

Growing up and changing bodies

Year: Y5

Subjects and Issues

◆Body parts ◆Feelings ◆FGM ◆Growing and changing ◆Hygiene ◆Personal hygiene ◆Puberty ◆Relationships education ◆Periods ◆Menstruation ◆Body changes ◆Emotions ◆National Curriculum science - relationships elements ◆Female genital mutilation (FGM)

Ensure a safe and familiar location and if possible gather pupils' own questions about puberty (or body changes as they grow older) before the session to help involve them and to maximise the value of the session.

Introduction

Thank pupils in advance for any questions that they might have and explain that as many as possible will be answered within the session.

'Puberty' is a rather unusual word, what do you think it means? In pairs, discuss what you think it might say in a dictionary.

Gather ideas and clarify that 'puberty' is the word given to the time in a person's life when their body begins to change from a child's body to an adult's body one that is capable of reproduction. Clarify that changes include physical changes, emotional changes, and psychological changes.

Emphasise that everyone is unique. Not everyone starts puberty at the same age, some earlier than others and some go through puberty faster than others. Girls often start before boys. Explain that chemicals produced in the body called hormones cause puberty, it is natural and part of growing into an adult. You may find it useful to show this video to the class to introduce this topic:

Taking care of your body during puberty (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00BYyDr8Xdg>)

Today we are going to have a chance to talk together about the different changes that happen when a person reaches puberty.

Activity

Provide groups with a bag of objects (alternatively use the IWB slide provided - see Resources needed area) to discuss in small groups of three or four. Ask the pupils to discuss how the objects might be linked with puberty and what a person might use them for. Allow a few minutes for the pupils to discuss the items.

Ask pupils to return objects to the bag then go through the objects and discuss with pupils.

Ideas might include:

Deodorant: can be used by young adults – both male and female - as they might begin to sweat more. Although regular washing can help someone stay clean and smelling fresh, deodorants are used in addition to washing by some people to help them feel confident about this.

Shower gel: like deodorant, regular washing can help someone feel confident about their body.

Tissues: During puberty, some people feel more emotional than before and can be caught unawares by emotions at times. Tissues and a supportive friend can be really helpful. Emotions usually settle down after puberty.

Washing Powder: To help people recognise that it is stale sweat that smells, it might be useful to source a small box of washing powder/tablets to help explain that as well as keeping their body clean and using deodorant, they'll also need to wash their clothes more often.

Spot cream/facial wash: Some people find that hormone changes during puberty cause spots to appear more often than before. A few people can find this is a problem for them. A talk with a pharmacist or medical professional might be helpful and special creams and washes are developed to treat such conditions. After puberty, these problems usually go away.

Period products: period/menstruation pads, tampons are designed to help girls and women stay hygienic and confident during their monthly period – we will talk about this a bit more later. Other products, e.g. menstruation cups, reusable pads, and period pants are available which some girls and women use as they are reusable and considered more environmentally friendly. You might find it useful to know that the DfE is running a **Period Product scheme** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/period-products-in-schools-and-colleges/period-product-scheme-for-schools-and-colleges-in-england>) where you can order a range of period products and have them delivered for free.

Hair growth: one of the body changes at puberty is that of hair growth. Some people choose to shave underarms etc. but some choose not to: everyone is different. This is an opportunity to emphasise autonomy and a person's right to make decisions about their own bodies. (NB: no image of a razor has been included in the IWB slide. This is to help prevent girls from feeling that it is the norm to start shaving as soon as they grow hair underarms and that they must do this).

Establish with the class that it is important that young people have a good understanding of how their bodies will change. To help talk about the body changes special vocabulary is needed for the body - see Puberty Glossary in the Resources needed area for support in explaining these changes.

Discuss the way female bodies grow and change:

- Breasts develop to enable a female to feed a baby
- Hips widen
- Height increases
- Vagina begins to self-clean, producing vaginal discharge
- Periods begin (usually within a year of the discharge appearing)
- Body hair grows around the genitalia and under the arms

Discuss the way male bodies grow and change:

- Height increases
- Chest and shoulders grow bigger
- Body hair grows on the face, under armpits, and around the genitalia.
- Penis and testes grow in size
- Semen begins to be produced
- Involuntary erections and wet dreams may be experienced

Again, emphasise that everyone is unique and special and that changes start at different times, progress at different rates and everyone's unique genetic code determines what a person will be like as an adult.

Remind pupils that there were some period/menstruation pads in the bag and explain that it is a chance now to talk about these.

Show a picture of the female reproductive parts. Explain that every female has ovaries that contain tiny eggs and that once a month an adult female releases one egg from their ovary and it travels along the fallopian tube towards the uterus (womb). In preparation for the egg, the lining of the uterus thickens but if the egg is not fertilized inside the female's body the lining isn't needed and so the woman/girl passes the blood out through her vagina. This monthly 'bleed' is called a period and lasts approximately 3 – 7 days. Reassure the pupils that the amount of blood in total is only about 3-5 tablespoons. It may be helpful to emphasise the amazing ability of a female's body to support an unborn child as it develops in her body.

Show pupils how period/menstruation pads can be placed in a pair of underwear. Show tampons.

If a girl had just started her periods, which form of protection might be easiest, to begin with? [Towels will allow the girl to see how much blood is passing and be aware when a change might be needed].

Have you heard how a girl or woman might know her period is about to start? Headaches or stomach cramps may precede a period.

Show a small bag containing period products (a range will enable them to discuss the product types available to choose from. Menstruation cups are a fairly recent product worn internally and washed for re-use. Environmental consideration and financial implications may encourage older girls towards these) – having some in a school bag ready will perhaps provide a feeling of preparedness for a young female. Discussions with a trusted adult, such as a parent, about different forms of protection might be something to advise at this point.

If someone started their period at school and didn't have any protection, who could they talk to?

Reassure young girls that there are staff (name these) available who could provide period products in an emergency.

Explain that periods may not be regular at first and therefore keeping a record of dates can help them notice when a pattern has become established.

Explain how used protection should be disposed of.

When people experience changes such as those associated with puberty they might feel anxious. This is normal. Although it is normal to feel anxious, what could young people do to help themselves manage their anxieties?

Emphasise that young people have the right to decide what happens to their body.

Who is the best person to decide what happens to your body?

Very occasionally, young people have things done to their bodies that are criminal (against the law) in this country. These crimes involve cuts made to female genitalia -the vulva- the external area around the opening to the vagina.

If you were concerned about yourself, or a young person you know, are there people you can think of who can help?

How can young people show respect to one another during such challenging times?

Plenary

Reassure the pupils that puberty brings changes but that they gradually occur, not all at the same time. Praise pupils for their mature approach to the session and check questions have been answered. Emphasise the right of a person to decide what happens to their own body. Reiterate people and places where help if needed can be sought.

Extension (optional)

See National Curriculum links for options for further discussion, according to your school's policy concerning RSE.

Learning Outcomes

Children will be able to:

- Identify some products that they may need during puberty and why;
- Know what menstruation is and why it happens.