

The Talk



It's hard to comprehend how quickly the conversation with your kids went from explaining the benefits of eating all their vegetables to having to talk to them about the birds and the bees. Talking to your kids about sex can be frightening, no matter how close you and your children are. There are a few things as a parent, you should remember:



- ⇒ The first person a child trusts is you, their parent/guardian;
- ⇒ As the primary role model, information should come from you;
- ⇒ It is better your children receive correct information from you, than the questionable internet, television, or your child's peers could provide.

Now the real question becomes...**HOW?**

- ⇒ Be honest. Use proper names for all body parts. Practice ahead of time to build confidence.
- ⇒ See if your child wants or needs to know more. Follow up your answers with, "Does that answer your question?"
- ⇒ If you don't know an answer, say so, research it and get back to them quickly.
- ⇒ Listen carefully to your child's responses.
- ⇒ Be prepared to repeat yourself.



By approaching these issues like any other health topic, not as something dirty or embarrassing, you increase the odds that your kids will be comfortable coming to you with questions and problems in the future. Your child may ask some things that surprise you. As awkward as you might feel, answer questions honestly. Don't have them feel like there are topics that are out of bounds. Try not to get angry or think that a question being asked means your child is involved in what they are asking about. They likely are looking to understand things they've heard. **Remember: their peers, television, and the internet would gladly answer any question with a big smile and open arms.**

Positive communication can greatly help young people establish individual values and make healthy decisions. Your values as a parent are important to express. This is the perfect time to tell them that you support their dreams and why you guide them with the standards you do. If personal questions about you or your past come up that make you uncomfortable, they can be deflected: "This is not about me, my concern is for the boundaries you need to set in your life."



NOTE: Providing the following pages to your child may help them understand what he/she is experiencing during puberty.



Puberty and Changes for Boys

What is puberty? Puberty is the time of life when hormones cause changes in a young person's body.

Where do the hormones come from? The pituitary gland located in a person's brain. It begins to release the special hormones that cause the changes.

When does puberty start? For some it happens sooner, for others it happens later.

Girls start noticing changes between the ages of 8 and 15.

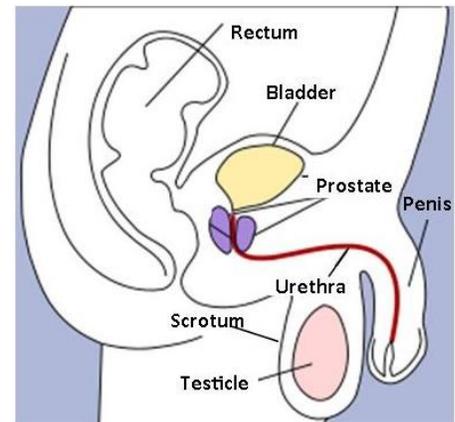
Boys start between the ages of 11 and 17.

Outwardly a boy's body will begin to change:

- Chest muscles pectorals will begin to develop.
- Shoulder muscles deltoids will broaden.
- As the larynx enlarges, voice will deepen.
- Facial, underarm and pubic hair develops and body hair may thicken.
- Reproductive organs will increase in size.

Inwardly things are changing as well:

- The pituitary gland releases hormones that cause the testicles, located inside the scrotum, to produce testosterone. This causes the external scrotum, testicles and penis to grow larger.
- When a boy has reached puberty, his testicles will produce millions of sperm. When the time comes for him to become a father, the sperm's job is to penetrate a woman's egg, causing fertilization.
- As a boy's body produces testosterone, involuntary erections and wet dreams may occur. Nocturnal emissions (wet dreams) are the release of sperm and fluid that boys have no control over. They are a normal part of puberty.
- Crushes and attractions may begin. Although younger children can have crushes, they are more intense during puberty.
- Self-consciousness may increase. Often, people beginning puberty feel self-conscious for a while.
- Sudden mood changes may begin. This is caused by the hormones flowing through your blood-stream.
- Friction with parents or guardians may grow. Puberty can be a trying time for you and your parents/guardians. While kids have their own emotional things happening inside, watching you move from childhood to young adulthood can also be emotional for the grown-ups in your life.





Girls

What is puberty? Puberty is the time of life when hormones cause changes in a young person's body.

Where do the hormones come from? The pituitary gland located in a person's brain. It begins to release the special hormones that cause the changes.

When does puberty start? For some it happens sooner, for others it happens later.

Girls start noticing changes between the ages of 8 and 15.

Boys start between the ages of 11 and 17.

Outwardly a girl's body will begin to change. All of these are totally normal.

- Underarm, pubic and leg hair will develop and hips will begin to broaden
- Breasts will begin to develop

Inside your body things are changing as well.

- A girl has two ovaries, and from the time she is born, they are filled with thousands of eggs that are about the size of the tip of a pin. Estrogen is the female hormone causing changes in a girl's body. During ovulation, an egg leaves one of the ovaries and travels down one of the fallopian tubes into the uterus. If that egg is not fertilized, it will pass through the cervix and leave her body along with the blood and fluid that are not needed since there is no pregnancy.
- This flow of blood and fluid is menstruation, more commonly called a period, which normally lasts from 2 to 7 days. Although it is called a monthly period, it may recur anywhere between 21 to 35 days.
- It is not uncommon for girls to experience cramps around the time of their period. This happens because the muscles of the uterus are contracting in order to eliminate the fluid.
- Six (6) months to a year before a girl first gets her menstrual period, her body might begin to produce a clear or white vaginal discharge, which is perfectly normal.
- Crushes and attractions may begin. Although younger children can have crushes, they are more intense during puberty.
- Self-consciousness may increase. Often, people beginning puberty feel self-conscious for a while.
- Sudden mood changes may begin. This is caused by the hormones flowing through your bloodstream.
- Friction with parents or guardians may grow. Puberty can be a trying time for you and your parents/guardians. While kids have their own emotional things happening inside, watching you move from childhood to young adulthood can also be emotional for the grown-ups in your life.

