

# Always Changing & Growing Up

Everything you need to know about puberty

## Grades 7-8



always

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# Growing up

## What a trip!

You're growing up. Growing independent, growing stronger and growing into an adult. Puberty is a time full of changes to the way you look and the way you feel; it's when you can learn to be a better leader, a better friend and a better you.

Puberty can start as early as 7 years old for some individuals or as late as 14 for others. It can be a really confusing time, as you might be wondering what's happening to you and why.

These changes are completely natural;  
they happen to all of us.

The goal of this guide is to give you all the information you need to navigate puberty with confidence. It also shares helpful tips and advice from experts.

Simply read on to find out everything you've always wanted to know about puberty and periods.

Yours,

*The Always Team*

# Your body is changing

## Puberty

Puberty is a time of physical and emotional change that happens as children grow and mature. These changes are natural and everyone experiences them.

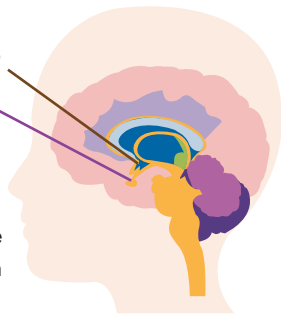
Puberty usually starts occurring between the ages of 7 and 14. Keep in mind, the onset of puberty is different for everyone. For some it happens early, while for others it can take longer. Your time is the right time!

## So, why do we all change?

Puberty exists to prepare the body for reproducing, and it actually starts in the brain! During puberty, two parts of the brain called the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland start making a lot more hormones.

Hormones are chemical substances that act as messengers in the body and make changes happen. Some hormones will make your bones grow longer, others will guide the development of your brain or the changes in your reproductive system.

**Hypothalamus**  
**Pituitary Gland**



**Did you know?** Everyone produces all the same hormones, but in different levels. Some people have more testosterone and some have more estrogen. That's one of the things that makes everyone different!

# Changes during puberty

Now you know why changes occur, let's take a look at what changes children go through during puberty.

## Bodies with female sex organs

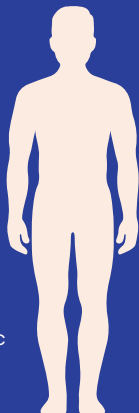
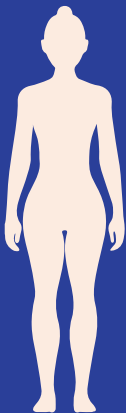
- Breasts start to grow
- Vaginal discharge begins
- Hips and thighs broaden
- Labia may grow and widen
- Menstruation begins

## Bodies with male sex organs

- Breasts can grow
- Voice cracks and gets deeper
- Adam's apple enlarges
- Shoulders get larger and body gets more muscular
- Chest hair may appear
- Penis and testicles grow

## Shared

- Emotions and feelings may seem stronger
- Brain development improves the way you think and understand
- New feelings of attraction may begin
- Height increases
- Skin gets oilier and pimples may appear
- Sweating increases, body develops own odour
- Body hair grows: face, armpit, leg and pubic



**These changes can be tough for many people, so it's great to support each other as best you can through this stage in life.**

# How to deal with all these changes?

With all these changes going on, it's important to learn how to keep your body healthy. As you're growing up, it's time to start making your own choices and developing healthy habits.

## Skin care

As the skin on your face gets oilier you may start getting pimples, blackheads or acne. If you get acne, it doesn't mean you're not clean. Most of the time, it's related to your new hormones that cause the extra oiliness, and it is also genetic.

The good news is that developing a regular skin care routine can help!

### You can start with these few tips:

- The first step to a good skin care routine, whether you have acne or not, is to wash. A daily shower gets rid of the dirt and oil on your skin. To wash your face, use a gentle cleanser and your fingertips. There is no need to scrub your skin hard – rough pads or cloths can actually worsen acne.
- Don't squeeze any pimples because this can cause scars and may even create more acne.
- Don't get too much sun as this can make acne worse. Use sunscreen when you are out in the sun.
- Keep your skin healthy by eating a healthy diet, being physically active and getting plenty of rest (more tips on this later!).
- If you feel you need a product to take care of your skin, talk to a Doctor to see which one would be right for you.

## Smile care

Part of staying healthy is making sure you keep your teeth clean. Make sure you brush them properly every morning and every night with a good toothpaste and a soft bristled brush.

**Toothpaste** helps fight cavities, strengthen teeth enamel and freshen breath.

For best results, brush from gum to teeth and don't forget your tongue. You should also **floss** daily in between your teeth and use a **mouthwash** to help reach places that brushing may have missed.



## Hair care

Some people need to wash their hair more often during puberty because their body produces more oil. If your hair becomes oilier you may want to follow this simple two-step routine to keep it clean:

### 1. Wash with shampoo

A good shampoo will clean your hair by removing deposits such as dirt, sebum (an oily secretion of the sebaceous glands) and styling products. It can also protect it from damage and nourish it too!

### 2. Then apply conditioner

The role of the conditioner is to untangle your hair and make it easier to manage. It will also keep it moisturized and protect it from damage.

## Sweat and body odour

Just as some glands start producing more oil during puberty, your sweat glands produce more perspiration. This is important because it helps regulate the temperature of your body – as the sweat evaporates away from your body it takes the heat with it! But, sweat can smell unpleasant when it comes in contact with bacteria on the skin. This smell is known as body odour.

### To help prevent body odour you can:

1. Wash regularly with soap– at least once a day and especially after physical activity.
2. Use a deodorant or antiperspirant on clean skin.

### Deodorants? Antiperspirants? What's the difference?

**Deodorants** are basically perfumes that help mask or cover your body odour. **Antiperspirants** help stop the body odour from developing by reducing sweat. Both come in many different styles and fragrances and are usually combined in one product. If you can't find a product that works for you talk with your doctor.





## Body hair

During puberty, thicker and darker hair begins to appear in many new places, such as legs, underarms and in the pubic area. Having body hair is natural. Some people may decide to remove it, some may choose not to.

## Breasts

Breasts begin to grow in bodies that produce high levels of estrogen. Those with male sex organs who produce higher levels of testosterone may also experience breast growth - and

it's natural. It usually involves a little enlargement of the nipple area or a small amount of breast growth.



## Regular preventive care

You've probably been going to the **doctor for checkups** all your life, so it should come as no surprise that you'll need to keep doing that. Regular healthcare is important, so be sure to visit your doctor and dentist on a regular basis.

# What happens in bodies with female sex organs

Some of the most significant changes that happen during puberty are the changes that happen to our reproductive organs.

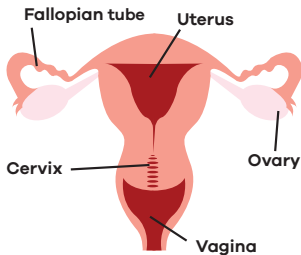
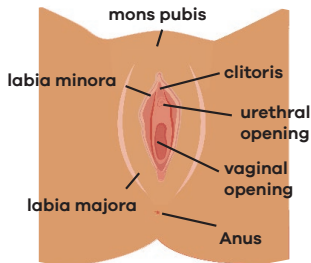
## Your period

During puberty, the body starts to produce more estrogen and progesterone. Estrogen causes your reproductive organs to grow, mature, and prepare to start your menstrual cycle. Every month, your body will prepare for pregnancy. If no pregnancy occurs, the lining of your uterus (endometrium) will shed and leave your body as a period.

Even if your body is now ready for pregnancy, it doesn't mean you are! It's important to know why you get your period and what is happening inside your body. There are many other external factors to be considered for pregnancy and these include age, readiness, and much more.

## Understanding your menstrual cycle

Your menstrual cycle is the time from the first day of bleeding in one cycle to the first day of bleeding in your next cycle. The average length of a menstrual cycle in the first few years is 21-45 days. After that, the normal length becomes 21-35 days, with the average length of a menstrual cycle being 28 days.

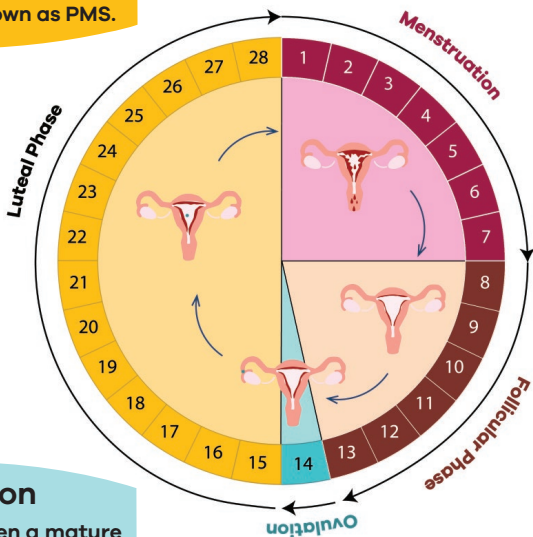


## 4 Pre-menstrual

The endometrium is thick and ready to receive a fertilized egg, but if fertilization does not happen, the lining is no longer needed. As a result, hormone levels change and the lining is shed. The hormones and shedding may cause symptoms known as PMS.

## 1 Menstruation

Your menstrual period, which is made of endometrial tissue, blood, and other fluids, exits the uterus through the cervix and vagina.



## 3 Ovulation

Ovulation occurs when a mature egg is released from the ovary.

The egg travels along the fallopian tube to the uterus. If a sperm fertilizes the egg, the cells can begin to form a pregnancy. Around the time of ovulation you may notice increased vaginal discharge.

## 2 Pre-ovulation

Each ovary holds thousands of eggs, and every month, rising hormone levels cause the ovary to produce a mature egg. During this time, estrogen causes the endometrium to get thicker.

# Period FAQs

## How long will my period last?

Well, it varies. For most, it usually lasts between 3 to 7 days.

## I haven't started my period, am I late?

There is no right time for your first period to come. You're most likely to get it between the ages of 10 and 16, but everyone is different. If you haven't started your period by 16, talk to a trusted adult or doctor.

## Why and how to keep track of my cycle

Everyone's menstrual cycle is unique. Keeping track of your cycle helps you understand how your body works and when your period will start. It can also be a big help for your doctor if you ever think there's a problem. Simply use a period calculator like the one on the Always website to keep track of your cycle.

## What if my period is irregular?

Many people who menstruate have unpredictable periods for the first few cycles. But, once you've had a few periods, they should happen at least every 45 days, but no more often than every 21 days.

## What is spotting?




Spotting is light vaginal bleeding that happens between periods. If it happens around your usual period (before or after), it can be normal. If it's happening often or unpredictably, you should check with your doctor.

## How much blood will I shed?

An average of about 4 to 12 teaspoons of menstrual fluid is lost during a period. But only a small amount of that is blood. Since your body contains 4 litres of blood on average, it doesn't miss the little bit lost during a period – and your body makes up for it quickly. The first few days of your period are likely to be the heaviest and the last few days will get lighter. Your period blood won't all come out at the same time.

# An overview of period protection

How do you deal with the menstrual fluid coming out of your vagina? There are lots of options. As you learn about them and try different things you'll be able to decide what works best for you.

Period Protection		Worn Inside or outside the body	Disposable or Reusable
	PADS	Outside	Disposable
	LINERS	Outside	Disposable
	TAMPONS	Inside	Disposable
	CUPS	Inside	Reusable
	MENSTRUAL UNDERWEAR	Outside	Reusable

## Don't get caught by surprise

Before your cycle becomes regular, your period may happen unexpectedly. It's a really good idea to always be prepared – just in case – especially when you're not at home.

### Below are some tips to make sure you're never caught off guard:

- Keep a pad or tampon in your **purse, backpack, locker** – or even just your pocket.
- Start **using a daily liner** a few days before your period is meant to start. It will help protect you by absorbing any spotting or light flow.
- If you get caught off guard, you can always use **rolled up toilet paper** until you can get a period protection.
- In case you don't have period protection on you, or can't afford it, you can always ask a trusted adult in your school to see if they have period products available.

And look out for others – have a pad or tampon on hand in case a friend is in need of period protection.

# All you need to know about pads

Most individuals who menstruate start with pads to manage their period, as they're really easy to use. A pad is a piece of absorbent material that you stick to the inside of your underwear to absorb your menstrual flow.

Each brand of pads looks different but they share many similar features. For instance, check out what an Always pad looks like below. Remember, on most pads, the longer or wider part of the pad usually goes to the back.

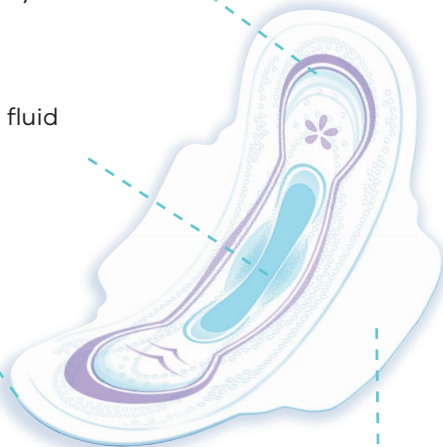
**Hey, that shape looks familiar**  
that's because its contoured  
to fit your body

## **Where'd it go?**

An absorbent core pulls fluid  
away from your body

## **Adhesive**

for stay-put protection



## **Wings**

Some pads have wings that wrap around underwear to help your pad stay in place and prevent from side leaks, enabling you to move freely

## How to use a pad



1. Wash hands with soap and water before changing your pad.



2. Open the wrapper of your pad.



3. Detach the pad from its wrapper and, if the pad has one, the paper strip that covers the wings.



4. Attach the sticky part securely to the inside centre of your underwear. Wrap the wings around it. When done, wash your hands with soap and water.



Change your pad every 4 to 8 hours, or more often if your flow is heavy. Don't forget to use clean underwear every day; change them if they become soiled.

## How to dispose of a pad

### Trash it – don't flush it!



1. Fold the pad up & wrap it in the wrapper from your new pad, or in toilet paper if you don't have a wrapper available.

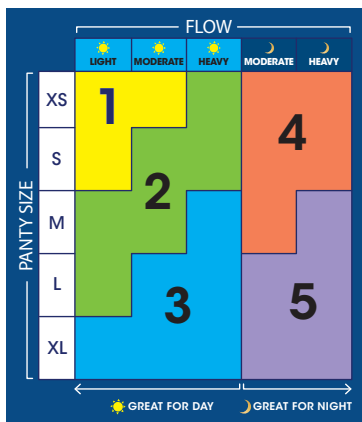


2. Put the wrapped up pad in the garbage and ensure the lid is closed once the product has been disposed.

## Choosing a pad

It is important to choose a pad that will be the best fit for you. Pads have different shapes, lengths and level of absorbencies so you can choose yours according to your shape and flow.

**The better it fits, the better it protects!**

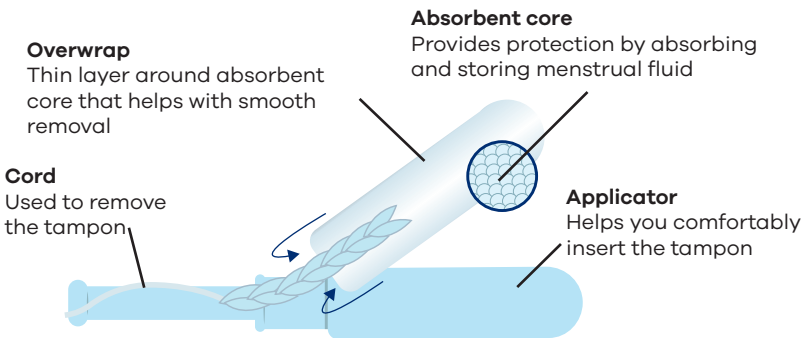


# All you need to know about tampons

A tampon is a type of period protection made from soft materials that you insert in your vagina to soak up menstrual fluid before it leaves your body. Tampons can give you the protection and comfort you need to move freely, whether you're in class, on the field, or in the pool!

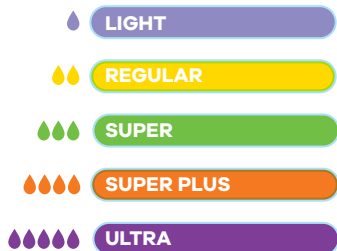
**Keep in mind:** Tampons go in your vagina (not your urethra). That means you can still pee while wearing a tampon, as the tampon does not go in the same hole as where your pee comes from!

## Check out what a tampon looks like:



## Which absorbency to choose?

Tampons come in different levels of absorbencies because everyone has different flows, that can change each day of their period!



We recommend you start with using a regular absorbency tampon. If you find it's difficult to remove your tampon after 4-8 hours and there are still white parts on your tampon when you remove it, try switching to a lower absorbency. If you find you're having to change it very frequently, try switching to a higher absorbency.



# Trash it – don't flush it!

Too many people still believe tampons, wrappers or applicators can be flushed in the toilet. This can cause the toilet to clog and is also harmful for the environment. Good habits make a difference. You can contribute to the care for the environment by not flushing your period products and disposing them in the garbage instead.



## What's TSS?

TSS, or Toxic Shock Syndrome, is a rare but serious infection that can be fatal. It has been associated with tampon use. It's caused by a certain type of bacteria that may live on healthy skin, but become a problem if they grow too rapidly.

TSS is treatable, but the earlier you catch it the better.

Be aware of the warning signs:

- Sudden high fever (usually over 39°C)
- Vomitting
- Diarrhea
- Sunburn-like rash
- Dizziness
- Muscle ache
- Fainting/near fainting when standing


Remove your tampon and contact a doctor if you have one or more of the above warning signs.


Although TSS is rare, here are a few ways to reduce your risk of getting it:

- Use the lowest absorbency necessary for your flow
- Use various forms of period protection throughout the duration of your period
- Look out for the warning signs above





# How to use a tampon


**1**  Wash your hands well. Then unwrap the tampon. Find a comfy position. Most either sit on the toilet with their knees apart or stand with their knees slightly bent.


**2**  Take a deep breath and relax. Hold the applicator securely.

**3**  Find the little grip marks on the applicator. Hold them with your thumb and middle finger. With the string hanging down insert the plastic tube into your vagina at a slight upward angle. Gently slide the applicator inside your vagina until your fingers touch your body.

**4**  With your pointer finger, push the smaller plastic tube all the way in; this slides the tampon out of the applicator and into the right place.

**5**  To remove the applicator, keep your fingers on the grip marks and pull down gently, leaving the tampon inside you and the string hanging outside. If you got it right you should not even feel it! If it is uncomfortable, chances are it is not inserted far enough. Don't worry - either use your finger to push it in a little further, or gently pull it out and try again with a new tampon.

**6**  Congrats, you got it! Now get rid of the applicator. Place it back into the wrapper and throw it in the bin, NOT the toilet. Wash your hands after inserting the tampon.

**7**  To remove your tampon, gently pull the string of your tampon to remove it and dispose it in the bin. Once you're done, wash your hands with soap and water.

## Top tips!

- Change your tampon every 4-8 hours or more often if your flow is heavy.
- Ensure that the last tampon is removed at the end of your period.
- Create a reminder to help you remember when to change your tampon.



# FAQ's about tampons

## Can I use a tampon at night?

YES! Insert a new tampon before you go to bed and replace it immediately when you wake up. If you sleep for more than 8 hours, use a pad instead.

## Can I use tampons when I play sports or go swimming?

YES! Tampons will keep you protected through all your kicks, jumps, and dunks. And yes, you can even go swimming!

## Do tampons hurt?

You shouldn't feel a thing! If it's uncomfortable, you probably did not insert it far enough, which is an easy fix. Use your finger to push it in a little further, or gently pull it out and try inserting a new one.

## Are tampons easy to take out?

YES! The removal string is sewn on tight, so just pull it in order to remove the tampon and it will easily slip out! If you feel a strong resistance, the tampon might not be full yet. You might want to switch to a lower absorbent tampon for next time.

## Am I old enough to use tampons?

As soon as you start having your period, you're old enough to use tampons and your body is ready. Just make sure you feel ready.

## Do I need to wear a pad and a tampon?

No. Tampons are designed to work on their own. But while you're getting used to tampons, you can use a daily liner as well.



# Discharge & daily liners

## Discharge

You've probably noticed that your underwear sometimes gets stained with a creamy white/yellowish fluid. This discharge comes from your vagina and is **natural**. It is a sign that your body is functioning properly. It helps prevent the vagina from drying out and protects it from infections.

The amount of vaginal discharge can vary during the menstrual cycle as hormone levels in the body change. But if your discharge is significantly different than usual, has a bad smell or you experience itching in your vaginal area you should talk to a trusted adult and go see a doctor.

## Daily liners

While vaginal discharge is natural and healthy, it might make you feel less fresh or uncomfortable. That's where a daily liner can help! It's an absorbent liner that you simply stick in the inside of your underwear. Unlike pads (which are designed to be used only during your period) daily liners are designed to be worn every day.

### Daily liners are perfect for:

- Keeping your underwear clean
- Absorbing vaginal discharge
- Absorbing perspiration
- Extra protection when you're getting used to tampons
- Protection for light period days or spotting

### What do I do with it after it has been used?

To dispose of your daily liner, treat it like a used pad - wrap it up and then put it in the garbage. Never throw it in the toilet.

# Premenstrual syndrome & period cramps

## PMS

Between ovulation and the first day of your period, your hormone levels go up and down. These fluctuations can sometimes make you feel more emotional and cause physical symptoms. These symptoms are usually called Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS).

### Common PMS symptoms you might experience:

- Feeling swollen or bloated
- Change in appetite
- Breast tenderness
- Abdominal cramps and feeling nauseous
- Acne or skin rash
- Mood changes: feeling sad, tearful, tired or irritable
- Headaches

### How to deal with PMS

- Chart your symptoms and be aware of when you may experience them
- Get enough rest
- Exercise
- Take time for yourself
- Practice deep breathing exercises
- Eat foods rich in fibre and low in sugar and fat
- Listen to your body

## Period cramps

Cramps can occur just before or during your period when the muscle of your uterus contracts to make the lining of your uterus leave your vagina as menstrual flow.

### How to treat them

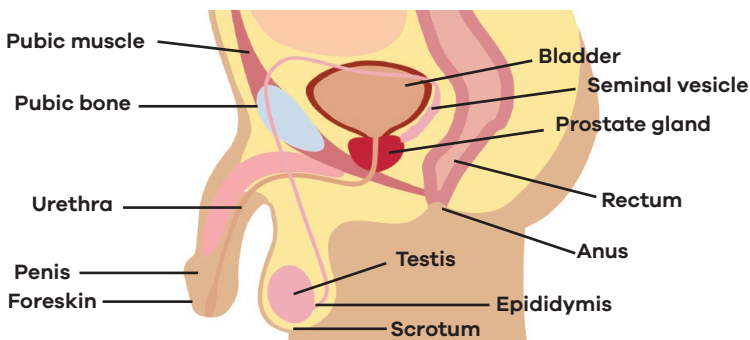
- Moderate exercise and stretching
- Use a hot water bottle or warm towel on your belly
- Take a warm bath
- Practice deep breathing exercises

### How to help someone with PMS and cramps

- Do not tease by saying “oh, it must be that time of the month again”.
- Remember that not everyone feels the same and how they feel can change from one period to another - try not to make assumptions about their feelings.

# What happens in bodies with **male sex organs**

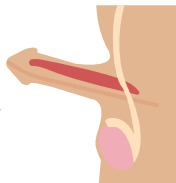
During puberty, your brain will signal to your body to make more androgens (reproductive hormones), especially testosterone. Testosterone does a lot of things: it makes your penis and testicles grow bigger, causes the growth of pubic hair, causes more frequent erections, and encourages the testicles to start making sperm.



## Erections

Erections are when the penis becomes harder and sticks up because parts of it fill up with blood. This happens throughout life, even as babies, but at puberty, they become more common and may happen randomly for no reason at all. Sometimes spontaneous erections can make you feel embarrassed – just remember they are natural and will occur less as you get older.

### ERECT PENIS



## Sperm

**Sperm** is the reproductive cell that can fertilize an egg to create a pregnancy. Sperm are made in the testicles, which hang outside your body in a sac (scrotum), just beneath your penis. The testes make a lot of sperm – about 1,000 sperm per second. Sperm are stored in the epididymis, which is the tube you can feel at the back of each testicle.

Sperm are best produced **at a cooler temperature** than normal body temperature. Because of this, the scrotum and testicles hang outside your body to stay cool. If you are cold, your scrotum shrinks to pull the testicles in closer to your body for warmth. When it is very hot, they may hang lower.

## Ejaculation

Sperm are released from the epididymis and move through the sperm ducts toward the penis. Along the way, sperm mix with fluid produced by the seminal vesicles and prostate gland, so they can move more easily. The sperm and this fluid are called **semen**. It is whitish and sticky.

Semen leaves the penis through the urethra. This is the tube that runs through the middle of your penis. Urine also leaves the body through the urethra, but never at the same time as semen.

When semen spurts out the penis, it's called an **ejaculation**. It happens when muscles at the base of the penis start to expand and contract. This pushes the semen through the urethra and out through the tip of the penis.

**Remember** – Even if your body is now ready to fertilize an egg, it doesn't mean you are! It's important to know why you get erections and what is happening inside your body. There are many other external factors to be considered and these include age, readiness, and much more!

## FAQs

### **Do individuals stop having erections when they get older?**

No, healthy individuals of all ages with a penis can get erections. They occur more commonly during and after puberty.

### **Does it matter what size your penis is?**

Not at all! Penises do vary in length and shape from person to person.

### **What is circumcision?**

This is a minor surgical procedure, usually performed soon after birth, which removes all or part of the foreskin of the penis. A circumcision is not usually considered medically necessary, but it may be performed for religious or cultural reasons, or because it makes it easier to keep the penis clean, as it helps to prevent the growth of bacteria. Those individuals who are uncircumcised should wash under the foreskin every day. Remember – circumcised or not, the penis works the same.

### **What are wet dreams?**

Sometimes you can ejaculate when you are asleep. This is called a nocturnal emission, more commonly known as a “wet dream”. Usually they happen without disturbing your sleep – you may just notice that your pajamas or sheets feel sticky when you wake up. This is natural. You will experience them less frequently after your body has gone through puberty, because as you grow older you’ll start having more control over your body. If you have a wet dream, be sure to change your pajamas or sheets.



# Staying confident

## Your brain is changing too!

While changes to your body are more evident, there's a lot of changes happening to your brain, too! You develop new, stronger emotions and these changes can affect your confidence. This is normal and there are supports available to help with these thoughts. Talk to a teacher, your doctor, or a trusted family member.

### What is self-confidence?

Self-confidence is a feeling of trust in ourselves, in our abilities and in our judgement. When we feel confident, we believe in ourselves and our choices. Confidence helps us to be positive and face challenges head on.

### Why is self-confidence important?

Self-confidence is important because it helps us lead happy and successful lives where we feel fulfilled. It helps us achieve our goals, enjoy healthy relationships and foster our personal growth.

### Can we build self-confidence?

Yes! While there are some factors that influence how confident you feel that you can't change, like how you are treated by others, there are plenty of things you do have control over like:

- The choices you make
- The risks you take
- How you think about and respond to challenges and setbacks

### Be a team player

Joining a team or a club can improve self-confidence as you experience the support of working towards a shared goal with others. You'll practise skills again and again and learn through failure – all while making friends and having fun!

### Learn to love the skin you're in

Going through puberty and experiencing changes to your body can be hard on your self-confidence but remember that everything you're going through is normal and our bodies come in all kinds of shapes and sizes.

# Build your brain power & embrace the growth mindset

Your brain is like a muscle, so you need to exercise it. When you take on challenges and practice until you overcome them, neurons in your brain create new and stronger connections. And when your brain gets stronger, your skills do too.


The attitudes and beliefs we have about ourselves are often referred to as a mindset and they can shape our view of the world. A psychologist named Carol Dweck describes two types of mindsets that can have a big impact on how we live our lives: a growth mindset and a fixed mindset.

## What is a fixed mindset?

With a fixed mindset, we assume that basic qualities like our intelligence and talents are fixed traits that we have no control over. We'll say things like, "you either have it, or you don't" and will stop trying when faced with a challenge.

## What is a growth mindset?

With a growth mindset, we believe that new abilities can be developed through practice. We just have to keep trying and learn from our mistakes. On average, people with a growth mindset do better in the face of challenges and are generally more successful.

Growth Mindset		Fixed Mindset	
CHALLENGING YOURSELF	Embrace challenges		Avoid opportunities
FACING CRITICISM	Learn from feedback		Ignore useful feedback
MAKING AN EFFORT	See effort as key to success		See effort as useless
OVERCOMING OBSTACLES	A misstep is a step forward		A misstep is a reason to give up
WHEN OTHERS SUCCEED	Find inspiration in their performance		Find inspiration in their performance



## **Embrace challenges as an opportunity to learn, grow and gain experience**

- It's okay to feel scared; remind yourself of all the things you've achieved in the past.
- Break challenges down into smaller, more manageable steps so they don't feel so overwhelming.
- See learning as "brain training"! Like any other muscle, the brain can be trained. When we take on challenges and keep practising until we overcome them, our brain cells grow and make more connections.
- Never stop learning; set a new goal every time you accomplish an existing one.



## **Reframe failure**

- Replace the word "failing" with the word "learning".
- Rather than seeing failure as "the end", try to see it as a stepping stone on the road to success.
- Remember that it takes time to learn!



## **Acknowledge and embrace your weakness as an opportunity to learn and grow**

- Plan your goals taking into consideration:
  - Maybe you know that you tend to put things off until the last minute - try to plan around that by making modest goals and giving yourself a reasonable amount of time to accomplish them.



## **Learn to give and receive constructive feedback**

- Think of feedback as a way to learn.
- If you have an area of weakness and someone is able to point that out to you, think of it as a gift that makes you aware of where you can improve.
- Don't be afraid to give constructive feedback to others, so that they also can learn and improve.
- Constructive feedback needs to be done with good intentions, because negative criticism can be harmful.



## **Be clear on WHY you're doing what you're doing, and remind yourself of that when the going gets tough**

- Outline what your long-term goals or purpose are.
- Try to study and work with a purpose so you have the motivation to keep going.
- Remind yourself of your purpose whenever you need a motivation boost.



## **Look to others for inspiration**

- Celebrate their achievements. If they can do it, so can you!
- Learn from their mistakes. Put yourself in their shoes for a moment and pretend that it was you making the mistake. What would you do? What would you be able to learn?



## **Update your language!**

- The words we use affect how we think & feel and can make a huge difference.
- Try changing your language for an added confidence boost:

INSTEAD OF ...	SAY THIS ...
I can't do it!	I can't do it, YET!
I give up	I'll use a different strategy
I can't make this any better	I can always improve
I'll never be that smart	I will learn how to do this
I'm pretty good at science BUT I still don't understand some concepts	I'm pretty good at science AND I'm getting better every week

## Practice I-D-E-A-L solution building

At times, it can be difficult to know what to think and how to act. Learning to make the right decision for you is an important part of growing up and feeling confident. To make decision-making easier, practice I-D-E-A-L solution building:



**IDENTIFY** the problem



**DESCRIBE** all the ways you might solve the problem



**EVALUATE** all the possible solutions



**ACT** on one of the solutions and try it out



**LEARN** if your solution solved the problem effectively

## Visualize success

By picturing what you want to happen – whether it's acing an exam or being the first to cross the finish line – you make it more likely to happen. When you try it, visualize every detail, from what you're wearing, to how you feel. The more vivid your imagination, the better!

## Practice gratitude

Being grateful for what you have and for what others have given you can help you improve your self-image. Try keeping a gratitude diary – write 3 things you're grateful for every day before bed.

## Celebrate small wins

Be proud and celebrate all your achievements, even if they seem small - like getting that difficult homework done!

## Don't compare yourself to others, you're unique

It's good to look to others for inspiration but don't compare yourself to them. We're all different and all have strengths and weaknesses so compare yourself to yourself and see how far you've come and how much improvement you've made.

Feeling confident isn't always easy, but when we give ourselves permission to make mistakes, are kind to ourselves and know that we can always count on our friends, we can feel like we can achieve anything.



# Sex, gender & society

When a baby is born, everyone is excited to know if it's a boy or a girl. From this moment on, it can feel like our lives are mapped out in front of us, with society telling us that boys like certain things, and girls like other things.

But we don't have to be limited by what society says!

## Let's start with a few definitions:

**Biological sex:** Your biological sex is based on the genitals you're born with and the chromosomes you have. At birth, most people are either male (with a penis) or female (with a vagina).

**Gender identity:** Our gender identity is our psychological sense of self. It's who we feel ourselves to be. Most societies have historically recognized two genders – male and female, relating to a person's biological sex – but gender is a continuum with many variations of how people feel about their gender, as well as how they express it. Everyone's gender identity is unique to them and should be respected.

**Gender roles:** A set of behaviours and attitudes considered by society to be 'acceptable' or 'desirable' for our sex or gender. It includes how we're expected to act, speak, dress, or groom. Gender role expectations can vary depending on the society and culture and can also vary over time.

**Gender expression:** This is the way we present our gender, through our actions, clothing, demeanor, and more. How we choose to express our gender might be different than our assigned sex at birth or it may be the same. There's lots of room for flexibility and it's likely that your gender expression can change frequently throughout your life.

## **What is the relationship between sex and gender?**

Sometimes a person's sex, i.e. their biological characteristics, and their gender, i.e. how they feel themselves to be, are the same. This is known as being cisgender. For example, if a person is assigned male at birth, and identifies as a man. Sometimes how a person feels about gender differs from their assigned sex at birth. This is known as being transgender. For example, if someone is assigned female at birth, and has a vagina, but identifies as male.

## **What are gender stereotypes?**

Gender roles can lead to harmful gender stereotypes about how people should act, look and feel. Historically, gender roles and stereotypes were more defined, but they can also still exist today.

There are 4 basic types of gender stereotypes:

- **Personality traits** — For example, the belief that females are generally believed to be more emotional, while males are believed to be confident and dominant.
- **Domestic behaviours** — For example, the belief that females take care of the children, cook, and clean the home, while males take care of finances, work on the car, and do the home repairs.
- **Occupations** — The belief that some occupations or jobs are for females and some are for males. For example, historically, females were considered the caregivers, and males were considered household providers.
- **Physical appearance** — For example, the belief that females have long hair and wear make-up, while males have short hair and are taller and more muscular.

## **Why are gender roles and stereotypes harmful?**

With gender roles and stereotypes come expectations and pressure. Expectations to act, look and feel a certain way, which doesn't necessarily align with who we are or how we feel. All of this can have a negative impact on our wellbeing - for example, if we feel we're failing to meet these expectations, or if we feel we're not recognized or accepted for who we are.

It's important to remember that we are all unique and neither our sex, nor our gender, defines who we are or limits what we can do.

Whatever our gender, we must give ourselves permission to live the life we want to live, on our terms. We also must support others to live their life on their terms too.

## How to eliminate gender roles & stereotypes

### Talk about them

Talk with friends and family about the stereotypes you see. Help others understand how sexism, which is when people are looked down upon because of their sex or gender, and gender stereotypes can be hurtful.

### Don't be afraid to speak up

If you notice something that makes you feel uncomfortable, whether it's on TV, in your everyday life, or in a magazine or on social media, don't be afraid to bring it up and discuss it. Sometimes we don't realize we're promoting a stereotype until it's pointed out to us.

### Be a role model for others

By joining that sports team, leading a group task with confidence or taking dance lessons, we give ourselves the opportunity to show what we're capable of and can act as a role model for others who want to do the same.

Remember there is a whole world of possibilities regardless of your sex, gender identity and gender expression. Don't let society and gender roles limit you. Everyone is unique and that's your biggest strength – so be proud of yourself and always respect others' choices.





# Staying healthy

## Be active

Being physically active through sport or other physical activities is a great way to keep your body feeling healthy, while boosting your energy levels! It will help make your heart and lungs work better too. The key to enjoying it is to pick something you like.

For even more motivation, consider making it into a social activity with your friends and family.

Getting enough sleep is also an essential part of staying healthy and happy. On average, you'll need between 8 to 10 hours per night.

## Here's why your body needs sleep:

- To restore and rejuvenate
- To grow muscles
- To repair tissue
- To file away all your thoughts from the day
- To help increase your ability to learn more and pay attention.
- Plenty of sleep can also help prevent certain diseases, like diabetes.

## Tips to getting enough sleep:

- Stick to a regular sleep schedule
- Avoid watching and using screens (e.g. TV, phone) one hour before going to bed
- Use a comfortable mattress and pillow
- Exercise daily

## Eat well

During puberty, your child's body needs a lot of energy. It's important for them to have a healthy well-balance diet that includes a variety of food that provide energy and nourishment to meet their daily needs.

## Visit the doctor

As you get older & start your period, you may want to start seeing a doctor. They can help you understand the changes you're going through and check everything is healthy. Talk to your parents or guardians about this.

## Stay safe

During puberty, you're going through so many changes that everything seems possible, and this is great. Just remember to stay safe too.

- **Understand the risks of drug use** – legal and illegal substances affect your body and brain, can cause serious long-term damage, and even be life-threatening.
- Be aware that **harassment and bullying exist** – if someone tries to harm or intimidate you, seek support from a trusted adult.

# Social media and cyberbullying

## Use the internet and social media responsibly

While they can be great ways to find out information and connect with others, they can also have drawbacks. Talk to your parents, guardians or a trusted adult to learn more about how to best use them, and follow these key tips:

- Be careful about what you share. What goes online stays there forever
- Don't feel pressured to do anything online
- Be aware that social media is not always real life
- Don't gossip online - things can spread easily and quickly

## What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that uses technology, such as apps & the internet, to target another person. It can happen anytime, anywhere and on any platform, from social media sites and email to messaging apps, chat rooms, and even computer games.

Cyberbullying involves harassing, threatening or humiliating a person. It might start directly online, or it might be a continuation of offline bullying that has started somewhere else, such as at school.

## Types of cyberbullying

There are many different types of cyberbullying. Some examples include:

- Sending hurtful messages directly or via social media posts
- Spreading false rumors, gossip or images
- Deliberately leaving out people from messages in a group
- Sharing personal information or revealing someone's secrets in public
- Making others feel unsafe by leaving scary or threatening messages

## Cyberbullying on social media

On social media, cyberbullying can be difficult to stop as posts can spread quickly – by the time one is removed, there could be five more – and because social media is something we can access all the time it can easily and rapidly become overwhelming.

Before posting anything on social media always think if it can hurt someone's feelings and how would you feel if that message or post was about you.

### Effects of cyberbullying

Someone who is being cyberbullied might start to think badly of themselves, or feel sad, lonely or nervous. They might lose confidence or have problems at school or with friends. It's important to know that what you are experiencing is not your fault and there is support out there for you.

### How to stop cyberbullying

There are a number of ways you can prevent and stop cyberbullying:

- Ask for help. Don't be afraid to talk to your parents, teachers or a trusted adult. They can offer you support, advice and help you to report what's happening to the relevant websites or social media platforms. Talking to others about how you're feeling can also help you feel less alone.
- Adjust your privacy settings. You can adjust your privacy settings to stop unwanted messages coming through, or so that only people you know and trust can see what you post. If you're struggling to do so, ask a parent or a trusted adult to help.
- Avoid retaliation. It can be difficult but try not to respond by sending the cyberbully similar posts or spreading rumours about them, it will only make you a cyberbully yourself.

## **Some other dangers of social media to be aware of are:**

- **Fake social media profiles:** there are people on social media who are not who they say they are. How to identify a fake profile?
  - Usually has very few or no actual pictures of the person
  - Was created recently
  - Has very few or no contacts in common
- **Over sharing information without realizing it:** for example, through hidden info on your photos. Photos contain EXIF data - information about the camera you took the photo with that allow the receiver to trace where the photo was taken.

## **Staying safe on social media**

- Use safe passwords and change them often. Try a combination of letters (lowercase & uppercase), numbers and special characters. Avoid using your name, email address, birth date or other easy-to-guess information.
- Don't tell anyone your social media passwords or let them see you logging in. If you do so, change the password as soon as possible.
- If you're using a public computer or someone else's computer be sure to sign out of your accounts before leaving the computer.
- Think twice before you post anything online because once it's out there it's very difficult to completely remove it. It is easy for people to screenshot your post, and comments may be taken out of context and be harmful to you in the long term.
- Think especially carefully before posting anything that may harm or hurt anyone. Cyberbullying is not ok – and can have an enormously negative effect on someone's life.

No one deserves to be bullied offline, or online. By thinking carefully about what you post and taking a stand against cyberbullying, we can all enjoy technology in a safe way.

# Healthy and unhealthy relationships

In order to have happy and meaningful relationships we need to be able to recognize healthy and unhealthy behaviours. Think of a relationship like cooking your favourite meal: for it to work, you need a few key ingredients!

## Healthy behaviours in a relationship:

Open, honest and safe communication is a fundamental part of a healthy relationship. That means you need to:

- Talk to each other!
- Be honest with yourself about how you feel
- Try to speak up if something is bothering you
- Respect what each of you have to say – that might mean sometimes agreeing to disagree

## Healthy boundaries

Learning to set healthy limits or boundaries are fundamental when it comes to establishing positive relationships. A game without rules would be very confusing – relationships work in the same way and need rules, too. Healthy relationships require reasonable and safe agreements on how to behave towards each other.

Having healthy boundaries means that your relationship shouldn't prevent you from:

- Spending time with your friends
- Enjoying hobbies you like
- Having privacy when you want it

## Trust

A positive relationship is one where you feel equal and respect one another. That means:

- Trusting each other
- Giving each other the benefit of the doubt

## **Respect**

The wishes and feelings of everyone in a relationship have value. Some healthy behaviours that contribute to a respectful relationship are:

- Making an effort to understand each other's point of view
- Avoiding insults
- Not putting each other down

## **Compassion**

By giving each other reassurance and encouragement, we can feel safe and secure in our relationship. We show kindness or compassion by:

- Being supportive of one another's goals or dreams
- Listening to their views

## **Unhealthy behaviours in a relationship:**

### **Power and control**

A negative relationship is one that is based on power and control, rather than equality and respect. In an unhealthy relationship you might feel:

- Pressured to do things that you don't want to do
- That you can't do the things that you used to enjoy
- That you can't be with some of your friends or family because your partner is being unreasonably jealous

### **Disrespect**

Disrespect is not OK and it's an unhealthy behaviour that should be avoided in a relationship. It can be shown by:

- Making fun of the other's opinions and interests
- Destroying something that belongs to the other
- Making the other feel bad about themselves
- Yelling at the other
- Being physically, verbally, or emotionally abusive

## Using physical force

Using physical force is a severe form of disrespect and it's never acceptable in any relationship.

Remember: it's never OK for anyone to hurt you, with or without intent. If you feel unsafe you must take steps to protect yourself.

## Dependence

It's great to enjoy being with each other but if one of you feels that you "cannot live without" the other or threatens to do something drastic if the relationship ends, that's a sign of an unhealthy relationship.

You should try to keep some time for yourself to cultivate your own interests and friendships, even if you are in a romantic relationship.

## What to do if there are unhealthy behaviours in my relationship

### Power and control

If you think your relationship is unhealthy, you should consider talking about it with that person. Sometimes by talking out your feelings and making changes to how you treat each other things can be fixed.

- If you've tried talking and things aren't getting better or you feel unsafe or scared to talk, it might be time to end the relationship. It can be hard, but everyone deserves a healthy relationship, with someone who treats you with respect.

Get someone else's point of view

- If you aren't sure who to talk to, think of a person you trust and feel comfortable being around - who is a good listener, and always has your best interests at heart?
- After getting someone else's point of view, you may feel more prepared to deal with the situation.



# How to end a relationship

## 1. Plan

- What you want to say. Try to explain what you are feeling but remember to clearly say that you want to end the relationship.
- Where you'll meet. Pick a neutral place to meet where there are other people around.
- How you'll get home safely after meeting. Let a friend or family member know where you're going & when they can expect you back.

## 2. Look after yourself

- After a relationship ends, make sure you spend time doing things that make you feel good like your favourite hobbies, or seeing your best friends!

## 3. Remember, it's not your fault

- The other person should respect your decision.
- If you feel pressured or threatened, talk to a trusted adult.

Remember! A positive relationship is based on open and honest communication, trust, respect and compassion. It has healthy boundaries that allow you to be who you are, do what you like and spend time with your friends and family.

Pay attention to unhealthy behaviours in your relationship such as power and control, disrespect and the use of physical force and ask for help if needed.

Always remember that a relationship should make you happy and everyone deserves to have positive relationships.

# Getting support from others

Talking to your friends and family about your feelings and questions during puberty can help them better understand and support you.

Don't feel like you need to cope with everything on your own. Ask your parents or a trusted adult for their advice and to help answer your questions. They've experienced it too, so they'll have lots of good tips and they might even be more useful than tips from your friends, or others your age.

## To help start the conversation, follow these tips:

**Keep it casual:** Find a time when you typically talk with your parents, and use it to discuss the things you've learned in this guide. You might want to ask them what it was like when they were younger and experienced puberty.

**Write it down:** Sometimes it helps to write down your questions, so you can make sure you get all the answers.

**Be direct:** Take a deep breath and just share how you're feeling. Chances are they've experienced similar feelings at some point in their life too!

# Where to get more info

We've covered a lot in this guide, but you may want to know more.



[always.com/en-us/tips-and-advice](https://always.com/en-us/tips-and-advice) is full of information.



Don't be afraid to talk and ask questions to your friends, family and teachers!

At Always, we believe that every child has the right to be able to manage puberty and their period with dignity and that no child should have to miss school and the things they love because of their period.

If your family is struggling to afford period products, if you're finding things overwhelming or are dealing with anxiety, speak to your teacher, your doctor, a trusted family member or trusted adult.

Now that you know how your body and brain work and have tips to stay healthy and confident, go out & enjoy this journey.

*You have limitless possibilities ahead of you!*

