in.

Lesson 1 Exit Card

Name _____

List one of the three stages of rapid growth in a person's life.

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