

# Puberty

Grade 5 and 6

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OK, so it's a funny word — but what is puberty, anyway?

Puberty (say: **pyoo**-ber-tee) is the name for the time when your body begins to develop and change as you move from kid to adult. We're talking about stuff like girls developing breasts and boys starting to look more like men. During puberty, your body will grow faster than at any other time in your life, except for when you were a baby.

It helps to know about the changes that puberty causes before they happen. That way, you know what to expect. It's also important to remember that everybody goes through these changes. No matter where you live, whether you're a boy or a girl, whether you like vanilla or double-fudge-chunk ice

cream, you will experience them. No two people are exactly alike, but one thing everyone has in common is that we all go through puberty.

Usually, puberty starts between ages 8 and 13 in girls and ages 10 and 15 in boys. This wide range in ages may help explain why some of your friends still look like young kids whereas others look more like adults.

When your body is ready to begin puberty, your pituitary (say: pih-**too**-uh-ter-ee) gland (a pea-shaped gland located at the bottom of your brain) releases special **hormones**. Depending on whether you're a boy or a girl, these hormones go to work on different parts of the body.

## It's Just a Growth Spurt

A spurt is a short burst of activity or something that happens in a hurry. And a growth spurt is just that: Your body is growing and it's happening really fast!

When you go through puberty, it might seem like your sleeves are always getting shorter and your pants are creeping up your legs. That's because you're having a growth spurt that lasts for about 2 to 3 years. When that growth spurt is at its peak, some kids grow 4 or more inches (10 or more centimeters) in a year! At the end of your growth spurt, you'll have reached your adult height — or just about.

## Puberty text

Changes that occur

For boys, the hormones travel through the blood and tell the testes (say: **tes-teez**), the two egg-shaped glands in the scrotum (the sac that hangs under the penis), to begin making testosterone (say: **tess-tahs-tuh-rone**) and sperm. Testosterone is the hormone that causes most of the changes in a boy's body during puberty

In girls, these hormones target the two ovaries (say:

**o-vuh-reez**), which contain eggs that have been in the girl's body since she was born. The hormones cause the ovaries to start making another hormone, called estrogen. Together, these hormones prepare a girl's body to start her **periods** and be able to become pregnant someday.

Boys and girls both begin to grow hair under their arms and their pubic areas (on and around the genitals). It

starts out looking light and thin. Then, as kids go through puberty, it becomes longer, thicker, heavier, curlier, and darker. Eventually, boys also start to grow hair on their faces.

## Questions to answer

- 1. What are two changes that boys experience during puberty?*
- 2. What are two changes that girls experience during puberty?*
- 3. What is the hormone called that made in the ovaries?*
- 4. What happens to hair a person's body as they grow?*
- 5. What is a growth spurt? How long does it last?*
- 6. What is puberty?*
- 7. What age does puberty start?*
- 8. Which part of the body releases hormones?*
- 9. Describe your feelings about puberty*