

Always Changing & Growing Up

#LIKEABOY Everything you need
to know about puberty

Grades 5-8



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Find out more



From a Boy to a Man

What a trip!

You're a growing boy. Growing independent, growing strong and growing into a man. Puberty is an exciting time full of changes to the way you look and the way you feel.

Puberty can start as early as 9 years old for some boys and as late as 14 for others. It can be a really confusing time, as you might be wondering what's happening to you and why?

Don't worry! These changes are completely normal and natural; they happen to all of us.

The goal of this guide is to give you all the information you need to navigate puberty with confidence. It also shares helpful tips and advice from experts.

Simply read on to find out everything you've always wanted to know but never dared to ask.

Yours,

The Always Team

Your Body is Changing

Puberty

Puberty is a time of physical and emotional change that happens as children grow and mature. These changes are natural, they're a sign you're healthy and everyone experiences them!

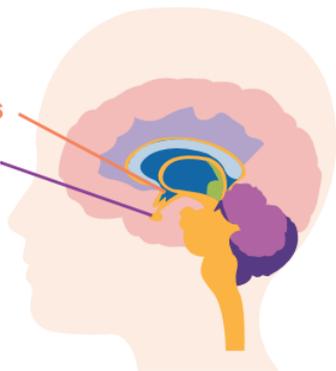
They usually start occurring earlier for girls (between the ages of 7 and 12), than they do for boys (between 9 and 14). But keep in mind, the time puberty kicks in is different for everyone. For some it happens early, while for others it can take longer. Your time is the right time!

So, why do we all change?

Puberty simply exists to prepare the body for reproducing, so the human species can continue! During puberty, two parts of the brain called the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland start making a lot more hormones.

Hormones are chemical substances that act as messengers in the body and make changes happen. Some hormones will make your bones grow longer, others will guide the development of your brain or the changes in your reproductive system.

Hypothalamus
Pituitary Gland



Did you know? Boys and girls produce all the same hormones, but in different levels. Boys have more testosterone and girls have more estrogen. That's one of the things that makes us different!

Changes During Puberty

Now you know why changes occur, let's take a look at what changes children go through during puberty.

Female

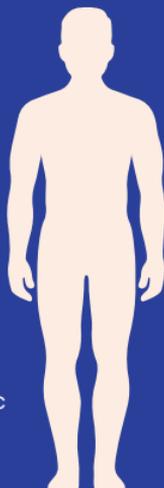
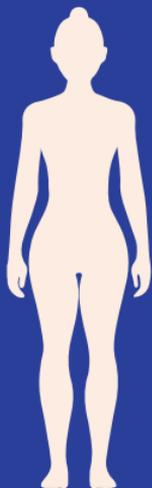
- Breasts start to grow
- Vaginal discharge begins
- Hips and thighs broaden
- Labia may change

Male

- Breasts can grow
- Voice cracks and gets deeper
- Adam's apple enlarges
- Shoulders get larger and body gets more muscular
- Chest hair may appear
- Penis and testicles grow

Shared

- Emotions and feelings may seem stronger
- Brain development improves the way you think and understand
- New feelings of attraction may begin
- You grow taller
- Skin gets oilier and pimples may appear
- Sweating increases, body develops own odour
- Body hair grows: face, armpit, leg and pubic



These changes can be tough for many people, so it's great to support each other as best you can through this stage in life.

How to deal with all these changes?

With all these changes going on, it's important to learn how to keep your body healthy. As you're growing up, it's time to start making your own choices and developing healthy habits.

Skin Care

As the skin on your face gets oilier you may start getting pimples, blackheads or acne. If you get acne, it doesn't mean you're not clean or you've done something wrong. Most of the time, it's related to your new hormones that cause the extra oiliness, and it is also genetic.

The good news is that developing a regular skin care routine can help!

You can start with these few tips:

- The first step to keeping your skin clean is to wash! A daily shower gets rid of the dirt and oil on your skin. To wash your face, use a gentle cleanser and your fingertips. There is no need to scrub your skin hard – rough pads or cloths can actually worsen acne.
- Don't squeeze any pimples because this can cause scars and may even create more acne.
- Don't get too much sun as this can make acne worse.
- Keep your skin healthy by eating a healthy diet, being physically active and getting plenty of rest (see more tips on this later!).
- If you feel you need a product to take care of your skin, talk to a trusted adult to see which one would be right for you.

Smile Care

Part of staying healthy is making sure you keep your teeth clean. Make sure you brush them properly every morning and every night with a good toothpaste and a soft bristled brush.

Toothpaste helps fight cavities, strengthen teeth enamel and freshen breath.

For best results, brush from gum to teeth and don't forget your tongue. You should also **floss** daily in between your teeth and use a **mouthwash** to help reach places that brushing may have missed.



Hair Care

Some boys need to wash their hair more often during puberty because their body produces more oil – some don't. If your hair becomes greasier you may want to follow this simple two step routine to keep it clean:

1. Wash with shampoo

A good shampoo will clean your hair by removing deposits such as dirt, sebum (an oily secretion of the sebaceous glands) and styling products. It can also protect it from damage and nourish it too!

2. Then apply conditioner

The role of the conditioner is to untangle your hair and make it easier to manage. It will also keep it moisturized and protect it from damage.

Sweat and body odour

Just as some glands start producing more oil during puberty, your sweat glands produce more perspiration. This is important because it helps regulate the temperature of your body – as the sweat evaporates away from your body it takes the heat with it! But, sweat can smell unpleasant when it comes in contact with bacteria on the skin. This smell is known as body odour.

To help prevent body odour you can:

1. Wash regularly with soap– at least once a day and especially after physical activity.
2. Use a deodorant on clean skin.

Deodorants? Antiperspirants? What's the difference?

Deodorants are basically perfumes that help mask or cover your body odour. **Antiperspirants** help stop the body odour from developing by reducing sweat. Both come in many different styles and fragrances and are usually combined in one product. If you can't find a product that works for you talk with a trusted adult.



Body Hair

During puberty, thicker and darker hair begins to appear in many new places, such as legs, underarms, chest and in the pubic area. Having body hair is normal and natural. Some people may decide to remove it, some may choose not to.

You may also notice hair starting to grow on your upper lip and chin and may want to start **shaving or grooming** it. Before you start shaving, talk to someone like your dad, guardian or relative - ask for advice and your own razor. At first you may not need to shave very often but eventually, as it grows faster and thicker, you may start shaving more regularly, even daily. Like most things, the more you shave, the better you get at it!



Breasts

You may think that only girls grow breasts during puberty, but many boys actually have some breast growth during puberty, too – and it's natural! It usually just involves a little enlargement of the nipple area or a small amount of breast growth. For boys who have this, it almost always disappears within 6 months to a year or so.

Regular preventive care

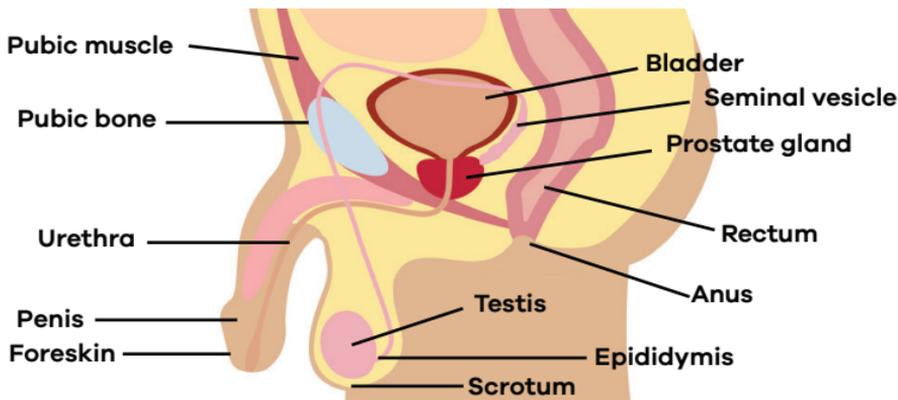
You've probably been going to the **doctor for checkups** all your life, so it should come as no surprise that you'll need to keep doing that. Regular healthcare is important, so be sure to visit your doctor and dentist on a regular basis.

Changes to the reproductive system

Some of the most significant changes that happen during puberty are the changes that happen to our reproductive organs.

What happens to boys

During puberty, your brain will signal to your body to make more androgens (reproductive hormones), especially testosterone. Testosterone does a lot of things: it makes your penis and testicles grow bigger, causes the growth of pubic hair, causes more frequent erections, and encourages the testicles to start making sperm.



Erections

Erections are when the penis becomes harder and sticks up because parts of it fill up with blood. They happen to boys throughout their life, even as babies, but at puberty, they become more common and may happen randomly for no reason at all. Sometimes spontaneous erections can make you feel embarrassed - just remember they are natural and will occur less as you get older.

ERECT PENIS



Sperm

Sperm is the male reproductive cell that can fertilize a female egg to create a pregnancy. Sperms are made in the testicles, which hang outside your body in a sac (scrotum), just beneath your penis. The testes make a lot of sperm – about 1,000 sperms per second. Sperms are stored in the epididymis, which is the tube you can feel at the back of each testicle.

Sperm are best produced **at a cooler temperature** than normal body temperature. Because of this, the scrotum and testicles hang outside your body to stay cool. If you are cold, your scrotum shrinks to pull the testicles in closer to your body for warmth. When it is very hot, they may hang lower.

Ejaculation

Sperm are released from the epididymis and move through the sperm ducts toward the penis. Along the way, sperm mix with fluid produced by the seminal vesicles and prostate gland, so they can move more easily. The sperm and this fluid are called **semen**. It is whitish and sticky.

Semen leaves the penis through the urethra. This is the tube that runs through the middle of your penis. Urine also leaves the body through the urethra, but never at the same time as semen.

When semen spurts out the penis, it's called an **ejaculation**. It happens when muscles at the base of the penis start to expand and contract. This pushes the semen through the urethra and out through the tip of the penis.

Remember – Even if your body is now ready to fertilize a female egg, it doesn't mean you are! It's important to know why you get erections and what is happening inside your body. There are many other external factors to be considered and these include age, readiness, and much more!

FAQs

Do men stop having erections when they get older?

No. Healthy males of all ages, from babies to older men, can get erections. They occur more commonly during and after puberty.

Does it matter what size your penis is?

Not at all! Penises do vary in length and shape from person to person, but not as much as you may think.

What is circumcision?

This is a minor surgical procedure, usually performed soon after birth, which removes all or part of the foreskin of the penis. A circumcision is not usually considered medically necessary, but it may be performed for religious or cultural reasons, or because it makes it easier to keep the penis clean. To help prevent the growth of bacteria, uncircumcised boys and men should wash under the foreskin every day. Remember – circumcised or not, the penis works the same.

What are wet dreams?

Sometimes you can ejaculate when you are asleep. This is called a nocturnal emission, more commonly known as a “wet dream”. Usually they happen without disturbing your sleep - you may just notice that your pajamas or sheets feel sticky when you wake up. This is natural - most boys have them. You will experience them less frequently after your body has gone through puberty, because as you grow older you’ll start having more control over your body. If you have a wet dream, be sure to change your pajamas or sheets.

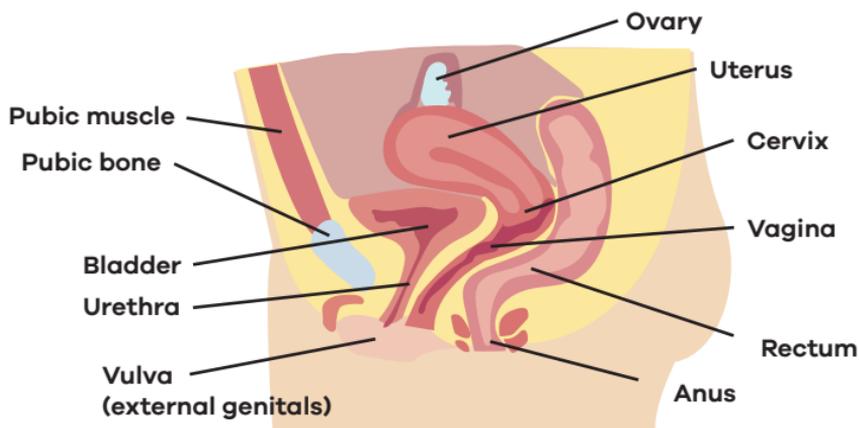


What happens to girls?

During puberty, girls start to produce more progesterone and estrogen (hormones). Progesterone is a steroid hormone that stimulates the uterus to prepare for pregnancy.

Estrogen stimulates growth and changes to their reproductive organs, including the vulva, vagina, uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries.

These **hormone changes** also mean that girls will start **menstruating**, also known as having a period. Every month, a girl's body will produce an egg in the ovary and the lining of the uterus will thicken. If no pregnancy occurs, the lining of the uterus sheds and leaves the body through the vagina. It comes out as bloody fluid that slowly flows out over 3-7 days each month. This is a very **natural process** for girls.



Understanding girls' periods

How do girls manage their periods?

Just so you know and in case you ever need to get one for a girl, these are the products girls might use to manage their periods. They all either absorb or hold the menstrual blood.

Period Protection	Worn inside or outside the body	Disposable or Reusable
 PADS	Outside	Disposable
 LINERS	Outside	Disposable
 TAMPONS	Inside	Disposable
 CUPS	Inside	Reusable
 MENSTRUAL UNDERWEAR	Outside	Reusable

PMS, cramps, and how you can help!

A week or so before her period, girls' hormone levels go up and down a lot. These fluctuations can change how a girl feels. The physical and emotional symptoms that occur are known as **premenstrual syndrome (PMS)**. They are completely natural and affect most women at some point in their lives.

Common symptoms that girls might experience:

- Feeling swollen or bloated
- Change in appetite
- Abdominal cramps and feeling queasy
- Acne or skin rash
- Mood changes: feeling sad, tearful, tired or irritable
- Headaches

These symptoms might lessen with time and not all girls experience them. Some actually feel energized and active before their period starts!

Girls may also get **period cramps** just before or during their period. These happen because the muscle of the uterus contracts, in order to push its lining out of the vagina.

How can you help with PMS & cramps?

- **Be supportive** and try to be understanding.
- **Do not tease girls** by saying "oh, it must be that time of the month again".
- Remember that **not all girls feel the same** and how they feel can change from one period to another - try not to make assumptions about their feelings.



Staying healthy and confident

Your brain is changing too!

While changes to your body are visible, there's a lot of changes happening to your brain, too! You will probably develop new and stronger emotions and become more aware of what people around you do and think.

These changes can affect your emotions and confidence and sometimes even make you more anxious. This is normal and there are supports available to help with these thoughts. Talk to a teacher, your doctor, a trusted family member or older friend.

Build your brain power

Your brain is like a muscle, so you need to exercise it: when you take on challenges and practice until you overcome them, neurons in your brain create new and stronger connections. And when your brain gets stronger, your skills do too.

This means you can get better at pretty much anything! From school, sports and after-school activities, to relationships, small talk and public speaking! It starts with taking a first step, letting your brain leave its comfort zone and not stopping when it gets tough.



Embrace the Growth Mindset

The growth mindset is the belief that your mind can grow and change with practice. Check out this table and start training your brain today:

Growth Mindset		Fixed Mindset	
CHALLENGING YOURSELF	Embrace challenges		Avoid opportunities
FACING CRITICISM	Learn from feedback		Ignore useful feedback
MAKING AN EFFORT	See effort as key to success		See effort as useless
OVERCOMING OBSTACLES	A misstep is a step forward		A misstep is a reason to give up
WHEN OTHERS SUCCEED	Find inspiration in their performance		Feel threatened and upset

Take risks and keep going

Remember – you only truly fail when you don't even try, so take positive risks. It can be scary, hard and, well, risky. But, it can also be exciting, fun and rewarding!

Here are a few tips to take positive risks:

- **Don't be afraid to fail!** If you fail, use it as an opportunity to learn, get stronger and keep going!
- **Try again, and again, and again.** Know that sometimes you have to keep practicing and trying new ways if you want to get better.
- **Remind yourself of all the things you've achieved** in the past. This can help you feel positive when you feel like you can't do something.
- **Break big things down** in to smaller, more manageable steps.
- **We all have strengths** - focus your attention on yours. It will help you become more confident and will give you energy!

Keep Going #LikeABoy. It's working!

Powerful words to help you out

A majority of teens believe words can harm. The good news is that changing the words you use can change your world. Try these words:

AND. When you praise yourself, it's easy to add "but" to lessen your success. Try using "and" instead. So instead of "I'm pretty good at geometry but I still have a B", try saying "and I am getting better every week".

I CAN. Have you ever said things like "I'm totally going to fail this test, I got so many questions wrong"? Turn the negative talk to more constructive thoughts like how you can study harder and do better next time.

YET! Yet is a very powerful word. You can use it to remind yourself that though you haven't accomplished it yet, you will!



Making good decisions

You're probably starting to earn more freedom at school and at home – and probably more responsibilities, too! As a result, you'll be making more decisions on your own than when you were younger. You'll need to evaluate and make sense of all the influencing factors in your life such as friends, parents, teachers and things you see in the media and read on the internet.

At times, it can be difficult to know what to think and how to act. Learning to make the right decision for YOU is an important part of growing up. It's easy to get into situations that are challenging when you don't take the time to think about your decisions.

Remember, great decision-making skills are learned – no one is born with them!

I-D-E-A-L solution building

IDENTIFY the problem

DESCRIBE all the ways you might solve the problem

EVALUATE all the possible solutions

ACT on one of the solutions and try it out

LEARN if your solution solved the problem effectively

Sex, Gender & Society

Let's start with a few definitions:

Biological sex: Your biological sex is based on the genitals you're born with and the chromosomes you have. At birth, most people are either male or female.

Gender identity: This is about how you feel and how you think about yourself when it comes to gender. Gender is a continuum and there are many different ways of expressing your gender. And that's ok - everyone's identity is unique to them and should be respected.

Gender roles: As you grow up, and enter puberty, you've probably started to become more aware of what people around you think. You might have started to notice that people expect you to look, act or behave in a certain way just because you're a boy. We call this gender stereotyping and these are socially constructed – they relate to characteristics and behaviors that are typically thought to go alongside a person's biological sex.

Don't let society limit you!

Your biological sex shouldn't define what you can or can't do – and stereotyping someone because of their gender, or thinking that someone is better or worse because of their gender, can be very harmful. It can stop us from speaking up and cause us to pretend to be someone we're not, especially when we fear criticism or punishment.

Remember – you don't have to let norms limit you. Boys can be whoever they want to be!

If you're worried about how others are treating you, speak to a trusted adult or parent.

You're great, just the way you are!

We are all different and that's awesome. Imagine if we all looked and acted the same – how boring would that be!

Many people only focus on what's wrong with them – their problems, struggles, and stress. But when we do this, we lose sight of what is good and strong in ourselves. There is much more to life than problems!

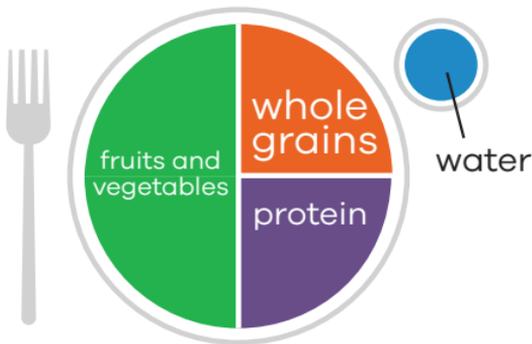
There is no right or wrong way to look, so try to focus on staying healthy and happy, be proud of your uniqueness and be supportive of those around you.



Healthy nutrition

Taking care of yourself also means supplying your body with the energy and nutrients it needs. Growing like you do during puberty needs a lot of energy and most of it comes from the food you eat. This is why it's very important to make sure you eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.

Here is what a healthy meal looks like:



A few tips:

- **Eat regular meals** and don't skip breakfast. Dips in energy can lead to crankiness.
- **Make eating healthy fun** - try out new fruits and vegetables each week!
- **Help with the grocery shopping** – and try and pick out healthy food you think you'll like.
- **Try your hand at cooking** – and make something for all the family.
- **Eat healthy snacks** - if you treat yourself with very salty or sweet ones, do so in moderation.
- When you're craving something sweet, **why not try a fruit smoothie** – it's full of delicious natural sugars.

Staying active

Being physically active through sport or other physical activities is a great way to keep your body feeling healthy, while boosting your energy levels! It will help make your heart and lungs work better too.



The key to enjoying it is to pick something you like. For even more motivation, consider making it into social activity with your friends and family.

Sleeping well

Getting enough sleep is an essential part of staying healthy and happy. On average, you'll need between 8 to 10 hours per night.

Here's why your body needs sleep:

- To restore and rejuvenate
 - To grow muscles
 - To repair tissue
 - To file away all your thoughts from the day
 - To help increase your ability to learn more and pay attention.
- Plenty of sleep can also help prevent you from becoming overweight, and reduces the chance of diabetes.

Tips to getting enough sleep:

- Stick to a regular sleep schedule
- Avoid watching and using screens (e.g. TV, phone) one hour before going to bed
- Use a comfortable mattress and pillow
- Exercise daily

Staying safe

At puberty, you are going through so many changes that everything seems possible, and this is great. Just remember to stay safe too.

- **Understand the risks of drug use:** legal and illegal substances affect your body and brain, can cause serious long-term damage, and even be life-threatening.
- Be aware that **harassment and bullying exist**. This is when someone seeks to harm or intimidate someone else. It is harmful, so if you're experiencing it - seek support from a trusted adult.
- **Use the internet and social media safely**, responsibly and positively. While they can be great ways to find out information and connect with others, they can also have drawbacks. Talk to your parents, guardians or a trusted adult to learn more about how to best use them, and follow these key tips:
 - Be careful about what you share. What goes online stays there forever
 - Don't feel pressured to do anything online
 - Be aware that social media is not always real life
 - Don't gossip online - things can spread easily





Healthy Relationships



Taking care of others around you

During puberty, everyone is going through changes that can be hard to deal with. Look out for others and share with a trusted adult if you're worried about any of your friends.

Discovering new feelings

At this particular moment of your life when your body is producing a lot more hormones, you might start to experience new feelings. Some of these feelings may cause you to be more curious about your sexuality and this is totally natural.

Personal intimacy

As these hormones can make people feel more curious about their new feelings, some may begin to explore private parts of their body, especially their genital area. This is not right or wrong, but it's personal and should be done in private.

Intimate feelings towards others

You might also begin to see others as more than just friends, and start having new feelings and crushes. This is completely natural!

Just remember to keep in mind that others may not feel the same as you, and it's important to respect other's personal choices.

Getting support from others

Talking to your friends and family about your feelings and questions during puberty can help them better understand and support you.

Don't feel like you need to cope with everything on your own. Ask your parents or a trusted adult for their advice and to help answer your questions. They've experienced it too, so they'll have lots of good tips and they might even be more useful than tips from your friends, or others of your age.

To help start the conversation, follow these tips:

Keep it casual: Find a time when you typically talk with your parents, and use it to discuss the things you've learned in this guide. You might want to ask them what it was like when they were younger and experienced puberty.

Write it down: Sometimes it helps to write down your questions, so you can make sure you get all the answers.

Be direct: Take a deep breath and just share how you're feeling. Chances are they've experienced similar feelings at some point in their life too!



Where To Get More Info

We've covered a lot in this guide, but you may want to know more.



always.com/en-us/tips-and-advice is full of information.



Don't be afraid to talk and ask questions to your friends, family and teachers!

Now that you know how your body and brain work and have tips to stay healthy and confident, go out and enjoy this exciting journey.

You have limitless possibilities ahead of you!



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