

# Growing up: Information for boys about puberty

## What is puberty?

Puberty is a time when your body goes through many changes—you're growing both physically and emotionally from a child into a teenager and eventually into an adult.

Although puberty doesn't happen at the same time for everyone, it usually starts between age 9 and 14 for boys. It also doesn't happen overnight. It's a process that takes place over several years.

To help you understand, here is how your body works:

- Puberty is controlled by hormones, which are natural chemicals made in your body. The hormones important in puberty for boys are made in the brain and in the testicles.
- The brain hormones travel through your body to your testicles, telling your body to start making sperm and another hormone, called testosterone.
- Testosterone causes most of the changes that will happen to your body during puberty.

## How does my body change?

Changes to your body will happen slowly, over many years:

- First, your testicles and penis begin to grow bigger.
- Your body shape may start to change as more muscle tissue forms.
- You will become taller, develop more muscles and your shoulders will get broader. On average boys grow nearly inches (9.5 cm) per year during this growth spurt. Boys usually have their growth spurt later than girls.

- Hair begins to grow around your genitals and your scrotum (the soft pouch underneath your penis that holds your testicles). It will also grow on your chest, arms, legs, armpits and face.
- Your testicles will start to make tiny cells called sperm. The sperm is the male reproductive cell. If a sperm joins an egg from the female after sexual intercourse, a pregnancy can happen.
- Semen is a mix of sperm and other fluids that leave your penis when you ejaculate. Likely, the first time you ejaculate you will be sleeping. When you are dreaming, you will have an erection (your penis becomes hard) and you will ejaculate. This is called a “wet dream.”
- In the last phase of puberty, your growth spurt will slow down. You will reach your adult height, your genitals will reach their adult size, and most boys develop more body hair and become more muscular.

#### **Other changes you can expect include:**

- More sweat. Since sweat can cause body odour, it helps to take a bath or shower every day.
- Some boys develop acne (pimples). Washing your face in the morning and at night with regular fragrance-free soap and water is important. If you do get pimples, acne lotions, creams and special soaps may help. If they don't work, talk to your doctor about other treatments.
- Your voice will change. Sometimes it cracks as it gets lower. This is because your larynx (voice box) is growing.
- Attractions. Many people start to be attracted to and think romantically or sexually about others during this time.

## **Will I feel different?**

While the hormones are causing all kinds of changes in your body, they will also affect how you feel. Emotions during puberty may feel a bit like a roller coaster. You may:

- Be afraid of the changes in your body one minute and excited about them the next.
- Feel awkward or confused.
- Get along and then fight with good friends all in the same day.

- Feel grown up one day and like a child the next.
- Feel angry at times.

Sometimes these changes can be overwhelming. You're not alone. Like other teens, you're going through a period of important change in your life. It can be both scary and exciting at the same time.

## How can I take care of myself during puberty and throughout life?

### Sleep

Your changing body needs sleep—lots of it. Puberty takes up a lot of energy. Most teens need at least 9 hours of sleep each night. Some need even more.

### Food and exercise

Since a growing body needs food, you will often be hungry. Eating a balanced diet that includes all food groups and being physically active are important to your health. Try to make physical activity part of your daily routine. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Be active and spend less time on screens.
- Walk more—to school, the gym, a friend's house.
- Use the stairs instead of the escalator or elevator.
- Walk the dog, rake the leaves, or shovel snow. Your parents will thank you!
- Do activities you enjoy: skating, swimming, biking, running, etc.
- Follow Canada's Food Guide.

If you are worried about your weight or body shape for any reason, talk to your doctor or an adult you trust.

## What else should I do?

- Puberty can cause you to have lots of different feelings and emotions. Talk to people you trust, including your parents who have been through this before. This can help you cope with the changes you are experiencing.

- Stay away from alcohol, drugs and tobacco. All of these can harm your body and are addictive.
- Talk to someone you trust about healthy relationships and attractions.
- Use social media safely

## Additional resources

- [sexandu.ca](https://www.sexandu.ca/) (The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada)  
(<https://www.sexandu.ca/>)

## Reviewed by the following CPS committees

- Adolescent Health Committee
- Public Education Advisory Committee

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