

Teaching Puberty: You Can Do It!

Growth & Development Curriculum Support for Grades 5 and 6

Lesson 5: Body Awareness for Boys

(to run concurrently with Body Awareness for Girls) If gender-separate classes are not done, move to Lesson 6.

Target Group: Grades 5 and 6
Suggested Time: 60 minutes

Learning Goals:

Today we are learning to:

- review ground rules as a class
- review key information from previous lessons
- review changes of puberty in more detail
- demonstrate confidence in asking questions
- be aware of other resources that can assist us to learn about puberty
- share our learning with an adult we trust

Suggested Materials:

- anatomical diagrams (Appendix G)
- SMART board or white/black board
- flip chart paper
- question box (with a small opening in the lid and the lid taped shut)
- paper for the question box (uniform colour/size)

Rationale for all-gender versus gender-separate classes

Durham Region Health Department recommends all-gender classes for Lessons 1- 4 of the puberty classes. Teaching puberty in an all-gender environment encourages students to:

- learn to talk comfortably and respectfully with each other
- learn that as people, some are more or less curious, shy, or confident about this topic
- understand that most of the changes are the same for everyone, decreasing the 'us' and 'them' pattern of thinking

There are also some reasons for teaching some classes separately by gender. In these classes some students may:

- feel more comfortable in asking questions on sensitive subjects
- feel camaraderie when discussing these topics
- feel that they can seek more in-depth information, as needed

Educators may assume that by separating the class into boys and girls we are creating two groups who each have similar anatomy and who will experience puberty in the same way. It is important to be aware that this may not be true, and that trans*, gender expansive and intersex students may find this isolating, upsetting, or embarrassing. Some of these students will want to participate with their peers, others may want alternative arrangements. Even when talking to a same gender group it is important to acknowledge that there will be a diversity of bodies and experiences.

Activity #1: Introduction

Discuss as a group where students would like to sit for this informal class (options could be moving chairs to a circle, sitting on floor, remaining at desks).

Review ground rules, what 'puberty' means, use of dictionary words, and the various ways questions can be asked.

Discuss reasons for this "boys" session – see above.

Talk about how, even in a group of all boys, students will find that they have differences – their bodies will be different, when and how they experience things will be different, how they feel about puberty will be different, and much more. Caution students about making comments about 'all boys' or 'for boys' and encourage them not to make generalizations.

Activity #2: Review Changes in Boys

Review changes of bodies at puberty that have been discussed in previous lessons.

Teacher Prompt:

- "We have already spent some time talking about changes of the male body at puberty. Today we will discuss a few things in further detail, such as erections, wet dreams, and personal hygiene."

Ask students to recall some of the changes that males go through during puberty.

Use Additional Information below to expand on discussion.

Additional Information for Activity #2

- Changes in testicle size and **scrotum** are one of the first signs of puberty, along with the growth of underarm and pubic hair.
- Body hair grows in the armpits and pubic area, and can become darker and thicker on the arms, legs, and face.
- Skin increases oil production, which may lead to pimples or acne.
- It is common for one testicle to hang lower than the other.
- Penis size does not affect a penis' function: urination, erection, ejaculation.
- Not all penises look alike. Penises come in different shapes and sizes.
- Penis size is determined by genetics, just like all of the other parts of the body.
- Some penises are circumcised (meaning that the foreskin has been removed) and some are not. Whether a penis is circumcised or not does not affect how well a penis works.
- At this stage, young people's feelings and moods can be very up and down, which can be difficult for them and those around them.
- Learning to talk about feelings and new situations continues to be very important.

Activity #3: Athletic Protection

Show athletic support device/jock strap (or a photo of one) and discuss importance.

Teacher Prompts:

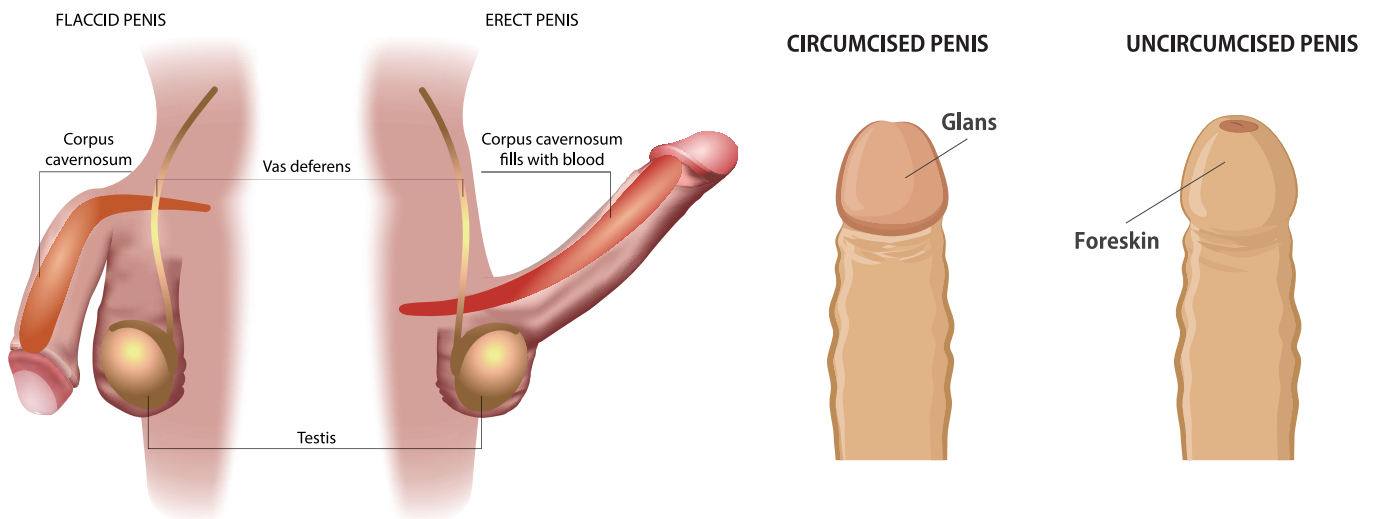
- "Why do you think it is important to protect the genitals from being hit?"
- "The genitals are part of the body not protected by the skeleton, and a serious injury to the genitals can be painful and may affect the ability to produce sperm."

Additional Information for Activity #3

- It is important to protect the penis and testicles, and to wear athletic support (a jock strap or 'cup') in sports.

Activity #4: Erections and Wet Dreams

Using a poster or diagram (Appendix G), review erections and wet dreams (see Lesson 3).



Teacher prompt:

- "An erection is the stiffening of the penis when blood fills the spongy tissue that lies inside of it."
- "This happens in males from the time of birth."
- "It is common for males to wake up in the morning with an erection."
- "Erections increase in frequency during puberty. There are many causes for erections: sexual thoughts, seeing something 'sexy', tension, rubbing of clothing, and sometimes for no reason at all."
- "Erections will go away on their own (without ejaculation) - the blood flows back out of the penis and it becomes soft again."
- "What do you think someone could do if they had an erection that made them feel uncomfortable?"

Possible Student Responses:

- change position
- hold something over waist
- think about something else

Teacher Prompts:

- "Wet dreams are the ejaculation of semen that happens while sleeping."
- "Wet dreams are common during puberty, and may or may not be accompanied by erotic or exciting dreams."
- "When someone has had a wet dream, they will usually notice a sticky, white spot of semen on their pajamas or sheets. If this happens, the sheets or pajamas should be washed."
- "Why do you think it's good that people your age know about wet dreams?"

Possible Student Responses:

- to be aware that it may happen and that it does not happen to everyone
- to understand why it happens
- to know what to do if it does happen

Additional Information for Activity #4

- The medical term for wet dreams is nocturnal emissions.

Activity #5: Personal Hygiene

This activity uses a kit made up of several products that pertain to puberty. Choose from the following list of products and have them (or photo representations) together in a container for the students to explore.

(Some teachers may choose to use all products for all groups, and some may select only certain products to discuss, based on the group.)

- T-shirt
- socks
- deodorant/antiperspirant
- shoe insoles or box of baking powder
- athletic support device (to protect the crotch/genitals)
- bra/camisole
- wash cloth
- soap
- toothpaste/toothbrush
- floss
- water bottle
- underwear
- razor/shaving cream
- shampoo
- baseball hat
- hot water bottle
- menstrual products (disposable menstrual pads of various sizes, reusable pads, tampons, menstrual cup (e.g., Diva, Keeper, or Soft Cup)
- hairbrush
- healthy snacks

Using the various products, have students pick an item, describe what it is and how it relates to puberty.

Use Additional Information below to facilitate discussion.

Additional Information for Activity #5

- Once puberty has begun, an increased production of sweat can lead to body odour if the sweat stays on the skin/clothes and bacteria develops; this means that people need to wash daily with soap and water – especially underarms, groin, and feet.
- Deodorant or antiperspirant can be worn on clean underarms to decrease odour.
- Clean underwear, shirts, and socks should be worn every day. Clothes need to be washed regularly.
- Baseball hats and other hats require regular cleaning as the head produces more sweat.
- Penises that are uncircumcised need to have the foreskin pulled back to clean the head of the penis.
- Pimples are caused by the increased amount of oil (sebum) that the skin produces starting in puberty. Although washing with soap and water, eating well, and getting enough sleep can help the skin, sometimes it is not enough and extra creams and medications are needed. A health care provider can help determine if someone needs prescription medication.
- Hot water bottles or heating pads can be used to help people experiencing menstrual cramps.

Wrap Up for Lesson 5

- Summarize what was discussed in this lesson and ask for any questions.
- Encourage students to share what they have learned with a trusted adult.
- Write the Kids Help Phone contact information on the board (1-800-668-6868, www.kidshelpphone.ca) and remind students that contacting Kids Help Phone is free, confidential, anonymous, and that it can be a safe place to discuss concerns.
- Discuss what will be talked about in Lesson 6: inappropriate sexual attention and contact, naming and describing emotions, and more time for questions.
- Give students paper and ask for contributions to the question box.

Adapted with permission from Toronto Public Health (October 2022)



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DEPARTMENT

Durham Health Connection Line | 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729
durham.ca/sexualhealth

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

