

Teaching Puberty: You Can Do It!

Human Development & Sexual Health

Curriculum Support for Grade 4

Lesson 2: Changes at Puberty

Target Group: Grade 4

Suggested Time: 45-60 minutes

Learning Goals:

Today we are learning to:

- describe physical and emotional changes that happen at puberty
- understand the importance of asking questions as a key part of our learning
- be aware of other resources that can assist us to learn about puberty
- share our learning with an adult we trust

Suggested Materials:

- Changes Chart, attached
- 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)

Activity #1: Changes that happen to both males and females at puberty

Teacher prompts:

- "The changes of puberty happen due to chemical messengers in our body that tell the body to change. It is like a switch being turned on."
- "A gland called the pituitary gland makes these chemical messengers that start the changes of puberty. The pituitary gland is located at the base of the brain at the back of your head." Help students find the location of the pituitary gland by asking them to touch the base of their skull at the back of their head.
- "There is no 'right' time for these changes to start. However changes in females commonly happen between ages 8 and 16 and changes in males commonly happen between ages 10 to 18."
- "How and when a person begins to change depends in part on genes that they inherit from their birth parents. Genes are like instructions that help the body to decide all sorts of things, like our eye colour, our height, the colour of our skin, and the shape of our ears!"
- "During puberty what changes happen to people's bodies?"

Student's responses: "They get taller, they get pimples, they grow body hair, etc."

Teacher Prompt:

- "Great. Now, let's review these changes that happen at puberty."

As a class, ask the students to come up with a list of physical changes at puberty. You may want to write these on the board. Emphasize the changes that are common to both males and females.

Teacher prompts:

- "Height and weight increase."
- "At puberty, feet often go through a growth spurt first, but the rest of the body will soon follow."
- "Deepening voice is another sign of puberty for everyone, although it is often more noticeable in males. When the voice box grows, the voice grows deeper. It is seen as a bump or protrusion in the front of the neck, most often in males, called an Adam's Apple."

- "Breasts grow during puberty – in females and in many males. It starts with an area under the nipple, one breast at a time. Many people feel like their breasts grow at uneven rates – this is common. For males, the changes are temporary, often lasting a year or two."
- "The genitals grow just as your whole body grows in puberty."
- "Shoulders broaden for everyone during puberty; this is often more noticeable in males."
- "Hips broaden during puberty, especially in females."
- "Another sign of puberty is hair beginning to grow in new places, like underarms and around the genitals (pubic hair). Depending on genetics, hair may also begin to grow thicker or darker on the arms, legs, upper lip, chin, and chest."
- "Body odour increases during puberty. This is the time when people need to bathe or shower with soap and water more often to get rid of the sweat and bacteria that cause body odour."
- "It is important to put on clean clothes after bathing."
- "It is important to use deodorant or antiperspirant under the arms to reduce body odour."
- "Puberty also triggers emotional changes. This can be a time of change in your moods, feelings, attitudes, likes and dislikes that may impact friendships and relationships with family. It is important to discuss your feelings with a trusted adult or you can contact the Kids Help Phone to talk with a counsellor." (1-800-668-6868)

Additional Activity for Activity #1

- Not everyone's genitals look the same. Diversity can be due to genetics, intersexuality, FGM (female genital mutilation), surgical procedures (e.g., circumcision), etc. (Please note: discussing FGM at this grade level is not recommended. An acknowledgement that not all genitals look the same should suffice.)
- When breasts begin to grow, a bra or undershirt can provide comfort and support.
- Although washing with soap and water, eating well, and getting enough sleep can help the skin, sometimes they are not enough to prevent acne. A health care provider may be needed to help students determine if prescription creams and medications are needed.

Activity #2: Body Changes: Males

** Many educators have found that teaching about changes to the male body first may help increase the comfort level of the students and manage the dynamics in the classroom.*

Teacher prompts:

- "We have talked about changes that happen to everyone at puberty and now we are going to talk more about changes that happen to male bodies, at puberty."
- "As we mentioned, when talking about changes that happen to everyone, hair begins to grow under the arms and around the genitals. The hair around the penis and scrotum is called pubic hair."
- "Hair may become darker on the arms and legs and will later start to grow on the upper lip, face, chest, and sometimes the back."
- "The testicles and scrotum and then the penis grow larger. It is common for one testicle to hang lower than the other."
- "Erections may happen more often. This is when the penis becomes harder and larger and stands away from the body."
- "The testicles begin to produce sperm, which are the male reproductive cells."
- "Sperm, in a thick whitish fluid called semen, may sometimes come out of the penis. This is called ejaculation. If it happens during sleep it is called a wet dream and means a person has reached puberty and their body is producing sperm."
- "When someone has a wet dream they will usually notice a sticky white spot of semen on their pyjamas or sheets. If this happens the sheets should be washed."

Body Changes: Females

Teacher prompts:

- "Now we will talk about the changes that happen to female bodies at puberty."
- "Breasts start to develop, one breast at a time. Bras, sports bras, or bandeaus are often worn for comfort and support."

- "In females, pubic hair grows in front of and around the genitals. This area is called the vulva."
 - "Body shape changes as the hips begin to widen."
 - "Periods or menstruation start."
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Activity #3: Menstruation

Teacher prompts:

- "Menstruation, or 'having periods', begins at puberty and is a natural and healthy part of being female."
- "A period happens when the body begins its' monthly release of a special blood-rich lining that had been building up inside the uterus." (Show an anatomical poster/illustration or describe where the uterus is in the female body.)
- "This fluid comes out through the vagina, an opening between a female's legs."
- "The first time a person gets a period they may notice a red or brownish mark on their underwear or on the toilet paper when wiping after using the toilet."
- "A pad (which sticks inside the underwear) or a tampon (that fits into the vagina) is used to absorb this menstrual fluid."
- "The period will last for between 3 and 7 days and then it will stop."
- "It will come again in a month or so, and will usually settle into a pattern and come roughly every 3-6 weeks for the next 40 years or so. It will stop during the time the body is pregnant."
- "A person may want to tell an adult at home about this first period, so they can talk about it, answer questions, and buy them the pads or tampons they will need."
- "The first period usually starts between the ages of 9 and 14, but it can come earlier or later than this."
- "People often want to know when their first period will come. No one can know exactly, but periods usually come about a year or two after some breast development and growth of pubic and underarm hair, but not before."
- "A white or yellowish mark on the underwear is another sign that menstruation may start in the next year or two."

- "Being prepared with a pad is a good idea. Some people start to carry one in their backpack."
 - "Sometimes people have cramps in their lower abdomen or back when they have their period. If this happens, talk to a trusted adult; there are some things that can help."
 - "Many cultures and families celebrate a first period because it means that the body is growing up, that the female reproductive system has matured, and that one day the person may be able to have a baby."
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Wrap Up for Lesson 2

- Summarize what was discussed in this lesson and ask for any questions.
- See the 'Changes Chart' (attached) as it may be used to assess the students' learning of the material in this lesson.
- 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.

Name: _____

Changes Chart

Many changes happen during puberty. Some of the changes are listed below. For each change, decide whether it could happen to males, females or both.

Put a (✓) in the correct column.

Changes	Could happen to males	Could happen to females	Could happen to both
Can get pimples			
Period begins			
Can have mood swings			
Shoulders get wider			
Hips get wider			
Pubic and underarm hair grows			
Can have crushes on someone			
Breasts get bigger			
Increased sweating			
Testicles increase in size			
Sperm are made			
Sexual thoughts and feelings increase			
Voice gets lower			

Lesson 2 Exit Card

Name _____

List two changes that are the same for both males and females during puberty.

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