

Puberty

Upper key stage 2

It is recommended that these activities are delivered to children in year 5 or above. However, in some circumstances it may be appropriate to use some of the activities for younger children – for example, if children are experiencing puberty early. It is recommended that girls understand about menstruation before they begin to have periods.

This topic is delivered in line with the National Curriculum for science and is therefore statutory. Parents do not have the right to withdraw their children from statutory elements of the curriculum.

Learning Intention:

- To understand the physical and emotional changes that take place at puberty.

Learning Outcome:

- To name the main male and female internal and external sexual reproductive parts, using the correct terminology.
- To be aware that puberty occurs at different times for different people and be able to explain why.
- To identify and describe the main physical and emotional changes that take place at puberty for boys and girls.
- To be able to identify and understand how hygiene needs change during puberty.
- To make clear the link between changes at puberty, sexual intercourse and the start of a baby.
- To explore girls' perceptions of boys and boys' perceptions of girls in a variety of situations.

Resources:

- "Hair in Funny Places" by Babette Cole.
- Question Box.
- Paper, pens, crayons.
- List of "rude" or slang terms, such as "willy" and "bum."
- Printed outlines of the male and female reproductive systems.
- Printed outlines of the mature male and female body shapes.

Please see Teacher's Notes for background information on the physical changes of puberty.

Teacher Introduction:

Start by saying: We can all find it scary when things change. It's even scarier if we don't know what's going to happen and what it means.

You are at the age now when you can expect some changes to happen to your bodies. This is a time of your life called puberty and it can be a difficult time if you don't know what to expect. That's why we are going to make sure that you understand what the changes will be so you will be confident about them when they do happen. In this lesson we will be looking in detail at how or bodies change. We will need to remember our working agreement so we can all feel safe and comfortable asking questions and talking about how we feel. If there is something you want to know but don't want to say so in the lesson you can write your question down and put it in the question box, and in our next lesson I'll make sure I include the answer.

Activity 1:

This topic may generate lots of giggling and inappropriate joking. It is important that teachers recognise that this behaviour is probably due to nervousness and embarrassment. To counter this it may be helpful to carry out an "ice-breaker" exercise. These are useful in that they reduce the power of "rude" words or slang terms whilst at the same time allowing teachers to ensure that all children understand the correct language.

Show a nude male and a nude female outline and ask the children what words they use to describe the different parts of the body.

Scribe a list of these, pointing out which are not socially acceptable.

Beside each term, write the correct term (for example, "breast" for "boob.") Explain to the class that these correct terms are the words that will be used in the lesson.

Also useful for: PH& HE

Activity 2:

Individually ask the children what puberty means to them. Scribe their responses, ensuring that they all understand that "puberty" means the stage of life in which humans transition from having a child's body to an adult's one, and that this is to allow men and women to have babies.

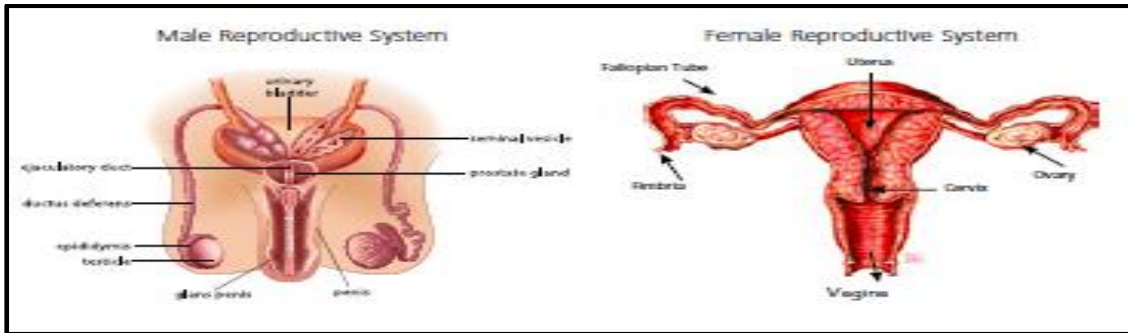
Also useful for: PH& HE

Activity 3:

In small mixed groups ask the children to label the male and female reproductive systems.

Give each group a list of words and ask them to match the word to the correct part:

Penis	Vagina	Cervix	Glans	Penis
Fallopian tubes	Epididymis	Uterus	Vas deferens	
Prostate	Seminal vesicle	Bladder	Testicle	Fimbriae



Ensure that the foreskin is discussed. Explain that some boys and men will have a foreskin but some will not. Sometimes the foreskin is removed, either for health reasons (perhaps because it is too tight) or because of religious beliefs such as those in Islam or Judaism.

Discuss with the children the actual size of the reproductive organs and show where the internal parts sit within the body.

Also useful for: PH&HE

Activity 4:

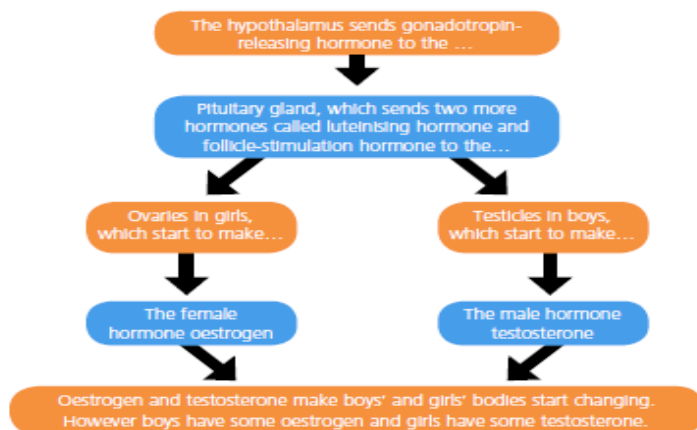
Read the story, “Hair in Funny Places” by Babette Cole.

Discuss the age at which puberty could start and reassure the children that everyone is different and thus may start puberty at different ages.

Explore with the children how puberty starts and how it is triggered.

Explain that a part of our brain called the hypothalamus sends a message to the pituitary gland, which is a tiny gland in our brains. The pituitary gland is in charge of our hormones and it sends out the hormones that make our bodies start to change.

Help the children to draw a Hormone Chain:



Note: this activity will need sensitive handling if there are any transgender children in the class, or if any of the children have transgender relatives or friends.

Activity 5:

Put the children into same sex groups.

Give each group two body outlines. Ask the groups to label one outline to show all the changes that boys go through and the other to show girls' changes.

Ask the groups to feed back, asking girls to describe male changes and boys to feed back on the changes females experience.

Use a blank outline to give the children the correct information for both boys and girls, using correct terminology. Ensure that any misunderstandings are addressed.

Put the correctly labelled outlines on the wall.

Using the flipchart or whiteboard, draw up a "change chart" with the following headings:

- Changes that only happen to girls
- Changes that only happen to boys
- Changes that happen to both boys and girls

Ask the children which change(s) fit into which category and complete the chart.

Put the completed "change chart" on the wall beside the body outlines. Remind the children that they can put any questions into the Question Box.

This activity will need sensitive handling if there are any transgender children in the class, or any child has transgender parents or relatives. In this case it may be appropriate for the teacher to lead this activity using one body outline and speaking in terms of "the child" rather than "boy" or "girl."

Also useful for: PH&HE

Activity 6:

Take each change listed on the change chart and discuss how they might affect us in real life. Suggested discussion points include:

- Dealing with periods at school
- Dealing with involuntary erections at school
- Keeping clean during periods and after a wet dream
- Needing new clothes like bras
- Needing to learn to shave

By the end of this activity it should be recognised that both boys and girls undergo change and that both boys and girls can find puberty a challenging time, and although the majority of changes are similar (such as growing body hair), both genders undergo unique changes as well.

Discuss what children can do by themselves to help deal with puberty (eg washing themselves) and that they may need help with (buying toiletries, washing clothes).

Ask the children to think back to the “support network” activity and to think about who they would ask to help them with aspects of puberty.

Also useful for: PH&HE, MW

Activity 7:

Use the changes noted on the body outline to lead a discussion on the purpose of puberty, for example:

- Breasts develop so a woman can feed a baby, if she has one
- Testicles descend so a man can make sperm and become a father
- Periods start so a woman’s womb is ready for her to become pregnant and have a baby

Ensure that children are clear about the developments they will experience and that they understand that eggs and sperm are needed for reproduction.

Also useful for: PH&HE, MW

Plenary:

Discuss what the children have learnt:

- The structures of the male and female reproductive systems.
- The physical and emotional changes of puberty for boys and girls.
- The practical implications of puberty.
- That boys and girls might have different perceptions of what each gender goes through.
- Why our bodies go through puberty.

Debriefing activity:

Explain that some changes are not so easily explained, for instance why men develop hair on their chests. Ask the children to come up with some funny explanations to create a sense of amusement and control around the topic. Allow time for them to write questions for the question box, then end the session.

Differentiation for SEND:

Some children with learning disabilities may be alarmed at the idea that their body will change; they may also struggle to understand that there are social conventions around the discussion of physical functions such as periods and erections.

Teachers may wish to emphasise this aspect of puberty with an activity aimed to help children to understand what is socially acceptable and what is not.

Suggested activity i

Resources needed: Pictures of people wearing different functional clothing – such as a coat, a tracksuit, high visibility vests. Ask the children what these clothes do (keep us warm, help us run fast, make sure we can be seen in the dark).

Explain that as well to keep us warm or safe our clothes do something else. Ask the children if they can guess what this is. Encourage the answer that clothes protect our dignity (“they stop other people seeing our private parts”).

Remind the children that there are parts of our body that nobody else is allowed to see or touch (the NSPCC Pants resource may be helpful here).

Discuss with the children that just like some parts of our body are private, so some of the things our body can do are private too. Ask the children what these things are. Scribe a list and ensure that it includes things like “talk about periods with strangers” and “tell people I have an erection.”

Put the list on the wall to help the class remember what is acceptable and what is not.

Suggested activity ii

Read “Pooh! Is that you, Bertie?” Discuss with the children why Bertie’s behaviour might seem funny but is not really acceptable. Help them think of good advice they could give Bertie, and write this as a list of reminders to display on the wall.

Children may also be anxious about their personal development. Some may be alarmed that their body is changing in ways they cannot control. For these children, the exercise on page 35 may be useful. Others may have early or delayed development as a result of their disability or condition; teachers may find some of the “Differences” activities (see pages 32 and 33) helpful.

Girls with learning disabilities may find the booklet “I change my pad” helpful. It is available from the Centre for HIV and Sexual Health, Sheffield: www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk or from BodySense: www.bodysense.org.uk. Girls who require help with intimate care such as changing sanitary protection should be reassured that school staff will treat them with dignity and respect – a child-friendly version of the school’s Intimate Care policy can be a useful way to deal with this anxiety. Boys receiving continence care may be embarrassed about staff witnessing involuntary erections, so similar reassurance will be required.