



## **TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT PUBERTY**

Puberty is part of a child's development when hormonal and physical changes result in sexual maturity and the ability to reproduce.

### **When does puberty happen?**

The age when puberty starts is different for each person.

In girls, pubertal changes often start with breast development, then pubic hair, weight gain in the hips, legs and stomach, and appearance of white mucous vaginal discharge. Menstrual periods typically begin 2 years after the onset of breast development, on average occurring at 12-13 years of age. If your daughter shows signs of puberty before age 8 years, or has no signs of puberty by age 15, you should see your doctor.

In boys, puberty begins with enlargement of the testicles, then the penis, and hair growth on the body. They will have a deepening of voice, acne, body odor, and then a growth spurt. If your son shows signs of puberty before age 9 or if not showing any signs of puberty by age 14, you should see your doctor.

With the physical changes, as a person enters puberty he or she may go through different emotions, and may develop new feelings about their peers and have sexual thoughts.

### **How do I talk to my child about puberty?**

As a parent, you are a role model to your child, and a trusted source of information. It helps to be approachable, to listen, and to respect their feelings. Start talking about puberty early on, before your child goes through the stages. It is best to have multiple conversations over time. Encourage your child to ask questions. This will help your child feel prepared for the physical changes, and recognize the normal and healthy stages of puberty.

### **Where do I start?**

See below for some helpful resources.

#### *Websites*

- Alberta Health Services resource: <https://teachingsexualhealth.ca/parents>
- Canadian Pediatric Society: [https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/behavior-and-development/information\\_for\\_girls\\_about\\_puberty](https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/behavior-and-development/information_for_girls_about_puberty) and [https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/preteens-and-teens/information\\_for\\_boys\\_about\\_puberty](https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/preteens-and-teens/information_for_boys_about_puberty)
- The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada: <https://www.sexandu.ca/your-body/puberty/#tc3>

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- American Association of Pediatrics:  
<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/puberty/Pages/default.aspx>

*Books*

- “It’s not the Stork”, “It’s so Amazing” and “It’s Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexual Health” series by Robie H. Harris
  - “Guy Stuff: The Body Book for Boys” by Cara Natterson
  - “The Care and Keeping of You (American Girl Library)” by Valorie Schaefer and Josee Masse
  - “Sex is a Funny Word: A Book About Bodies, Feelings and You” by Cory Silverberg and Fiona Smyth
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