

# Growing Up OK!

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## Puberty

The key word when it comes to puberty is *CHANGE*. Your body is changing, your feelings are changing, and your relationships with those around you are changing.

You're growing up. Celebrate it and celebrate yourself!

You're growing up and becoming an adult. This move from childhood to adulthood is called **puberty**.

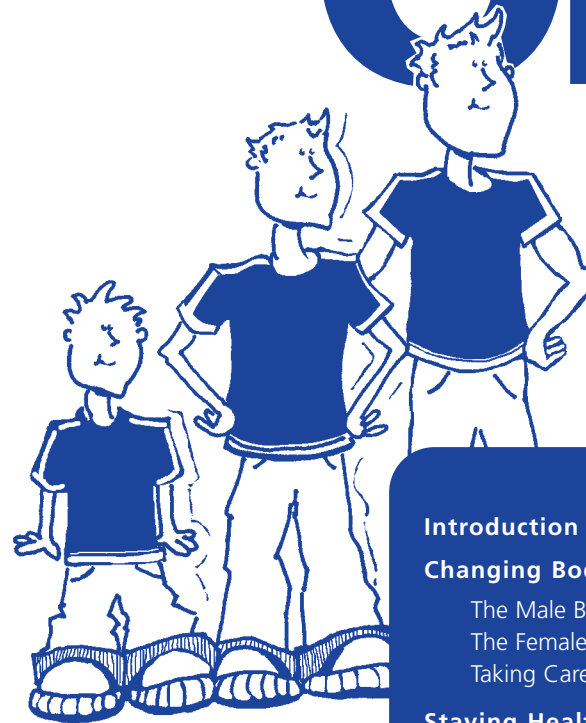
Somewhere between the ages of about 8 and 16 puberty will begin. It will be different and take a different amount of time for everyone.

So try not to compare yourself to others. You will grow and mature in your own way and at your own pace. By the time you're around 18 to 20 years old, puberty will be over.

The next few years are going to be pretty interesting. All this change might even seem kind of scary. Just remember that the most important thing about you isn't going to change. No matter what, you'll always be the same unique person you've always been.

You will grow and develop in your own way, at a pace that is different, but just as normal, as everyone else's.

**You're growing up OK!**



### Introduction

#### Changing Bodies 2

The Male Body 5

The Female Body 8

Taking Care of your Body 15

#### Staying Healthy 18

#### Staying Safe 20

#### Changing Emotions 21

#### Changing Relationships 23

#### Decisions, Decisions 25

#### Glossary 26

This booklet provides general information about puberty. Some frank language is used to explain the facts. Bolded words are defined in the Glossary.

# Changing Bodies

**D**uring **puberty**, you're going to grow faster and develop an adult body. **Hormones** in your body start these changes. Hormones are chemicals that are made by organs called **glands**.

The most important gland is the **pituitary gland**. This tiny gland, found at the base of the brain, prompts other glands to start making hormones. In boys, the **testicles** start to make the male sex hormone **testosterone**. In girls, the **ovaries** start to make the two female sex hormones **estrogen** and **progesterone**. The pituitary gland also makes the human growth hormone in both boys and girls. This hormone makes the bones and muscles grow faster during puberty.

Some of the changes these hormones cause happen only to boys (page 5). Others take place only in girls (page 8). Let's start by looking at the changes that happen to both boys *and* girls.



## Skin

During puberty, your skin can get oily. Sometimes your **pores** might become blocked with oil. If this happens, you might get pimples or **acne**.

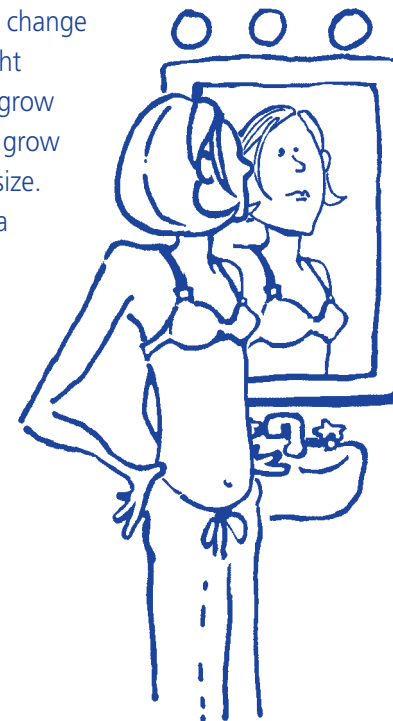
## Hair

Both boys and girls will start growing hair on their legs, under their arms and in their **pubic area**. Boys will also grow facial hair. The amount of new body hair that grows is different for every person.

## Breasts

Girls will notice that their breasts change during puberty. Girl's breasts might tingle and hurt just a bit as they grow and develop. They may not both grow at the same rate or to the same size. It is normal for one breast to be a bit smaller than the other one.

It is also normal for boy's breasts to change during puberty. They may swell and hurt a little. This will stop after puberty.



**Growth**

Growth can be very quick. You can have growth spurts and shoot up several inches in a short time. This fast growing might give you achy growing pains. You might also feel clumsy while you get used to your new size. Remember that everyone will grow at their own rate. You might suddenly find that you're a head taller or shorter than a friend who's the same age as you!

You will also gain some weight. This is just part of becoming an adult. Boy's shoulders and chests will broaden, while girls will develop breasts and broader hips.

**Perspiration**

Both boys and girls start to perspire (sweat) more during puberty. Perspiration also starts to have a stronger smell.

**Voice**

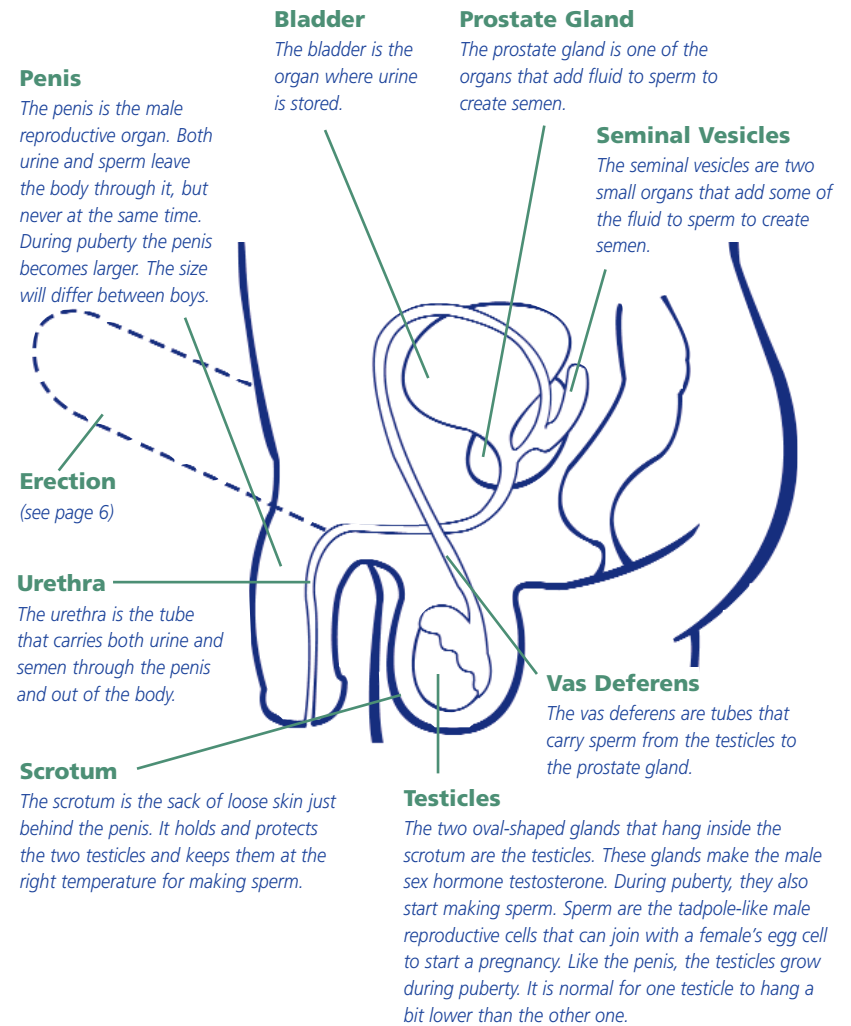
The voices of both boys and girls will get deeper. This change will be greater in boys. As a boy's voice box, or larynx, grows his voice can suddenly go from high to low or from low to high. This cracking can be a bit embarrassing sometimes. In time it will stop happening.

**Masturbation**

Touching and rubbing your **genitals** can feel good. This is called **masturbation**. People of any age, male and female, may choose to masturbate or not to masturbate, both choices are normal.



# The Male Body



At puberty, **reproductive organs** mature. In boys, first the testicles and then the penis will grow larger and begin to work a bit differently. Like all the changes you'll have during puberty, these changes won't happen all at once. Give yourself time. You will develop at your own pace.

## Erections and Ejaculation

After puberty starts, the testicles begin to make the male reproductive cells. These are called **sperm**. The sperm travel from each testicle in a tube called the **vas deferens**. The vas deferens takes the sperm around the **bladder** and through the **seminal vesicles** and the **prostate gland**. In the seminal vesicles, liquid is added to the sperm. Then, the prostate adds more liquid. The mixture of these liquids and sperm is called **semen**. Semen leaves the male body through the penis.

When a man is sexually aroused, extra blood fills the spongy tissues in the penis. The penis becomes larger and stiffer, and it stands out from the body. This is called an **erection**. When a man's sexual arousal reaches its peak, muscles force semen out of the penis. This is called **ejaculation**. During ejaculation, about one teaspoon of semen is ejaculated from the man's body. After ejaculation, the penis becomes soft again.

Many things can cause sexual arousal and an erection – even just looking at someone, or wearing pants that rub against the penis. Sometimes erections just happen for no reason at all. This can be embarrassing, but these erections are normal.

Not all erections end in ejaculation. If an erection doesn't lead to ejaculation, the penis will get soft again.

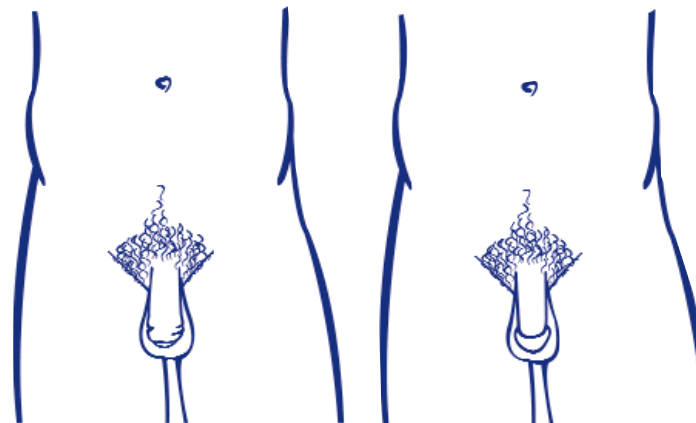
The basic function of the male reproductive system is to produce sperm.

## Wet Dreams

Sometimes the penis can get erect and ejaculate semen while a boy is asleep and dreaming. This is called a **wet dream** or a **nocturnal emission**. They can happen to both boys and grown men. It can be embarrassing to wake up in damp pajamas and sheets, but wet dreams are just a normal sign that a boy's body is growing up.

## Circumcision

Some boys' penises look different from others. This is because some boys are **circumcised** and others are not. Either way is just fine. Circumcised and uncircumcised penises work the same.



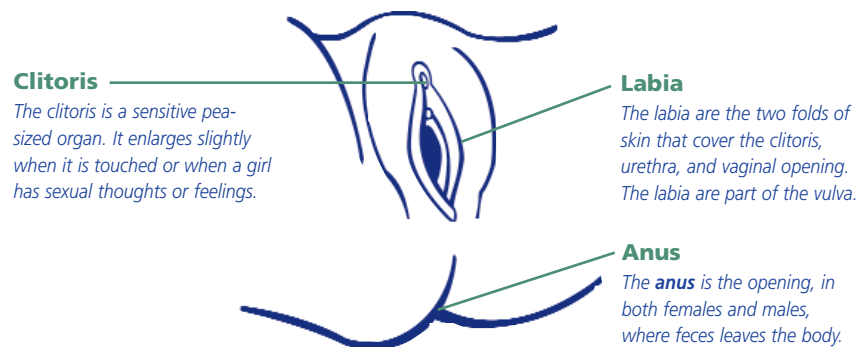
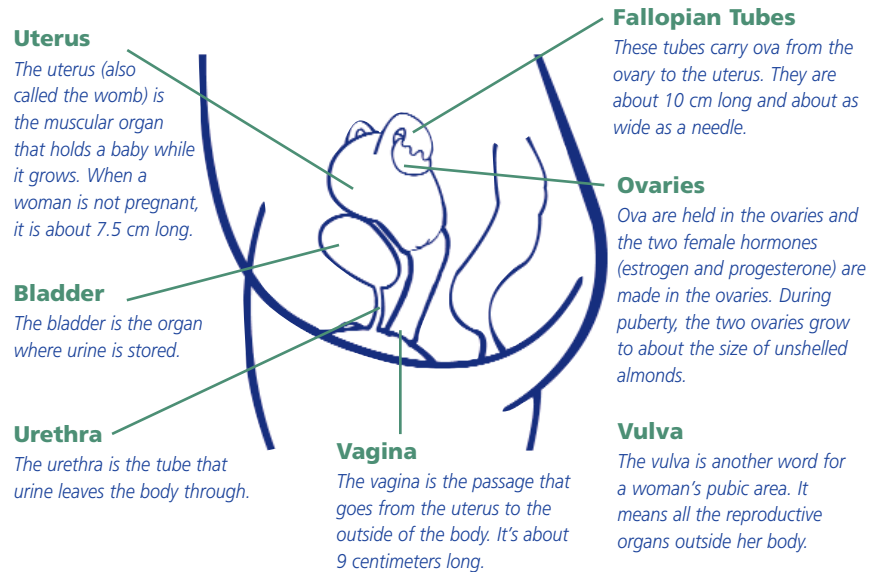
### Uncircumcised Penis

An uncircumcised penis still has a **foreskin**. The foreskin is a loose skin that covers the tip of the penis.

### Circumcised Penis

A boy who is circumcised has had the foreskin removed from his penis soon after birth. This procedure is done by a doctor.

# The Female Body



During puberty, a girl's reproductive system reaches maturity. Her hips broaden, her breasts develop and she will begin to **menstruate** (have monthly **periods**). These changes won't happen overnight. They will take a different amount of time for each girl. Try not to compare yourself to others.

## Menstruation

Most girls will start to menstruate sometime between the ages of 9 and 16. Each girl is going to start menstruating in her own time. Don't worry if you start earlier or later than your peers. Starting to have periods means that your body is able to have a baby.

All women are born with thousands of **ova** (egg cells) already in their **ovaries**. It is not until puberty that the ova begin to ripen and leave the ovaries one at a time. This is called **ovulation**.

An ovum leaves an ovary and goes down a **fallopian tube** and into the **uterus**. The lining of the uterus is a thick mixture of blood and fluid. If a **sperm** (the male reproductive cell) **fertilizes** the ovum, this blood-rich lining will help to support a growing baby. If it is not fertilized, the pin-point-sized ovum either dissolves or flows out the vagina with the usual vaginal **discharge** (page 17). You won't even notice it. Soon after the ovum is gone, the lining of the uterus also leaves the body through the vagina. This is menstruation.

During menstruation, about 4 to 6 tablespoons of blood and fluid leave a girl's body through her **vagina**. It usually happens every 28 days and takes between 2 and 7 days. The exact length of time and amount of fluid are different for each girl.

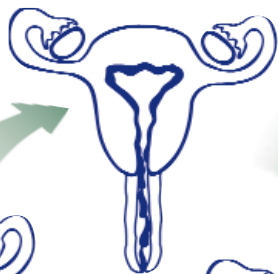
One of the biggest changes that happens to a girl during puberty is menstruation.



## The Menstrual Cycle

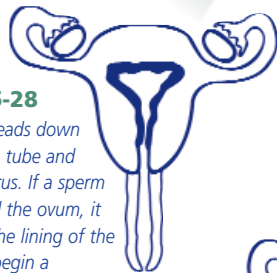
### Days 1-5: Menstruation

The blood and fluid lining of the uterus leaves the body through the vagina.



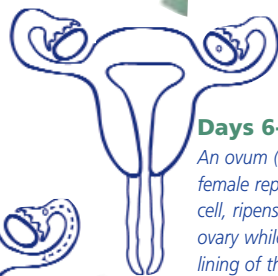
### Days: 15-28

The ovum heads down the fallopian tube and into the uterus. If a sperm has fertilized the ovum, it will stay in the lining of the uterus and begin a pregnancy. If it is not fertilized, the ovum either dissolves or passes out through the vagina without even being noticed. This happens just before menstruation begins.



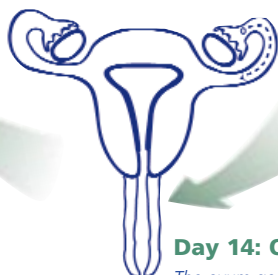
### Days 6-13

An ovum (egg), the female reproductive cell, ripens in an ovary while the lining of the uterus begins to thicken in case the ovum is fertilized.



### Day 14: Ovulation

The ovum goes from the ovary into a fallopian tube.



## Tracking Your Menstrual Cycle

Many women like to keep track of their **menstrual cycle**. It helps them figure out when they will probably get their next period. You can keep track of your personal menstrual cycle by circling the days on the calendar that your period starts and ends. Each time you menstruate, count the number of days that have passed since your last period started. After a few months, it will be easier to tell when your period is due.

At first, your menstrual cycle might not be very regular. You might even skip your period for a month or so, and then start getting it again. Sometimes it can take a while for a girl's body to get into a pattern.

## Questions about Menstruation

### Q How do you absorb menstrual flow?

A During her period, a girl can use either **pads** or **tampons** to absorb her **menstrual flow**. Pads attach to the inside of panties with small sticky strips and catch menstrual flow outside the body. Tampons, on the other hand, are small absorbent rolls that are put right into the vagina. Most girls find it easier to use pads at first.



If you decide to use pads, make sure you change them several times each day and again before you go to bed. This will feel better and stop odour.

Tampons also need to be changed often and it is important that girls choose the absorbency that is best for them. Using tampons the right way can prevent a very rare but serious infection called toxic shock syndrome.

Tampons are safe and can be very comfortable, but using them can take some practice. When they are put in properly, you shouldn't be able to feel a tampon at all. Don't worry about it getting lost inside you or falling out. The muscles in the walls of your vagina will hold it in place until you're ready to take it out.

Each box of tampons or pads has a sheet of instructions with diagrams on it. Read them carefully. You should also talk to a parent, an older sister or a nurse about what to do when you start menstruating.

### Q What if you get your period unexpectedly?

**A** Many girls worry about getting their first period. They wonder what to do if it starts while they're at school or away from home. If you're at school, you can:

- keep pads in a bag or locker for unexpected periods
- ask a teacher or a friend for a pad
- check the bathroom for a machine that sells pads
- make a pad out of toilet paper or paper towel to use until you get home

### Q Can you still do all the things you usually do? What about bathing or sports?

**A** A girl who is menstruating doesn't need to act any differently than she usually does. She can exercise, dance, play sports and bathe normally. She can even swim if she uses a tampon. Feel free to do what you want to do.

Menstruation is a normal and healthy part of every woman's life. It is nothing to be embarrassed about.



Your period is a normal and healthy part of life — you can and should continue your usual activities.

### Q How do you feel during your period? What about cramps?

**A** Most girls are only a little uncomfortable just before and during their periods. Before menstruation, many girls feel bloated and puffy, and find that their breasts are tender. They may also feel a bit moody or even a little down. During menstruation, some girls also have menstrual cramps.

Here are some things you can do to make cramps less painful:

- exercise
- take a hot bath
- use a hot water bottle on your abdomen
- if your cramps are always very painful, you should see your doctor

### Breasts

During puberty, breasts begin to grow and develop. There is no set time that this will start. It is different for every girl. There is also no normal size or shape for breasts to be. There are as many different sizes and shapes of breasts as there are women.

### Q How long does it take for breasts to be fully developed? If a girl starts later, will she have smaller breasts?

**A** It takes a different amount of time for each girl. If a girl starts later than other girls, it doesn't mean that her breasts will always be smaller. There is no link between what size breasts will be and when they start to develop.

While your breasts begin to grow, they might feel uncomfortable and tingle.



**Q What if one breast is bigger than the other one?**

**A** Often women have one breast that is a bit larger than the other is. It usually isn't very noticeable. Sometimes one breast can grow just a bit more quickly than the other one. Often, a girl's breasts will even out by the time puberty is over. Sometimes they don't. Either way is just fine.

**Q Will breasts hurt while they grow?  
Can they pop or burst?**

**A** Some girls find that their breasts itch and hurt a little while they develop, but breasts will not pop or burst. They develop slowly and the skin grows with the rest of the breast.

**Q What if a nipple doesn't stick out?**

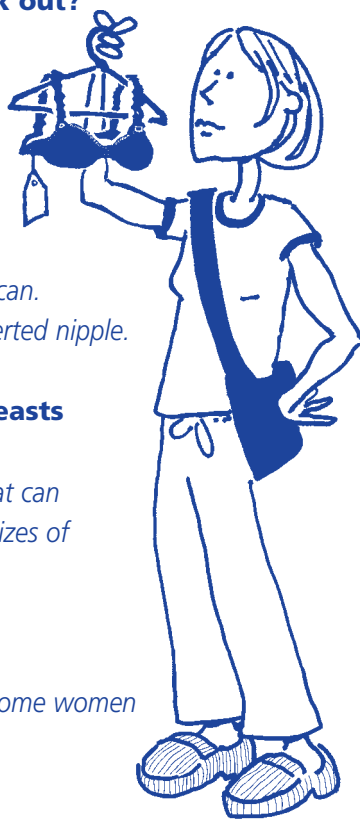
**A** This is called an **inverted nipple**. Sometimes a nipple that is inverted will change to an outward nipple as the breast grows. Often it won't. Even if it looks different, an inverted nipple can do everything any other nipple can. There is nothing wrong with an inverted nipple.

**Q Is there any way to make breasts grow bigger?**

**A** There are no exercises or creams that can make your breasts grow larger. All sizes of breasts are normal.

**Q Do you have to wear a bra?**

**A** You don't have to wear a bra, but some women find it is more comfortable.



# Taking Care of Your Body

Your changing body has changing needs. During puberty, you'll need to start paying more attention to caring for your body. You'll feel better and look your best when you do. Here are a few pointers that should help you.



## Shower

If you don't already, you might want to start taking a daily bath or shower.

## Deodorant and Antiperspirants

The changes to your hormones will give your sweat a distinct smell. This is especially true for your underarms. Daily showers or baths will help. So will using deodorant or antiperspirant. Deodorants cover odour. Antiperspirants close off sweat glands. No sweat – no smell! You might want to ask a parent or a nurse if you're not sure which is best for you.

## Hair

Just like your skin, your hair might be more oily than it used to be. Washing it more often will keep it clean.

You will also have body hair to care for. Boys should talk to a parent, an older brother or another adult they trust about shaving their facial hair. Girls might want to ask someone they trust about starting to shave their legs and underarms. Not all men and women shave. For some it is a personal choice. For others it is cultural.

### Skin

During puberty, your skin might get pretty oily, and all that extra oil can block your pores and cause pimples or **blackheads**. Washing your face at least twice a day with soap and water should help you keep things under control.

Some people get a severe case of pimples and blackheads called acne. Acne usually clears up after puberty. Until then, you can ask a doctor about some medicines that might help.

### Dental

Brush your teeth and floss at least twice each day: once in the morning and once at night. For extra fresh breath, be sure to brush your tongue.

During puberty, your skin can become oily due to increased oil gland activity.



### Underwear

Both girls and boys should wear cotton underwear. Cotton is a natural fiber that allows the skin to breathe and prevents the trapping of moisture that can lead to infections. If you choose underwear that is made of something else, make sure it at least has a cotton crotch. Boys can choose either boxers or briefs, as long as they aren't too tight.

### Shoes

Smelly feet can usually be controlled with a clean pair of socks every day. It's also a good idea to wash insoles every now and then. You can buy sprays that fight foot odour but often a light dusting of baking soda does the same thing.

### Genital Area (boys)

It is very important to keep the **genital** area clean. During a bath or shower, boys who are not circumcised should clean beneath the foreskin of their penis.

### Genital Area (girls)

To keep their genital area clean, girls need to wash the vulva, the area around the vagina and the anus with soap and water. The inside of the vagina cleans itself naturally. The vagina's natural cleaning can leave a slight creamy yellow, odourless discharge on your underwear. This is perfectly normal. Taking regular baths or showers should leave you feeling clean and fresh.

Girls should try to wipe from front to back after they use the washroom. This will help stop harmful bacteria from getting into the vagina.

# Staying Healthy

**N**ow is a great time to decide to live a healthy life. The habits you start today will be hard to shake later on, so why not start good ones now? Eating right, getting enough exercise, and staying away from smoking, drugs and alcohol can make your life longer and happier.



## Eating Right

As you gain more independence, you'll have more freedom to choose the foods you want to eat. You'll also be able to choose when and how much to eat. Candy, chips and pop might taste good, but they won't put the right nutrients into your growing and changing body. Make a point to choose more healthy snacks – like fruits and vegetables. Canada's Food Guide\* shows you the kinds of foods you should choose and how much of them you should eat.

Dieting usually isn't a good idea. This is especially true during puberty. Diets won't help you get that "ideal" body and they can harm your health in the future. Besides, gaining weight during puberty is a good sign. Your body is growing. Eating a balanced diet and getting regular exercise should keep you at a healthy weight – with room for a treat now and then.

*\* Contact your local health centre for more information.*

## Exercise

Getting enough exercise is also important. Not only will it help build strong bones and muscles, it also gives you a chance to be part of some fun activities. When you're active, the ups and downs of puberty can seem a lot easier to handle.

For some great fitness tips, check out Canada's Activity Guide\*.



## Sleep

Sleep is very important. During puberty, you'll need about nine hours of sleep every night. This should keep you alert during the day and give your body some growing time.

## Other Healthy Choices

Choosing to eat right, stay active and get enough rest is a big step toward a long and healthy life. But you should also stay away from alcohol, smoking and other drugs. These risky activities won't make you cooler, but they can hurt your health or even kill you. Every year, smoking kills more than 40,000 Canadians.

**Caring about yourself and your body will help you make healthy choices.**

*\* Contact your local health centre for more information.*

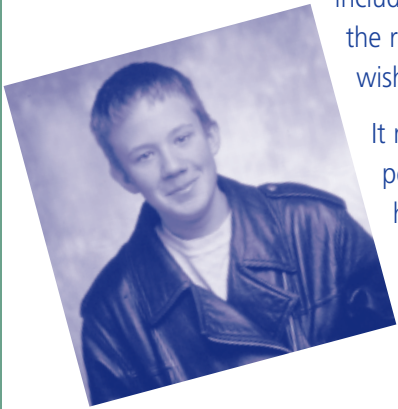
# Staying Safe

**No one — including relatives, friends and strangers — has the right to touch your body against your wishes.**

It's natural to be sexually attracted to other people. But it's not acceptable to touch or kiss someone against their will. It's not even acceptable to tease people in a sexual way. These types of behaviors are called sexual assault and sexual harassment, and they're against the law.

If these types of things happen to you, don't keep it a secret. Tell a parent or an adult you trust. Sometimes people who have been sexually assaulted or harassed feel embarrassed, ashamed or even guilty about what has happened. Sometimes a person who has hurt you is someone close to you or someone with power or authority. You might find it very hard to tell anyone, but it's important that you do. No one — including relatives, friends and strangers — has the right to touch your body against your wishes.

It might seem easier not to tell, but many people who have been sexually assaulted or harassed say that keeping it a secret only made them feel worse. By telling, you can get the help you need.



# Changing Emotions

As if all the changes to your body weren't enough, you'll notice that your emotions are changing too. You might discover that you have new interests, concerns and attitudes. You might also find that all those hormones are making you moody. You might feel terrific one minute and down in the dumps the next. Your feelings might surprise you. They might even make you a little worried. Try to put these worries aside. You and your friends are all going through the same things.



## Feeling Grown Up

In many ways, you're starting to feel like an adult. You probably want to be more independent and make more of your own choices. You might want to have more privacy or be taken more seriously. You'll even find that you don't like some of the same games, books and TV shows you used to. New interests and feelings are taking the place of old ones.

## Feeling Attractive

You might be more interested in your looks than you used to be. When you think about how much your body is changing, that's not surprising. Right now, your body is a work in progress. You'll be interested in how it's going to turn out. You may worry about how attractive you are. You might even wish you could change things about yourself or that you could look more like the people you see in magazines, on TV or in the movies.

The truth is that most of us won't look like models or movie stars but that doesn't mean we aren't attractive. Often the "ideal" bodies we see aren't ideal at all. They are unrealistic and unhealthy. Learning to like the unique person you are is part of becoming a happy adult.

### Feeling Liked

During puberty, you might find that you're more interested in being liked by others. It's normal to worry about being liked. Still, you shouldn't have to act like someone else or do things you don't want to do just to fit in. Sometimes you might feel awkward, or even left out and lonely. Don't be afraid to talk about these feelings with a parent, a friend or a teacher you trust. Believe it or not, most of your classmates are feeling the exact same way!

### Sexual Feelings

You and your friends are also starting to have new sexual feelings. You might discover that a certain book or a show sexually excites you. A certain person might seem attractive to you. You might imagine what it would be like to be in love, or to kiss or touch someone. It can take some time to get used to these strong new feelings. Remember, you can always ask a parent, teacher, doctor or nurse if you have questions. A whole new side of you is opening up. Get ready for some pretty powerful feelings.

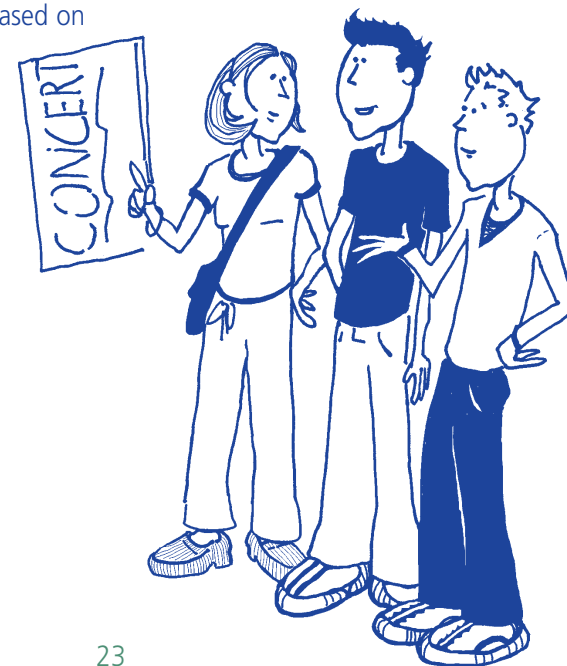
A healthy part of growing up includes friendships with both sexes.

# Changing Relationships

As you grow up, the way you interact with those around you is bound to change. Your relationships with your family and your peers are different when you're a pre-teen or teen than they were when you were a young child. In some ways, they are more complex.

### Friends

As you gain more independence, your relationships with your friends might seem just as important as your relationship with your family. It can seem like your friends just understand you better. You may want to be in with a certain group, make new friends or drift away from friends you've outgrown. The desire to fit in can be very strong. That's fine, but remember that the best friendships are based on respect. You have to respect others, and you have to respect yourself.





**Dating**

In the next few years, you may experience new types of relationships. Some of these situations may feel awkward. Just be yourself! Others should like you for who you are and respect the choices you make.

**Family**

Even though your friends might seem more important to you right now, your family doesn't have to become less important. Part of growing up is learning to juggle the many kinds of relationships most of us have. Your family can be an important part of your life and a good place to go when this puberty thing has you feeling down or worried.

You're growing up. Enjoy it. It might seem like everything is changing, and changing fast, but remember that the most important thing will always stay the same – you will always be yourself.

Keeping close and honest relationships with your family and friends can help you adjust during puberty.



# Decisions, Decisions

**G**rowing up means you'll get to make more decisions for yourself. How do you go about making the right decisions? Using the DEAL formula can help you think things through, understand the problem or situation, and make the right decision.

**Deal**

**D**escribe the problem. What exactly is it? Write it down and make a list of all the possible solutions. You can ask people you trust to suggest solutions you might not have thought of.

**E**valuate all the solutions. Ask yourself what might happen if you decided on each one. Would the problem be solved or made worse?

**A**ct on the solution you feel is best. Just go ahead and give it a try.

**L**earn from your decision. Did it work? What went wrong? What might have been a better decision? You might want to think of a few new solutions, or just go back and try another one you've already considered. Depending on the problem, it can take a few tries before you're able to solve it.





# Glossary

It's good to know and use the right terms to talk about sexuality. Using these words will make sure people know exactly what you're talking about.

**acne:** very bad pimples and blackheads that are hard to get rid of.

**anus:** opening where feces leaves the body. Both males and females have one.

**blackhead:** a pimple with a black top.

**bladder:** the organ that holds urine before it leaves the body. Both males and females have one.

**circumcision:** when the penis' foreskin is removed in surgery.

**clitoris:** a small, sensitive organ found above the urethra in women.

**dermatologist:** a doctor specializing in skin.

**discharge:** the term for any substance that is released from anywhere on the body.

**ejaculation:** the release of semen from the penis.

**erection:** when the tissues of the penis fill with blood making it larger and harder.

**estrogen:** one of the two female sex hormones made by the ovaries. It causes body changes in girls during puberty. The other is called progesterone.

**fallopian tubes:** the tubes the ova travel down to get from a female's ovaries to her uterus.

**fertilization:** when a sperm makes its way into an ovum. This starts a pregnancy.

**foreskin:** the loose skin that covers the tip of the penis.

**genitals:** the outer sex organs of males and females.

**gland:** any organ that makes a substance used in the body. Many glands make hormones.

**hormone:** a chemical from a gland that makes cells or tissues to act in a specific way.

**inverted nipple:** a nipple that points in and not out.

**labia:** the inner and outer "lips" or folds of the female vulva. They are on both sides of the vagina.

**masturbation:** touching your own genitals to make them feel good.

**menstrual cycle:** the female cycle that starts with menstruation and then continues as the lining of the uterus builds up and then breaks down again. It usually takes around 28 days.

**menstruation:** shedding the lining of a female's uterus, which has formed in preparation for a fertilized egg.

**nocturnal emission:** the ejaculation of semen while a male is asleep. It is also known as a wet dream.

**ovary:** the female gland that ripens egg cells (ova) and makes the hormones estrogen and progesterone.

**ovulation:** the release of an ovum from a female's ovary into a fallopian tube.

**ovum:** egg cell produced in a female's ovaries (plural: ova).

**pad:** a product that attaches to the inside of a female's underwear to catch and absorb menstrual flow. It is also called a sanitary napkin or feminine napkin.

**penis:** the tube-like outer sex organ of a male.

**period:** the common name for the time when a female is menstruating.

**pituitary gland:** a gland that secretes hormones that cause growth and affect the activities of other glands. Both males and females have pituitary glands.

**pores:** tiny openings in the outer layer of the skin.

**progesterone:** one of the two female sex hormones produced by the ovaries – the other is estrogen.

**prostate gland:** an organ that adds fluid to sperm to create semen.

**puberty:** the period of change and growth when boys and girls start to become adults. It can take several years.

**pubic area:** the area of the male or female body where the outer sex organs are found.

**reproduction:** when sexual intercourse results in a pregnancy and a new baby.

**scrotum:** the sack of loose skin just behind the penis. It contains and protects the two testicles.

**semen:** a mixture of fluid and sperm that is released from a male's penis.

**seminal vesicles:** two small pouches that add fluid to sperm to make semen. The prostate gland also adds fluid to the sperm.

**sexual intercourse:** when a man puts his penis into a woman's vagina.

**sperm:** the male reproductive cells made in the testicles.

**tampons:** a small roll of absorbent material worn inside the vagina to catch and absorb menstrual flow.

**testicles:** the male sex glands. They make sperm and the male sex hormone testosterone.

**testosterone:** male sex hormone that is made by the testicles. It causes the changes in boys during puberty.

**urethra:** the tube that carries urine out of the male and female body. In males, semen also leaves through the urethra.

**uterus:** a muscular organ located in a female's pelvic region. It holds and nurtures a baby until it is born. The uterus is sometimes called the womb.

**vagina:** the passage that connects a female's uterus to the outside of her body.

**vas deferens:** the tubes through which sperm moves from the testicles to the prostate gland.

**vulva:** the outer female sex organs.

**wet dream:** a common name for nocturnal emissions or the ejaculation of semen while a male is asleep.

Alberta Health and Wellness web site: <http://www.health.gov.ab.ca>

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SX38