

# Elementary 4: Sexual Growth and Body Image

## Lesson 1: Introducing and Understanding Puberty

---

### Aim/Rationale

Students will learn about the physical and emotional changes that occur during puberty as well as healthy strategies to cope with these changes.

### Competencies

#### Learning Content in Sexuality Education

- 1) *Learn how the main changes associated with puberty are part of the process of growing up*
- 2) *Share your feelings about growing up*

#### Broad Areas of Learning

- 1) *Health and well-being*
- 2) *Citizenship and community life*

### Purpose

Learning about one's body and appreciating that body is an essential developmental task for children and adolescents. Puberty is a natural stage of development characterized by physical, emotional and social changes that can start young people on a path that can include romantic and sexual attractions, romantic relationships, sex, and having children.

Children at this age level are likely to begin experiencing the physical and emotional changes that occur during puberty and require accurate information that will help them understand the transformations their bodies are experiencing.

Relevant to:

- Promoting egalitarian relationships
- Promoting a healthy body image

## Lesson

### Materials

1. Worksheets
  - True or False Handout
  - Advice Column Handout
  - Ask an Adult! Handout

### Essential Questions

- What is puberty? What does it mean to, “go through puberty?”
- What kinds of changes will my body undergo?
- What are some healthy responses to feelings I may have during puberty?

### Using Gender Inclusive Language

Consider discussing puberty with terms such as “can,” “may,” or “might” to avoid excluding certain students such as those who are intersex, transgender, or gender non-conforming (e.g. “People with a penis may also grow hair on their face” or “Some people with a vagina may also develop breasts”). It may be helpful to explain to students that being a boy, a girl, or in-between is mostly about how someone feels, not their body parts.

When talking about sexual feelings, it also helps to not be specific about the gender that people might be attracted to. This lets you include anyone who could be or become attracted to boys, girls, non-binary genders, or more than one of these. In order to include youth who may grow up to be asexual (someone who does not experience sexual attraction) or aromantic (someone who does not experience romantic attraction or crushes) it’s also good to use “can,” “may,” or “might” when you talk about people developing romantic and/or sexual feelings.

### Terms

- Puberty
- Hormones (testosterone, estrogen and progesterone)

### Development/Teaching Methods [30 min]

1. Start the lesson with a brainstorm activity. Ask the students to break into groups of two or three people. Within their group, have the students come up with a list of things that change during puberty and things that stay the same. This introductory activity can help the teacher gauge what the students already know and dispel any myths they may believe.

2. Ask the students, “What does puberty mean?” Write some of the responses on the board. Create a definition the class agrees on, or give them one similar to this: “Puberty is when our bodies change to adult bodies.”
3. Explain that our bodies experience many changes during puberty, both physically and emotionally. Some of the physical changes that students may notice include:
  - Hair growth in places like our legs, armpits, genitals (pubic hair) and for some people, the face
  - More active oil glands, which can lead to oily hair and oily faces (acne)
  - More active sweat glands, which can lead to body odour
  - Growth spurts
  - Growth of the penis, testicles and breasts
  - Wider hips and shoulders
  - Nocturnal emissions (wet dreams)
  - More frequent erections (these are very common when waking up, sometimes called morning wood)
  - Vaginal discharge (clear or whitish liquid that comes out of the vagina)
  - Menstruation
4. Next describe the types of changes that can occur to our emotions, including:
  - Mood swings
  - May become interested in romantic partnerships or develop crushes
  - Might begin to have sexual feelings
  - May want more independence and privacy
5. Tell students that these changes are caused by hormonal changes in the body. Everyone has hormones called *testosterone*, *estrogen*, and *progesterone*. Most of the time, but not always, boys will begin to produce more testosterone and girls will begin to produce more estrogen during puberty. These hormonal changes are what cause the other changes we experience.
6. Next, to review the information, play a short True or False game with the class (see True or False Handout).
7. Remind the students that puberty is something that almost everyone experiences, so they are not alone. Also remind that students that everyone is different, so everyone will experience puberty differently. Because of these changes, students need to take extra care with bathing and keeping themselves clean.
8. Discuss some strategies that can help the students cope with the changes they experience during puberty. Ask them what they do if they have bruises or muscle aches and connect these to growing pains and menstrual cramps. Offer examples like asking for painkillers, lying down, stretches, and exercise. Ask the students to describe activities they do to calm down or feel happier. Offer examples such as writing in a journal, taking a walk, drawing, talking with a trusted friend or parent, etc...

## Culmination [5 min]

To end the lesson, ask the students to brainstorm things they are looking forward to about growing up (e.g. driving a car, having more freedom, staying up later, dating, etc.). Have the students write their responses on the board. Remind the students that experiencing puberty is one of the first steps towards becoming an adult.

## Performance Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify and describe the physical and emotional changes associated with puberty.
- Identify strategies to help manage these changes.

## Assessment Ideas

- 1) Have the students pretend that they are an advice columnist and “give advice” to those with questions about puberty (see Advice Column Handout). Ask the students to write short paragraph responses that provide accurate information.
- 2) Ask the students to select an adult they know and trust, such as a parent, grandparent or family friend, and have them interview that person about their experiences with puberty (see Ask an Adult! Handout).



Tel 514-527-0928 Fax 514-527-0701  
2075 Plessis, Ground Level, Montréal (Québec) H2L 2Y4  
[info@accmontreal.org](mailto:info@accmontreal.org)