



## Puberty

### What is Puberty?

Puberty is the process of the body changing from childhood into adulthood. When puberty has been completed it means your body can reproduce, or make babies.

### How long does puberty last?

Puberty usually starts around 10 years old, but can start as early as 8 years old and as late as 12. The whole puberty process takes several years.

### What happens during puberty?

Your body will begin to change. Puberty usually begins with breast growth followed by pubic and underarm hair, but either can come first. Then you may notice you start to get taller and the last stage is getting your menstrual period. Most people still grow about 1-3 inches after they get their period.

### MAIN PUBERTY CHANGES

**Breast Growth:** You may notice some bumps on your chest begin to form. These bumps are the beginning of breasts. One side may start to grow before the other. Sometimes you may feel soreness before you see anything. Sometimes your chest will be sore if you bump into something. This will not last long and is normal.

**Pubic and underarm hair:** Usually about 6 months to a year after your breasts begin to grow you may start to notice hair growing outside your vagina (this is called your vulva) or under your armpits. Sometimes this occurs before your breasts start to grow.

**Growing taller:** You will grow quite a bit. Most children grow about 2.5 inches (6cm) a year during puberty and this speeds up in the year before your period starts. After your period starts you will grow much more slowly but you may still grow 1-3 inches. One sign that your growth spurt is beginning is that your feet may grow very quickly.

**Period:** Your period is the last stage of puberty. It is a word that we use for the vaginal bleeding that occurs every month. Other words we use for period include menstrual cycle, monthly cycle, time of the month, and many other names. It is a healthy sign that your body is working and has matured. Most people bleed for 3-7 days. If your bleeding is very heavy, you are soaking through your bed clothes, or if your bleeding is painful, you should talk to a trusted adult about this. Most periods are irregular at first but over time (usually 6 months to 2 years) they should be coming about once a month.

### Other Changes:

**Body odor:** You may notice that you have a different body odor. This is nothing to be worried or embarrassed about, and is normal. It is important to always keep your body and clothes clean. You can also use a mild deodorant in the underarms to help with body odor.

**Acne (pimples):** You may notice that you have more acne on your face, this is also normal. You may also have acne on your chest or back. If the acne bothers you, let a parent or provider know.

**Hips:** You may notice that your hips get wider and this is normal.

**Here are some reasons to see a doctor or other healthcare provider...**

You have breast growth or pubic hair before you are 8 years old.

You have no breast growth by the time you are 13.

You have not started your period by the time you are 15.

You are having bad pain with your period bleeding.

You are having very heavy bleeding that is soaking your bed or clothes.

You have not gotten your period in over 2 months.

You are worried about the changes your body is going through.

Your period is causing you to miss or be distracted at school or your activities.

You have any questions or concerns.

**For more information, see these other NASPAG Handouts:**

Menstrual Hygiene Products

Your Period

Vulvar and Vaginal Hygiene

Irregular Periods

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