

Showing children that it is OK to talk about growing up and changing gives them a positive message. If you want your child to come to you for support when they are a teenager, they need to grow up being comfortable talking to you about relationships, changes, sex and their feelings.

Good sex and relationship education can raise the age of first sexual activity and reduce the number of teenage pregnancies, abortions and sexually transmitted infections. Research has shown that sex education does not encourage sexual activity and experimentation.

When is the right time?

There is no right or wrong time to start talking about growing up and sex and relationships. But, it is easier if it is a gradual process.

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Tips for talking

- **Start early**, encouraging your children to ask questions and answer them simply, as if you were talking about toys or shoes.
- **Have a phrase up your sleeve**. If your child asks an awkward question in public, tell them "that's an interesting question and we'll talk about that at home" and make sure you do.
- **Find out how much they already know** and what they think by asking them about different situations such as relationships.
- **Find out more** about what sex and relationships education is going on in school.
- **Talk while doing ordinary things** such as the washing up or walking somewhere, so that it feels natural.
- **Talk to other parents** about how they answer difficult questions and situations.
- **Be honest**, if you don't know then say so and find out the facts together.
- **Have booklets, books or leaflets** for both of you to share.



Talking To Your Child About **GROWING UP**



Puberty for Boys and Girls

FOR GIRLS

At our school we have been learning and thinking about puberty and growing up.

Puberty is when a child changes into an adult. Over a period of about two years, all sorts of changes take place to boys and girls bodies.

Puberty for girls can begin between 9 and 16, puberty for boys between 10 and 17. However, everyone develops at different times and at different rates.

We have been talking about what changes are going to happen to girls and boys as they reach puberty. These are some of the things we have talked about for girls and boys.

- Their body will change shape, and their hips will grow wider.
- Their breasts will grow bigger and they will need to think about getting a bra.
- Before their periods they may notice yellowish or white stains on their underwear. This is normal and is called a vaginal discharge. They only need to worry if they feel itching or irritation.
- Periods will start, this means that they are physically ready to have a baby. Every month an egg, which is stored in the ovary will ripen. It moves down the fallopian tube and into the uterus (womb). If it is not fertilised, the lining of the uterus comes away - this is their period. Usually they will get a period every 28 days, but this can be different for different girls. The length of time that they have their period for can vary too, but most women bleed for 3 to 7 days.
- Hair will grow under their arms and around their vagina; they need to wash here every day.
- Hair may get greasy and need washing more often.
- They may get spots.
- They may feel moody and anxious.

FOR BOYS

- Their body shape will change and they will grow taller.
- They will grow hair on their legs and chest, under their arms, around their penis and on their chin and upper lip.
- Sometimes during puberty they may get an erection, their penis will go hard for no apparent reason.
- It's normal to ejaculate in their sleep (wet dreams).
- Their voice may deepen and for a while be squeaky.
- They may feel moody and anxious.
- Their penis and testicles will grow larger and they will be able to produce sperm, this means they can father a child.
- They may get spots.

