



## **Puberty (for Adults)**

### **What is Puberty?**

Puberty is the name for the time when the body begins to develop and change, moving from child to adult. During puberty, the body grows faster than at any other time in life, except for infancy. These changes are biological, psychological and sexual.

### **How Do Sex and Gender Play A Part?**

A child's "biological sex," whether they were born with a penis or vagina, will determine many of the physical changes they go through during puberty. It is important to remember that this "biological sex" is not the same as gender and may be different in some children. If that is the case puberty can be an even more confusing time. You can talk to them about the differences between biological sex and gender and discuss the possibility of delaying or halting puberty with a doctor. See our Gender 101 pamphlet for more information.

### **What Happens During Puberty?**

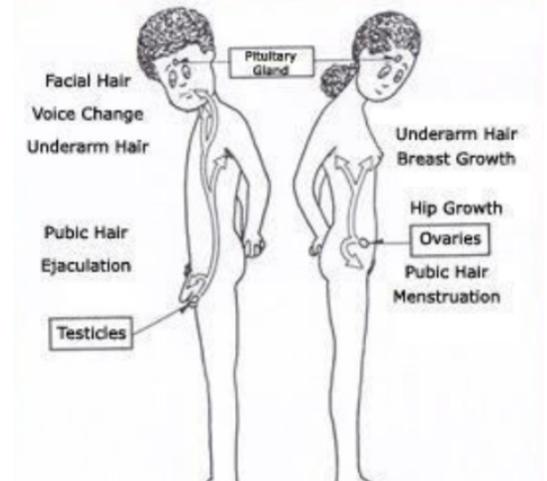
Puberty usually starts for children with penises between ages 9 and 15 and between 8 and 13 for children with vaginas. This wide age range may explain why some children appear to be older than others of the same age. If you think that your child may be experiencing puberty very early or very late talk to a doctor.

During puberty the pituitary gland in the brain releases hormones that target certain areas of the body. One of these targets are the testes/ovaries. In response to these hormones the testes to make sperm and release testosterone, or on the ovaries to release estrogen and begin menstrual cycles. Testosterone and estrogen are "sex hormones" and are responsible for the pubertal changes that are specific to biological sex.

## What Are the Physical Changes?

Some physical changes all children go through include:

- Arms, legs and feet growing faster than the rest of the body.
- Increasing sweat production.
- Increasing oil production in their skin.
- Body odor.
- Acne.
- Voice changes particularly for children with penises.
- Growth in height.
- Weight gain. Children should be assured that this is normal and there is no need to diet.



Some physical changes children with penises can expect include:

- Sperm production, so they may begin to experience ejaculation.
- Hair on the arms, legs, face, and possibly chest.
- The penis growing longer and thicker and the testes getting larger.
- Growing broader.

Some physical changes children with vaginas can expect include:

- Breast growth that will usually start before other changes. It is not unusual for one breast to be larger than the other and they will likely even out with time.
  - Hair growth in the pubic region, underarms and legs.
  - Menstruation, usually starting between the ages of 9 and 14.
  - Hips may grow wider and the waist may appear smaller.

## The Importance of Hygiene

As the body begins to produce more oil and sweat during puberty it is important to stress good hygiene with children. Daily showers and deodorants or antiperspirants can be used to help with these changes. It should be noted that schools are scent free, so perfumes, colognes and body sprays are not appropriate. Menstrual hygiene and menstrual products should also be discussed with children who are expected to have periods.

## What Are the Psychological Changes?

During puberty children may begin to develop personality changes. In particular you may notice them developing a shorter temper and mood swings. These are completely normal results of the hormonal and neurological changes in the body. Children may also begin to act differently around their peers, they may become shyer or more extroverted, as they experience sexual desire for the first time. You can discuss all of these emotional changes with your child.

All of the changes children go through during puberty can be a catalyst for bullying. You don't need to suspect your child is involved in bullying, as the bully, victim or bystander, to discuss it with them. There are many different forms of bullying; verbal, physical, indirect (rumours), cyber bullying and exclusion.

These can all be harmful but may have different signs you may not be able to see.

Puberty, bullying and other stressors can contribute to conditions like depression, eating disorders and substance abuse, which are not uncommon in children. Puberty may also be the age at which conditions like bipolar disorder begin. If you feel the emotional changes your child is experiencing are not normal talk to a doctor.

## **What Are the Sexual Changes?**

Puberty is often the beginning of sexual desire for children. Kids may begin to feel desire towards friends, classmates or public figures like actors. These desires can be towards people of any gender or all genders and kids should be taught that this is normal.

The physical feelings of sexual desire and arousal should also be discussed. Masturbation in children is completely normal and may begin younger than you think, even before puberty. It should not be stigmatized. Nocturnal emissions or “wet dreams” in children with penises is a normal part of puberty. Masturbation is also normal in children with vaginas and can be discussed.

## **How to Talk to Kids?**

Talking to children about puberty can be difficult and feel awkward. One of the ways we can make it more comfortable is by using proper terminology, like penis and vagina, rather than slang to encourage children to respect their bodies and others.

You should start young to help make this feel normal and encourage your child to come to you when they have questions. This way they get information from you rather than from other sources, like media, which may be inaccurate. But don't worry it is never too late to start! Try to keep yourself educated and up-to-date, things change rapidly. Seek reliable sources of information like us! So, congratulations by reading this pamphlet you've already taken the first step!

For more information see our “Let's talk: A guide for parents on how to talk to their child about sex and sexual health” pamphlet.

## **What Is Being Taught in School?**

Parents are the most important source of information for kids, but schools also help by teaching important content. The following is the NL curriculum for sex ed. Please note that these topics may be covered earlier or multiple times and in more detail as children age;

Grade 2; Sexual abuse/ inappropriate touching

Grade 4; Proper names of body parts including genitals.

Grade 7/8; STIs, prevention, birth control and consent.

Grade 9 (or earlier); Sexual orientation.

Unclear; Gender identity, internet safety/sexting (These concepts may still be taught).

## **Sexual Health Questions? We Have Answers!**

### **Location:**

47 St. Clare Avenue

### **Hours:**

Monday: 9am – 4:30pm

Tuesday: 9am – 4:30pm  
Wednesday: 9am – 4:30pm  
Thursday: 12pm – 6pm  
Friday: 9am – 4:30pm

**Phone:**

579-1009

Toll free 1-877-NO MYTHS  
(1-877-666-9847)

**Website:**

[www.plannedparenthoodnlshc.com](http://www.plannedparenthoodnlshc.com)

**Email:**

[pp.nlshc@gmail.com](mailto:pp.nlshc@gmail.com)

**Revised August 2020**