

## **Puberty: A Parent's Guide.....Will we live through this?**

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### **Introduction**

Observations from 5<sup>th</sup> grade

Clinical Practice

### **Is it important to talk to our kids? Why?**

They need us, even if they don't think so.

They will get the information, so let's make it accurate

### **Biology Review**

## **What is Puberty?**

A complex series of physical and biological transitions leading to sexual maturity.....or a child's body maturing into a young adult body, capable of reproduction.

### **How does this process start?**

1) The **hypothalamus** in the brain begins to release pulses of Gonadotropin releasing hormone (**GnRH**).....

2) then cells in the **anterior pituitary** respond to these pulses of hormones by releasing **luteinizing hormone (LH)** and **follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH)**....

3) the **ovaries** and **testes** respond to the rising amounts of LH and FSH by growing and beginning to produce **estradiol (form of estrogen)** and **testosterone**

4) rising levels of **estrogen** and **testosterone** create the body changes we see in the puberty process

**\* this internal process may start 1-2 years prior to visible body changes \***

### **When do physical changes of puberty begin?**

For girls usually between 8-13 years old

For boys around 10-14 years old

### **What are the physical changes for boys and when do they happen?**

Growth spurt in height (not really driven by sex hormones)

Testicular enlargement

Penis increases in size

Sperm production

Pubic hair and armpit hair develops

Voice changes and deepens

Muscles increase in shape and size

Facial hair

Body odor and acne (these changes can occur earlier or later)

### **What are the physical changes for girls and when do they happen?**

Growth spurt in height

Breast development

Pubic hair

Armpit hair

Curves/fat deposition

Menarche or menstruation

Body odor or acne (again, can be earlier or later)

Ovulation

### **What's normal, what not?**

**Changes on the Inside**  
**Feelings**  
**Interior trying to catch up to the external changes**

Am I pretty?  
Why am I short?  
I'm tired.  
Why aren't I good at anything?  
I'm fat  
There's never been a bigger pimple.  
I wore my white pants today... uh oh  
I feel great, I love everyone, now I hate you.  
Why does my mom constantly ask me questions?  
My parents don't really understand me.

**Puberty and Adolescence**  
**How do we better understand our children/teens?**

Adolescence - puberty to adulthood in 3 stages

- |                       |            |
|-----------------------|------------|
| 1) Early adolescence  | ages 11-13 |
| 2) Middle adolescence | ages 14-18 |
| 3) Late adolescence   | ages 19-21 |

(don't really catch up to the physical changes until Late Adolescence)

**Emotional development**

Asserting their independence  
Striving for autonomy  
Ambivalence about separating from parents

## **Cognitive developmental Stage (according to Piaget)**

Concrete Thinking  
(Ages 7-11)

Formal Operations  
(11 years and up)

## **Characteristics**

Thinks logically about objects  
and events

Thinks in abstract terms

## **Social Development**

Peers and friends now become very important  
Family is still important, but peers opinions weigh heavily

## **The Parent's Perspective**

Spend a little time thinking about your own experience of puberty and what if anything your parents talked with you about.  
Spend some time thinking about how you feel about your child growing up and how and what you want to talk with them about.

<p><b>Putting it all together to talk.... And listen</b></p>
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The 8 year old girl who is close to you and chatty.

The 10 year old boy who gives one syllable responses

The 15 year old (boy or girl) who know everything and is sure that you don't

## **Resources for you and your children**

Friends  
Family  
Pediatrician  
Nurse Practitioner  
School/teacher  
Sense of humor  
1 good reference for you and your child  
Become a good listener

**Suggested reading/reference:**

The Boy's Body Book, Everything You Need to Know for Growing up YOU. Kelli Dunham. 2007.

The Girl's Body Book, Everything You Need to Know for Growing up YOU. Kelli Dunham. 2008

The Care & Keeping of YOU, The Body Book for Girls. American Girl. Valerie Lee Schaefer. 1998.

The Feelings Book, The Care & Keeping of your Emotions. American Girl. Dr. Lynda Madison. 2002.

It's so Amazing! Robie H. Harris