

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS DURING PUBERTY EDUCATION

Please note: The nurse instructing the course does allow students to ask open questions throughout and at the end of the session. Below includes questions that may be asked during a session by a student. The nurse is equipped with the answers below to help guide the conversations. The answers below are created using the content from the evidence-based curriculum, *Always Changing & Growing Up*.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q: What is puberty?

A: Puberty is a time when your body starts changing from a kid to an adult. These changes happen so your body can grow and develop. You might notice things like getting taller, changes in your voice, or new emotions. It can feel a little confusing or awkward sometimes, but it's totally normal and happens to everyone.

Q: Does everyone go through puberty?

A: Yes! Everyone goes through puberty, just at different times. It's a normal and healthy part of growing up, so there's nothing to worry about or be embarrassed about.

Q: When does puberty start?

A: Everyone is different, so puberty starts at different times for each person. Usually, girls start between ages 8 and 13, and boys start between ages 10 and 17. Your body will start when it's ready.

Q: What causes all the changes that happen during puberty?

A: Your brain sends signals to your body to start making special chemicals called hormones. These hormones help your body grow, change, and develop into an adult. Some of the biggest changes happen in your reproductive system, but you'll also notice changes in your height, skin, and even emotions.

Q: What are hormones?

A: Hormones are special chemicals in your body that act like messengers, telling different parts of your body to grow and change. Everyone has the same hormones, but in different amounts. Boys have more testosterone, and girls have more estrogen. Other hormones help your bones grow, your brain develop, and your body go through puberty.

Q: What causes mood swings?

A: During puberty, your body releases a lot of hormones, which can affect your brain and emotions. This can make you feel happy one moment and frustrated or upset the next. Mood swings are totally normal, and they happen because your brain is still adjusting to all these new changes.

Q: Does everyone start to have body odor during puberty?

A: Yes, most people do. This happens because special sweat glands, called apocrine glands, become more active. When sweat from these glands mixes with bacteria on your skin, it can cause body odor (BO).

Q: Why do you get acne (pimples) during puberty?

A: During puberty, your body makes more oil, called sebum, which can clog pores and cause pimples. Even if you wash your face regularly, acne can still happen, and that's normal.

Q: Why should I shower daily?

A: Showering every day helps keep your body clean and smelling fresh. Use soap for your body, shampoo for your hair, and wash areas like your armpits, feet, and private parts. Wearing clean clothes, especially socks and underwear, and using deodorant can also help with body odor.

Q: Do I have to brush my teeth twice a day?

A: Yes! Brushing your teeth in the morning and before bed helps keep your teeth clean, prevents cavities, and makes sure your breath stays fresh.

Q: What can I do to stay healthy while my body goes through all these changes?

A: Take care of yourself by eating healthy foods, staying active, getting enough sleep (8-9 hours a night), and visiting the doctor when needed. Avoid too much junk food and take time to relax, too!

Q: What if I have more questions about puberty? Who do I ask?

A: You can talk to a parent, older sibling, school nurse, teacher, or another trusted adult. It's okay to have questions—puberty is a big change, and you're not alone!

MALE QUESTIONS

Q: What changes do boys go through during puberty?

A: Puberty happens because your body starts making more testosterone, which causes a lot of changes, including:

- Your body grows taller, shoulders get wider, and muscles develop.
- Your penis and testicles get bigger and start making sperm. (This doesn't mean you need to think about becoming a parent—your body is just developing!)
- Your voice gets deeper and may crack sometimes as it changes.
- Your skin and hair may get oilier, which can lead to acne or pimples.
- You start growing hair on your face, underarms, chest, legs, and around your private area.
- You sweat more, which can cause body odor.
- Your emotions might feel stronger, and you may start to have new feelings of attraction.
- Your brain keeps developing, which helps you think and understand things in new ways.

Q: What is a penis?

A: The penis is the male reproductive organ. It's part of the body that helps with urination (peeing) and, later in life, reproduction.

Q: Does penis size matter?

A: No, penises come in different sizes and shapes, but not as much as some people think. The size of a penis has nothing to do with "manly-hood" or whether someone can become a father one day.

Q: What is an erection, and why do boys get them often?

A: An erection happens when the penis fills with blood and becomes stiff. During puberty, boys get erections more often, sometimes for no reason at all. This is completely normal and happens to everyone. Erections are a natural part of how the male body works.

Q: Do men stop having erections when they get older?

A: No, healthy males of all ages—from babies to older men—can get erections. They just tend to happen more often during and after puberty and are necessary for reproduction later in life.

Q: What is circumcision?

A: Circumcision is a small surgery that removes the foreskin (the skin covering the tip of the penis). Some boys are circumcised as babies, while others are not. If you are not circumcised, it's important to wash under the foreskin daily to keep it clean. Whether circumcised or not, the penis works the same way.

Q: What are wet dreams?

A: A wet dream, or nocturnal emission, is when a boy ejaculates (releases sperm and fluid) while sleeping. It's completely normal and happens to most boys during puberty. You might not even wake up when it happens, but you may notice that your underwear or sheets are wet when you wake up. Wet dreams usually happen less often as you get older.

Q: When should males start shaving?

A: Everyone grows facial hair at different times. If your dad or grandfather has a lot of facial hair, you might start growing it earlier, but if they don't, you might grow it later. If you decide to start shaving, make sure to use your own razor, get advice from someone you trust, and use shaving cream to protect your skin.

FEMALE QUESTIONS

Q: What changes do girls go through during puberty?

A: Puberty happens because your body starts making more estrogen, which causes many changes, including:

- Your body shape changes — your breasts start to grow, your hips and thighs get wider, and you grow taller.
- You may start to have vaginal discharge, and your period (menstruation) will begin at some point. (Just because your body can have a period doesn't mean you need to think about becoming a parent — it's just part of growing up.)
- Your skin and hair may get oilier, which can lead to acne or pimples.
- You start growing hair on your legs, underarms, and around your private area.
- You sweat more, which can cause body odor.
- Your emotions may feel stronger, and you might start having new feelings of attraction.
- Your brain keeps developing, helping you think and understand things in new ways.

Q: What is menstruation (a menstrual cycle or period)?

A: Menstruation, or a period, is when your body sheds the lining of the uterus (tissue, blood, and fluid) through the vagina. This happens about once a month, usually every 28 days, as part of the menstrual cycle. It's a natural and healthy sign that your body is working as it should.

Q: How do I know if my first period is coming?

A: Your first period will come when your body is ready, usually between ages 10 and 16. Some signs that it might be coming soon include:

- Breast development started about two years ago.
- You've started growing pubic hair.
- You notice a creamy white discharge in your underwear.

Q: What is vaginal discharge?

A: Vaginal discharge is a white or yellowish fluid that comes from your vagina. You may notice it in your underwear. It's typically normal and healthy—it helps keep your vagina from drying out and protects it from infections.

Q: Does it hurt to have your period?

A: It can for some girls. Some feel cramping in their lower belly as the uterus squeezes to shed its lining, but others don't feel any pain at all.

Q: What can you do to relieve period cramps?

A: You can try light exercise, using a heating pad, taking a warm bath, or using over-the-counter pain medicine if needed.

Q: How long does a period last?

A: It's different for everyone, but most periods last between 3 and 7 days.

Q: How and why should I keep track of my period cycle?

A: Keeping track of your period helps you know when to expect it and understand how your body works. It can also help your doctor if you ever have concerns. You can use a calendar or a period-tracking app to mark the start and end of each period.

Q: Why can periods be irregular?

A: This is usually related to hormones. It's very common for periods to be unpredictable during the first couple of years. You might have one period, then skip a few months before the next one. If you haven't had your first period by age 16 or your periods stay very irregular, it's a good idea to talk to a trusted adult and maybe a doctor.

Q: How much blood will I lose during my period?

A: It might seem like a lot, but most girls only lose about 4 to 12 teaspoons of fluid during their period, and only part of that is blood. Your body has plenty of blood and quickly makes up for what is lost.

Q: Will my period hurt?

A: Your period itself doesn't hurt, but many people feel cramps in their belly or lower back during their period. This happens because the muscles in your uterus are squeezing to help push out the menstrual blood. Some people have mild cramps, while others have stronger ones.

Q: How can a girl handle the menstrual fluid that comes out during her period?

A: There are different ways to manage your period. You can use:

- Pads – These stick to your underwear and absorb the blood. (*Demo - Attachment B*)
- Tampons – These go inside your vagina to soak up the blood. (*Demo – Attachment C*)
- Menstrual cups – A small, flexible cup that goes inside the vagina to collect the blood.
- Period underwear – Special underwear that absorbs the blood like a pad.

Everyone's body is different, so it's important to find what feels best for you. Visual examples of all four options will be shown or discussed.

Q: How often should a girl change her pad or tampon?

A: It's best to change a pad or tampon every 4 to 6 hours, or more often if your flow is heavy. Before bed, switching to a heavier pad can help keep you protected overnight.

Q: What is Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS)?

A: TSS is a very rare but serious infection that is sometimes linked to tampon use. It happens when certain bacteria grow too fast in the body. Warning signs include a sudden high fever, vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness, and feeling really sick. If this happens, you should get medical help right away.

Q: What should a girl do if her period starts at school?

A: Keep a period kit in your backpack with pads, tampons, or other supplies. If you think your period is coming soon, wearing a pantyliner can help. If you don't have supplies, you can use toilet paper in your underwear until you can get a pad or tampon. Ask a teacher, school nurse, counselor, or the front office—they may have period products available.

Q: What is Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)?

A: Before your period starts, your body's hormones change, which can cause PMS. Some girls feel more emotional, like being extra sad, tired, or moody. Others may have bloating, headaches, acne, sore breasts, or cramps. Not everyone gets PMS, and the symptoms can be different for each person.

Q: How do I know if my breasts will be big or small?

A: Breasts come in all shapes and sizes, and everyone grows at their own pace. Your family's genetics (like your mom's or grandma's breast size) might give you an idea, but your body is unique. You won't know your final size until your puberty journey is complete.