Growing Up

Gateshead Primary Care Trust
South Tyneside Primary Care Trust
Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust
Puberty and body changes are part of growing up. This process happens to everybody, although not always at the same time. For boys/girls these changes can happen any time between 9-14 years, for some a little earlier or later than that.

Growing up can be an exciting time, but it may be a bit confusing if you don’t understand the changes that are taking place.

We hope this booklet will answer some of your questions.

Don’t be afraid to ask and talk if you are worried as your body is changing and you are growing up.

Ask a grown up you are close to and can trust as they have already gone through puberty.
how your body changes

- You will grow taller, known as a growth spurt.
- Shoulders get broader and muscles get bigger.
- Hair will grow under your arms in your armpits. The fine hair all over your body also gets more obvious. Pubic hair also begins to grow on the lower abdomen and round the genital area. Later on hair will grow on the chin and face.
- Penis grows bigger, longer and wider.
- The testicles also grow bigger and one usually hangs lower than the other.
- Your skin becomes greasy and you sweat more during puberty.
- Voice ‘breaks’ it begins to deepen. This is because your voice box grows larger.
- Mood swings - the hormones causing all the body changes can also affect your emotions. Try not to worry, this is a normal part of growing up.
how your body changes

- You will grow taller, known, as a growth spurt.

- Your breasts begin to develop, and get rounder and fuller.

- Hips broaden and fill out, making a girl’s figure softer and rounder.

- Hair starts to grow under your arms in your armpits.

- Pubic hair begins to grow on the lower abdomen and round the genital area.

- Your skin becomes more greasy and you sweat more during puberty.

- Mood swings - the hormones causing all the body changes can also affect your emotions. Try not to worry, this is a normal part of growing up.

- The other big change that happens at this time is menstruation (your monthly period). This is normal and healthy and nothing to be afraid of. To understand menstruation you need to know how your body is working and what the female reproductive system is like.
Boys

Reproductive System

Bladder
- Stores urine.

Urethra
- Carries sperm or urine to outside the body.

Penis
- Goes stiff and hard when ready for intercourse, due to increased blood flow.

Testes
- There are two of these which make sperm.

Scrotum
- A sac containing the testes.

Sperm Duct
- Carries sperm away from the testes.
Endometrium  spongy blood filled tissue that lines the uterus.
Egg  also called ovum. This is the female reproductive cell.
Fallopian tubes  two tubes connecting the ovaries to the uterus. The egg travels along these tubes. Also called oviducts.
Ovary  gland on either side of uterus, which contains eggs and produce female hormones.
Uterus  also called womb. Muscular organ where baby develops and grows until birth.
Vagina  flexible passage to the outside of body, through which menstrual fluid flows and babies are born.
reproductive system

The main function of the male reproductive system is to produce sperm. Sperm is the male reproductive cell.

When a sperm joins with a female egg in a woman’s body this is called fertilisation, and a baby can develop from the fertilised egg.

Sperm is produced in the testes (or testicles), and leaves the testes through the sperm duct. The sperm are mixed with fluids produced by the prostate gland. The mixture of sperm and fluid is called semen. It leaves the body by the urethra, the tube in the centre of the penis.

Urine also comes out of the urethra, but not at the same time as semen.
What happens during your menstrual cycle?

After puberty, hormones signal one of your ovaries to release one egg cell each month. The egg is released into the fallopian tube and this is called ovulation.

If there are sperm in the fallopian tube the egg can be fertilised and the egg begins to develop into a baby.

The egg (fertilised or not) moves through the fallopian tube into the uterus (womb).

Meanwhile, in preparation for the egg, the lining of the uterus (the endometrium) becomes thickened with a layer of tissues and blood cells. If the egg is fertilised, it attaches itself to the endometrium which nourishes it as it grows into a baby.

However, most of the time the egg will not be fertilised, so the endometrium will not be needed. It starts to dissolve into a reddish fluid and flows out of the body through the vagina.

This is called menstruation or your period.
some of your questions answered

What is an erection?
This is when the penis stiffens and gets hard. This happens when the blood vessels in the penis get larger and fill with blood. It happens when a male is sexually aroused.

What is ejaculation?
The release of semen from the penis. Semen is pushed out of the body by contractions of the prostate gland and seminal vesicles.

Why do erections sometimes happen for no reason?
These are called involuntary erections and are a normal part of growing up. They are not as noticeable as you might think. The best way to make it go away is to think about something else.

What is a wet dream?
This is also called a nocturnal emission. It is nothing to worry about, it’s when you ejaculate in your sleep. There may be a damp patch on your pyjamas when you wake up. Wet dreams are a normal part of growing up.

Does it matter what size your penis is?
Everybody is different. A big penis does not make you more of a man than a small one. When they are erect most penises are about the same size.

What is masturbation?
This means to handle your own penis and may lead to ejaculation. It is not harmful to your health.
some of your questions answered

**When will I start my periods?**
Everyone has their own internal body clock. Your periods usually start about two years after your breasts begin to develop, and soon after you grow under arm and pubic hair. Some girls start as young as 9 and others not until they are 15 or 16.

**How often will I have my period?**
It takes a little while for your periods to become regular, and this is nothing to worry about. Most women have their periods about every 28 days, but this can vary.

**How long will my period last?**
A period usually lasts from 3-7 days. Again this varies, as we are all different.

**How will I know if my period is due?**
It’s a good idea to mark on a calender, each time your period starts, so you can predict when your next period will be due.

**How much blood will I lose?**
Over a menstrual period, lasting 3-7 days, you will lose about 1/2 cup of blood (menstrual fluid).

**What are period pains?**
Some girls do feel uncomfortable during their periods. They may complain of a dull ache in the lower abdomen or lower back.
girls

some of your questions answered

**What can I do if I get period pains?**

**Exercise** - gentle exercise like a long walk and deep breathing can help.

**A warm bath** - this will help you relax, or placing a hot water bottle on your abdomen can help.

**Pain relievers** - always check with an adult (mum), school nurse or doctor, before taking any medicines.

**How do I use a pad?**

Pads usually have a sticky strip and this fixes them in your pants. Pads need to be changed regularly. If your flow is heavy every 2-4 hours and if lighter 4-6 hourly. If pads are not changed often enough they may smell, so regularly changing is really important.

**What should I do with my used pad?**

Wrap it up in toilet paper, or the wrapper of your fresh pad and place it in a wastebin.

**What if my period starts and I haven’t got a pad?**

You can easily use tissue or toilet paper until you can get one. If it happens at school you can ask your teacher for help, as spare pads are always kept in school. If you think your periods will be starting soon it’s a good idea to always carry a pad with you in your school bag.

**Is it okay to use tampons?**

Yes, tampons are safe to use, and can be worn to go swimming. However it is important to read the instructions and change them often. It’s a good idea to chat to a grown up first if you want to try them.

**What is masturbation?**

This means to touch your own genitals which may lead to pleasurable feelings. It is not harmful to your health.
Keeping clean

As these changes take place you will need to take more care of your body. As your sweat glands are more active, keeping your skin clean and fresh is very important. When sweat comes into contact with the bacteria on your skin it can create an unpleasant odour.

A daily wash, bath or shower is the best way to keep clean, paying special attention to your armpits, genital area and feet. It’s a good idea to use a deodorant and wear clean socks and underwear every day.

Hair - your hair will be more greasy due to overactive oil glands on your scalp. You’ll need to wash it more often, to keep it looking clean and shiny, but washing too often may make it more greasy.

Skin - spots can be a normal part of puberty. It’s important to wash your face at least twice a day to keep greasy skin at bay. If spots are a big problem, your Doctor may be able to help.

Healthy eating

Eating a good variety of healthy foods is especially important as your body is changing and growing.

You need to include:-

Dairy products - milk, yoghurt, cheese, for healthy bones and teeth.

Protein foods - meat, fish, eggs and pulses for growth and repair.

Vegetables and fruit - to provide fibre and vitamins.

Breads and cereals - to provide energy.
Your body also needs plenty of fluids. At least 6-8 glasses of water each day is recommended.

People come in all different shapes and sizes. It is normal to put on some weight as your body changes shape during puberty.

Try not to worry too much, but if you are concerned try to talk to someone you can trust e.g. parent, family doctor or school nurse.

**Keeping fit and healthy**

Regular exercise will help to keep you fit and healthy, and give you more energy (it is quite usual to feel tired at times during puberty).

There are lots of activities which you may enjoy either by yourself or with your friends:

- Walking
- Running
- Football/Netball
- Swimming
- Cycling
- Dancing and lots more . . .

**Remember!**

If you are worried about anything or are unsure about anything and have more questions, don’t be afraid to ask.

**Places to find help:**

Parents/Carers - Brothers/Sisters
Teachers - Doctor or School Nurse
Library books - there are other useful books you might like to read.
Childline - a free phoneline you can ring to talk to someone in confidence - **Tel: 0800 111 111.**
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This information can be made available in another format or language on request. Please contact the Communications and PR Team Tel: 0191 529 7118 Email: mopil@sotw.nhs.uk

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