



## Puberty

Ages 11-12

### WHAT IS YOUR CHILD GOING THROUGH?

Puberty, which means “to become covered with hair,” is a period of physical and psychological change that lasts 3 to 5 years on average. Most young people go through these changes between the ages of 10 and 14. This transformation generally starts earlier in girls than in boys.

#### Things that kids might be wondering

- When will I get my period?
- Is it normal for my breasts to be smaller than those of other girls?
- When do I need to start shaving?
- I think a lot about boys. Is this normal?
- What can I do to attract girls?

### PHYSICAL CHANGES

#### BELOW ARE THE PHYSICAL CHANGES THAT WILL OCCUR IN YOUR CHILD:

##### In girls:

- growth spurt
- breast development (often one breast develops before the other)
- appearance of hair: in the pubic area, under the arms, on the legs
- increased sweating
- skin (pimples) and hair more oily
- vaginal discharge (before menstruation)
- start of menstruation

##### In boys:

- testicles change and grow
- appearance of hair: in the pubic area, under the arms, on the face
- penis lengthens
- voice changes (gets lower)
- growth spurt
- muscles grow and shoulders widen
- increased sweating
- skin (pimples) and hair more oily
- more frequent erections (day and night)
- first ejaculations

### PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGES

Children going through this stage may also:

- have mood swings
- want to be more independent... while still needing you
- want some space from you and the family
- open up to others... while also wanting to be alone
- be more reserved and want more privacy
- be more curious about sex
- be more concerned about their appearance
- want to please others, be in love
- etc.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PARENT?

### Share your personal experience with puberty

Children's experiences are often similar to their parents'. To help talk about puberty, ask yourself:

- At what age did you notice you were going through these changes?
- How did you experience these changes?
- What did you worry about? What embarrassed you?
- What did you wonder about? Who answered your questions?
- What did you like about your appearance?
- What was the most positive aspect about becoming a teen?
- Etc.

### Buy things that will help your child

- Hygiene products (panty liners, maxi pads, tampons) and a bra, if necessary.
- Specific daily care products (face wash, shampoo, anti-perspirant).
- If required, choose a hair removal or shaving method (for girls: armpits, legs; for boys: face).

Show your child how to use these different products.

## WHAT CAN HELP YOU?

### Web site

[www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca)

### Books and brochure

FRITH, Alex. *What's Happening to Me?*, Éditions Usborne, Héritage Jeunesse, 2007. (Boys Edition)

MEREDITH, Susan. *What's Happening to Me?*, Éditions Usborne, Héritage Jeunesse, 2006. (Girls Edition)

*Transformations, Butterflies and Passions... And All Sorts of Questions. Parents' guide for discussing sexuality with their teens.* Available from [www.msos.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.msos.gouv.qc.ca)

### Do you need a professional resource?

Call Info-Santé at 811 or the parent help line at 1-800-361-5085.

### Tips

**Respect children's privacy.** Accept that they don't tell you everything. If they confide in you, don't repeat what they say.

**Adopt a positive attitude towards puberty.** Tell your children that you are proud to see them grow up. Adolescence is an important period in their lives, as they are on the road to becoming an adult.

They may be worried about the changes of puberty. **Tell them** it's normal for these changes to occur at a different pace for everyone at their age.

**Be understanding** about their changing moods and need for more freedom along with their desire to please others and their sensitivity to rejection and embarrassment. Don't forget that children go through different emotions during this time.

## Kids' Space

Write down a question you would like to ask your parents or write what you learned about this topic at school:

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This tool was produced thanks to funding from the Secrétariat à la jeunesse as part of the Stratégie d'action jeunesse 2009-2014.

**Page layout:** Alphatek