

Teaching Puberty: You Can Do It!

Growth & Development Curriculum Support for Grades 5 and 6

Lesson 4: Reproduction, Ovulation, & Menstruation

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
- understand how reproduction happens
- understand ovulation and menstruation
- continue to 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:

- 'Letter from Chris' handout (Appendix H)
- 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)

Activity #1: Introduction

Review ground rules as a class.

Clarify any confusion indicated through Lesson 3 Exit Cards – discuss actual questions from Exit Cards and take up answers as a group.

Activity #2: More than just your body!

Discuss various types of changes during puberty (i.e. physical, social and emotional).

Teacher Prompt:

- “What changes at puberty?”

List the students’ responses on the board. Be sure the following are included:

- body – name some changes (growth spurt, pubic/underarm hair, etc.)
- mind – increased ability to understand abstract thinking, better problem-solving skills
- friends – friend preferences may change as one meets new people and develops new interests
- responsibility – may take on or be given more responsibility
- feelings – may begin to have attractions, crushes, and/or mood changes

Teacher Prompt:

- “What stays the same at puberty?”

List the students’ responses on the board. Be sure the following are included:

- who you are (including spirit, soul, inner-self)
- genetic make-up

Additional Information for Activity #2

- Self-esteem can be affected at puberty as young people begin to look outside of themselves and their families for approval.
- Mood swings are common; however, if a child feels sad or in a despairing mood that persists beyond two weeks, it can be a symptom of depression. This should not be ignored. The child may need medical follow-up.
- An attraction to someone may include bodily responses such as an increase in heart rate, sweating, and/or anxiety.
- While hormones (estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone) may affect feelings, how one deals with those feelings is up to each individual.

GRADE 6 REVIEW – Activity #2: Letter from Chris

Read the following story to the students (or hand out copy from Appendix H) and use the teacher prompts below as a framework for follow-up discussion.

LETTER FROM CHRIS

My name is Chris and I want to tell you what's happening to me. It seems like every day brings a new change. It's almost like I'm getting a new body! They tell me I'm going through puberty!

One of the things that's happening is this new hair that's growing in places it's never been before. Like under my arms. I know this is supposed to happen and all, but it still takes getting used to.

I don't mind some of the changes I'm seeing. In fact, some things I even like. I'm taller than I was last year. I know I'm smarter just because I'm able to think and write about what I'm going through now.

But then, there are some changes that aren't so great. Like B.O. (body odour). The first time I noticed it, I thought it was coming from someone else! Now I realize it's not too bad if I wash often, use deodorant, and change my shirts and socks so that they don't get too stinky!

A really dirty trick, though, is acne. I remember I was getting ready to go to a party when I looked in the mirror and saw this big zit staring back at me! I went to the party anyway. I noticed that many other kids had the same or a worse time with their zits.

There's one thing I get kind of embarrassed about. When I was at the party the other night, I was with someone I 'like' (I'm not mentioning any names). I got this funny feeling 'down there'. It was strange, but felt good at the same time. I wonder if that's normal?

They tell me I'm going through puberty. That means I have to go to school with my zits and B.O. But, I'm bigger and smarter. I guess I'll survive.

Teacher Prompts:

- "Do you think Chris is a boy or a girl?"
- "Does it matter? Why or why not?"
- "What part of the body did Chris mean by 'down there'?"

**note: If students say they thought Chris was a boy because of the statement 'I got this funny feeling down there,' advise the class that everyone can have physical responses to sexual attractions.*

Additional Information for GRADE 6 Activity #2

- This activity incorporates and reinforces student learning from Grade 5, and includes emotional changes as well as the physical changes.
- Students can learn that they are more alike than different, and that many of the changes at puberty happen to everyone.

Activity #3: Looking Forward to...

Have the students discuss the positive aspects of growing up.

Teacher Prompt:

- “What are you looking forward to about growing up?”

List the students’ responses on the board. Examples may include:

- freedom/doing what you want
- driving
- staying up late
- taking the bus by yourself
- making money, having a job
- going out
- having a family

Teacher Prompt:

- “These are all great responses and along with these new activities you will need to learn new skills – such as driver’s education, babysitting courses, or learning how to apply for a job.”

Additional Information for Activity #3

- It is important to help students identify the many positive things that come with growing up.

Activity #4: Becoming a Parent

This activity looks at all of the different ways that people can become parents.

Teacher Prompt:

- “It was mentioned in the last exercise that some of you were looking forward to having a family when you grow up. What are some of the ways a person becomes a parent?”

List the students’ responses on the board. Be sure the following are included:

- pregnancy/ they make a baby
- adoption
- parenting a partner’s children

Teacher Prompt:

- “We are going to talk about how pregnancy happens (i.e., how to make a baby) and some of the many ways that a family is made.”

Additional Information for Activity #4

It is important not to assume that all children came into their families the same way. It is important for all students to feel included and represented.

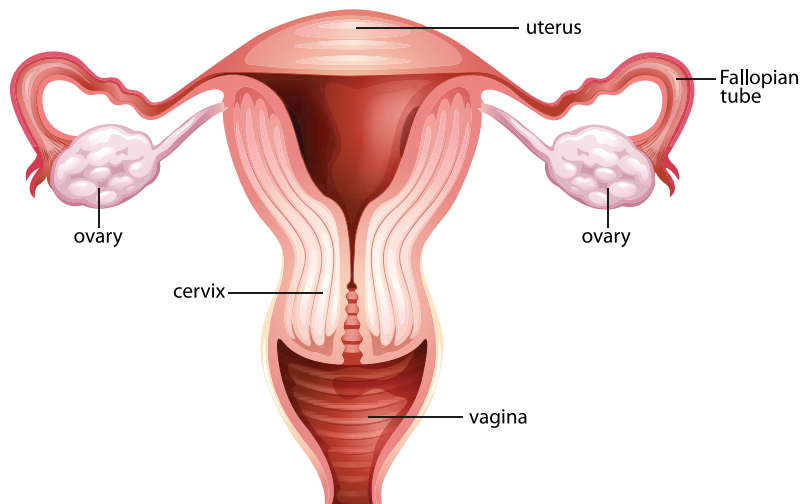
For more information on assisted reproductive technologies, visit the Government of Canada: Fertility Options website:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/fertility/fertility-treatment-options.html>

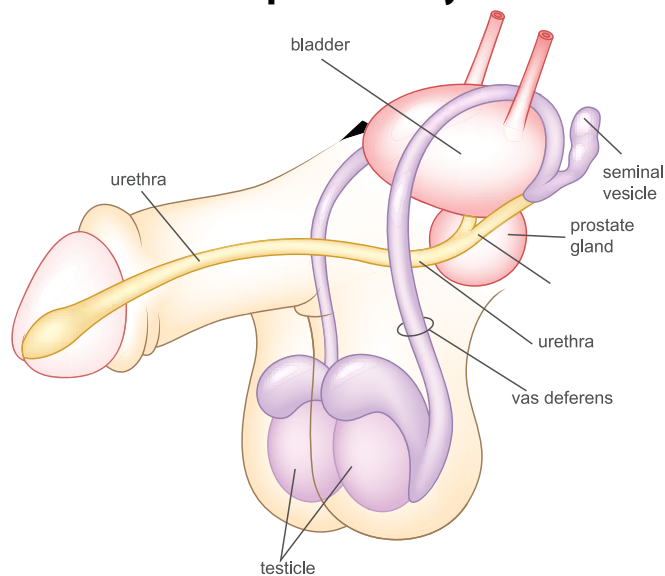
Activity #5: How a Baby is Made / How a Family is Made

Using diagrams or drawings of the male and female reproductive systems (Appendix G), describe fertilization.

Female Reproductive System



Male Reproductive System



Teacher Prompts:

- “To make a baby you need an ovum (egg), a sperm, and a **uterus**. Commonly, a baby is made when a female and a male have a type of sexual intercourse where the penis ejaculates sperm inside the vagina. The sperm travels from the vagina through the uterus into the **fallopian** tubes. If ovulation has occurred, or is just about to, then the egg and sperm may connect.”
- “**Fertilization** is when the ovum chooses one of the sperm (remember millions of sperm are in the **semen** every time a male ejaculates) and lets it inside. This fertilized ovum then moves into the uterus to grow and develop.”
- “**Pregnancy** is when this fertilized ovum attaches to the inside of the uterus and begins to develop.”
- “A human pregnancy usually lasts about 9 months, although many babies are born earlier or later than this.”
- “Sometimes people want to reproduce but they cannot. They may need help with the three things that are needed – an ovum, a sperm, and a uterus.”
- “Sometimes they choose to go to a fertility clinic and see a doctor to help them use a donated ovum or donated sperm to help them get pregnant.”
- “Sometimes they may ask someone to grow the baby in their uterus for them. This is called being a surrogate.”
- “Sometimes people create a family through adoption.”
- “Other times children are parented by a guardian, like a grandparent, other family member, or a foster parent.”
- “Families come in all sizes and can be created in all sorts of ways.”

Additional Information for Activity #5

- Sperm cells are microscopic cells with tails that help them move up from the vagina into the uterus and into the fallopian tubes.
- The **ovum** is only released from the **ovary** into the fallopian tube (ovulation) about once a month and can live in the fallopian tube for up to a day.

Some people call this type of sexual intercourse ‘having sex,’ or ‘making love.’

There are other ways to have sex or make love.

Activity #6: Ovulation, Fertilization, Pregnancy, and Birth

Using anatomical diagrams (Appendix G), lead a discussion on ovulation, fertilization, **pregnancy**, and birth.

Teacher Prompts:

- “Females are born with hundreds of thousands of ova that are stored inside the ovaries.”
- “At puberty, hormones cause the ova to start to mature and the ovaries begin to take turns releasing a mature ovum into the fallopian tube. This is called ovulation and happens about once a month or approximately 14 days before the next menstrual period.”

- “The ovum travels along the fallopian tube towards the uterus – this trip takes about 24 hours.”
- “While the ovum is maturing in the ovary, hormones cause the uterus to build up a thick lining of blood and other tissue to be ready in case the ovum is fertilized.”
- “Fertilization is when the ovum chooses one of the sperm and lets it inside. This fertilized ovum moves into the uterus to grow.”
- “Pregnancy is when this fertilized ovum attaches to the inside of the uterus and begins to grow and develop.”
- “A birth can be through the vaginal opening or through a surgery called a caesarean section (also known as a C-section).”
- “During a vaginal birth, the vagina (birth canal) stretches over the baby’s head and body (like a tight turtleneck) to allow the baby to be born.”

Additional Information for Activity #6

- Multiple births (i.e., twins, triplets) can be either identical or fraternal. Identical twins involve one ovum and one sperm; the fertilized ovum splits and develops into separate **zygotes**. They will be the same sex and look identical. **Fraternal** twins happen when an ovary releases two ova and the ova are fertilized by two separate sperm - developing into two separate zygotes. These twins will be like any other siblings and may or may not look like each other. They may be the same or different sexes.
- **Conjoined** twins (formerly called Siamese twins) are a rare event and happen when a single fertilized ovum only partially separates.

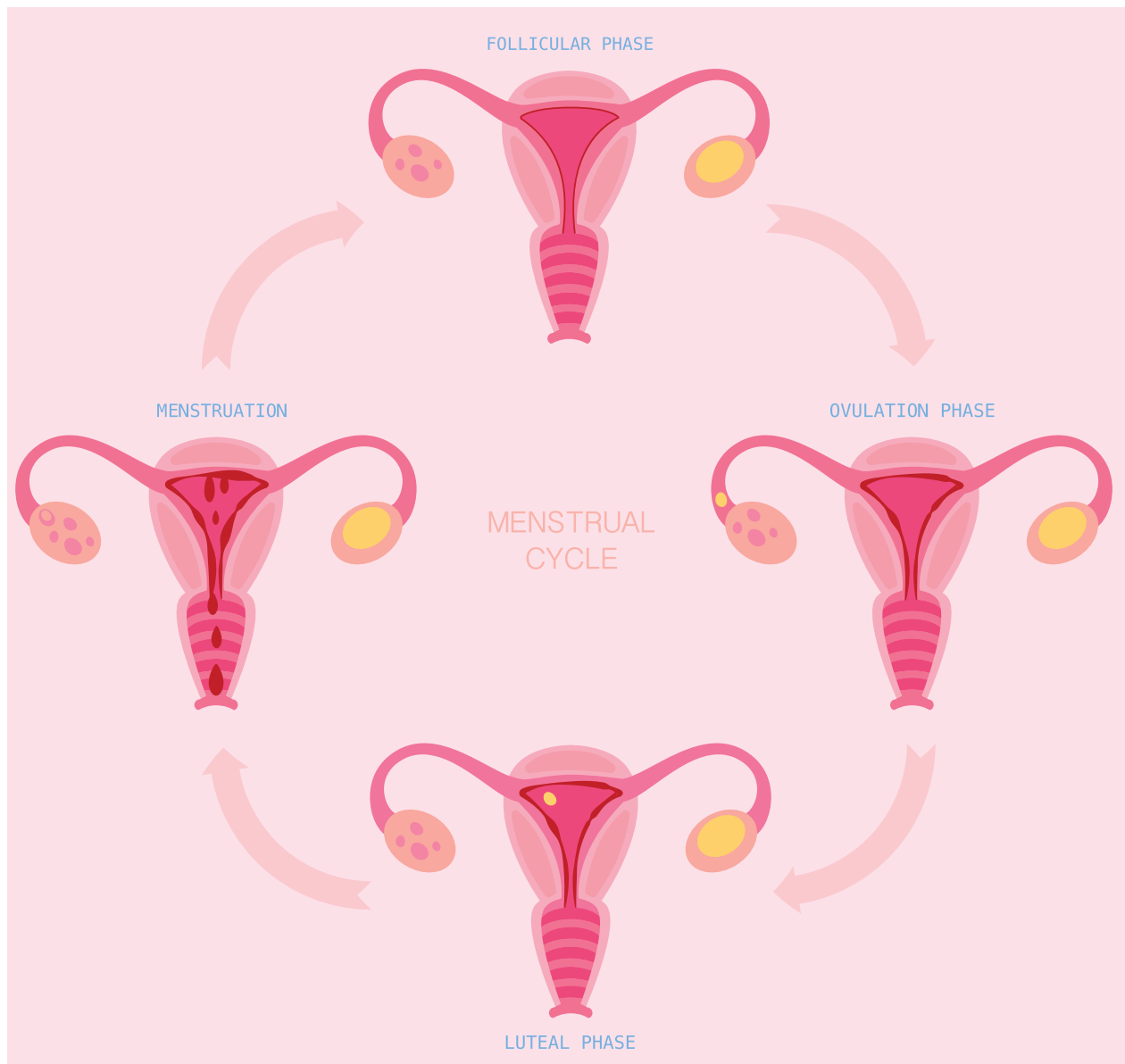
Activity #7: Menstruation

Using anatomical diagrams (Appendix G), review the process of ovulation and introduce **menstruation**.

Teacher Prompts:

- “Let’s talk about how menstruation, or getting a period, happens. Most of the time the ovum does not meet with a sperm cell in the fallopian tube, so it then dissolves. About two weeks later, the lining, made up of blood and tissue that had been building up in the uterus, is not needed and it will slowly flow out of the uterus through the cervix, then through the vagina to the outside of the body.”
- “Ovulation (the release of an ovum from the ovary into the fallopian tube) happens about once a month.”
- “A first period usually happens between the ages of 9 and 14 years old. It may be earlier or later than this.”
- “Secretion of a clear or whitish fluid from the vagina (which may be noticed on the underwear) usually starts 1-2 years before the first period.”
- “Someone would know that their first period had started when they saw some bloody discharge (menstrual fluid) on their underwear or on toilet paper when wiping.”
- “It may be brownish, pink, or bright red in colour.”
- “This menstrual fluid (about 2 tablespoons to a ½ cup per menstrual period) will come out during the day and night usually for between 3 and 7 days.”
- “Pads, tampons, or **menstrual cups** are used to catch the menstrual fluid.”

- “The next period will occur in the same way in about a month’s time. Sometimes periods don’t come every month for the first 1-2 years.”
- “The first day of each menstrual period can be marked on a calendar so that someone with regular periods may be able to predict when their next period will come.”



Additional Information for Activity #7

- The menstrual cycle is counted from the first day of one period to the day before the first day of the next period.

Activity #8: Menstrual Discomforts

Lead a discussion on cramps and possible tips to relieve them as a way to help normalize menstruation.

Teacher Prompts:

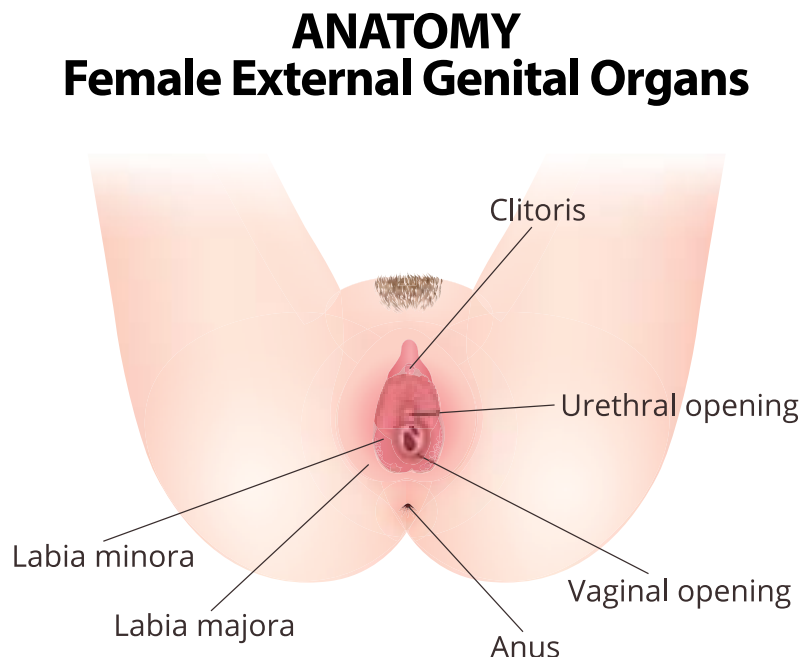
- “Has anyone heard of menstrual or period cramps?”
- “Some people get abdominal pain, cramping, headaches, diarrhea, or changes in mood with their periods; others do not.”
- “Nausea can accompany the cramping for some people.”
- “Cramps usually start on the first day of a period but may start a day or two earlier.”
- “Cramps can be felt in the lower belly, lower back, or even in the thighs.”
- “What could someone do to alleviate the symptoms?”
- “Symptoms may be eased by applying heat with a heating pad or hot water bottle.”
- “Eating a diet with lots of fruit and vegetables, and getting regular exercise, may help prevent cramps for some people.”
- “Students should talk with a trusted adult before trying certain herbal teas and remedies.”

Activity # 9: Female External Anatomy

Using anatomical diagrams (Appendix G), discuss the female external anatomy.

Teacher Prompt:

“Here is a diagram of the external female genitals, also called the vulva.”



Teacher Prompts:

- “At the top of the vulva is the **clitoris**, which is an important organ for female pleasure.”
- “The vulva has two openings.”
- “The **urethra** is a very small opening, in front of the vaginal opening, where urine comes out of the body. All people have urethras for this purpose.”
- “The vaginal opening is where menstrual fluid comes out of the body and where a tampon can be inserted when a person has a period. It is also where the penis enters during vaginal intercourse and where the baby comes out during a vaginal birth.”
- “The anus, the opening behind the vulva, is where bowel movements come out of the body. All people have an anus for this purpose.”

Additional Information for Activity #9

While the external part of the clitoris is small, the majority of this important organ is internal.

Activity # 10: Use of Menstrual Products

Lead a discussion on menstrual products. Show students samples and explain product use.

Teacher Prompts:

- “Pads are placed in the underwear to absorb menstrual fluid.”
- “Used pads should be wrapped in toilet paper or the plastic wrapper from the fresh pad and put in the garbage; never down the toilet.”
- “Pads and tampons come in different sizes and thicknesses and can be chosen to suit the person’s menstrual flow.” “Tampons are absorbent, densely-packed materials (usually cotton) that are cylinder-shaped.
- “Tampons are inserted into the vagina to catch menstrual fluid before it leaves the body; insertion and removal instructions are on the box.”
- “Inserting tampons can get easier with practice.”
- “Some people never use tampons; some use them for swimming or certain activities only; and some use them throughout their period.”
- “Pads should be changed every 3-4 hours or more often if needed.”
- “Tampons should be changed every 4-8 hours or more often if needed; a tampon that is too absorbent for a person’s flow will be more difficult to remove as it dries out the vagina.”¹
- “Tampons should not be worn for longer than 8 hours at a time and should not be worn overnight due to the risk of a rare infection called **toxic shock syndrome**.”²
- “Tampons cannot get lost in the body since the cervix stops them from going into the uterus.”

1 Government of Canada. (2015). Menstrual tampons. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-medical-devices/menstrual-tampons.html>

2 *ibid.*

- “Once removed, tampons should be wrapped in toilet paper and put in the garbage or flushed down the toilet (check instructions on box).”
- “Eco-friendly reusable pads, tampons, and alternative products such as menstrual cups are available.”

Wrap Up for Lesson 4

- 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 5: further information on physical changes of puberty to be discussed in same-gender groups.
- Give students paper and ask for contributions to the question box.
- Distribute ‘Exit Cards’ and give students a few minutes to complete them and hand them in.

Lesson 4 Exit Card

Name _____

Fertilization is when _____

What are some ways a person becomes a parent? _____

Lesson 4 Exit Card

Name _____

Fertilization is when _____

What are some ways a person becomes a parent? _____

Adapted with permission from Toronto Public Health (October 2022)



HEALTH
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.

