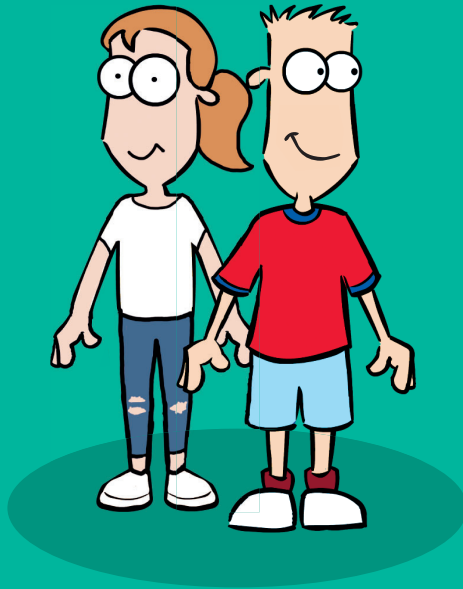


Busy Bodies

A booklet about puberty and adolescence for you and your parents



How to get the Busy Bodies Resources

Busy Bodies Booklets can be downloaded or ordered from:
www.healthpromotion.ie

Professionals can register on the site to order larger numbers of copies.

Busy Bodies Video can viewed at: www.youtube.com/playlist

The video is the original and does not contain the new booklet material.

Making the 'Big Talk' many small talks, a series of resources to help parents talk with their children about relationships and other aspects of growing up, can be ordered from www.healthpromotion.ie

Additional resources for parents can be found at
www.sexualwellbeing.ie

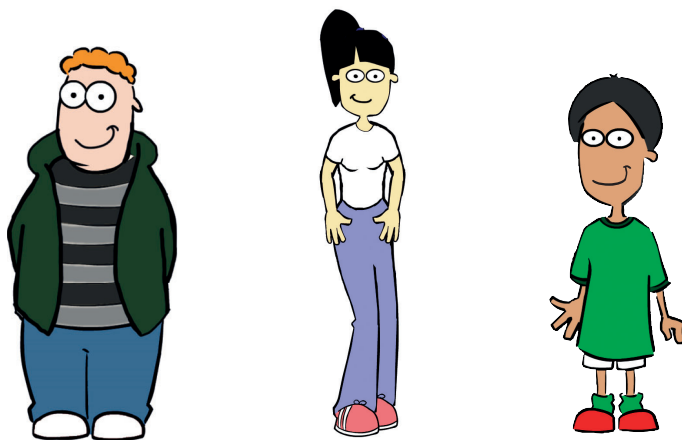
To Parents/Carers and Teachers

Welcome to **Busy Bodies**. This is an updated version of the booklet that was originally published in 2008. It provides useful and supportive information about the physical and emotional changes that children will experience during puberty, the basics of reproduction, and how young people can look after themselves as they grow up.

Parents and carers can use the booklet alone or in tandem with the **accompanying video material**, as a support and source of information for themselves and their child during puberty.

Teachers can use the booklet to support preparation for teaching and learning related to the Wellbeing Specification- For Primary and Special Schools. The **Busy Bodies** booklet and video material do not, in themselves, comprise a teaching programme. They cover a range of pubertal and adolescent issues and can be used, along with other resources, activities and teaching methodologies to meet the students' learning needs during this important developmental stage.

Schools may wish to order multiple copies of the booklet to share with parents/carers for use in the home.



To Young People

Hi!

This book will help you understand and manage some of the changes you will go through during puberty and adolescence. Sometimes the words 'puberty' and 'adolescence' are used as if they are the same thing, but although they are linked, they are not the same.

Puberty describes the physical changes that happen when your body starts to become more like an adult's.

Adolescence describes the stage in your life between being a child and an adult, covering the teenage years.

The booklet will tell you about both. It will also support the Wellbeing lessons that you are doing at school. We have tried to make the booklet as easy as possible for you to read and to understand, and we hope you find it helpful.

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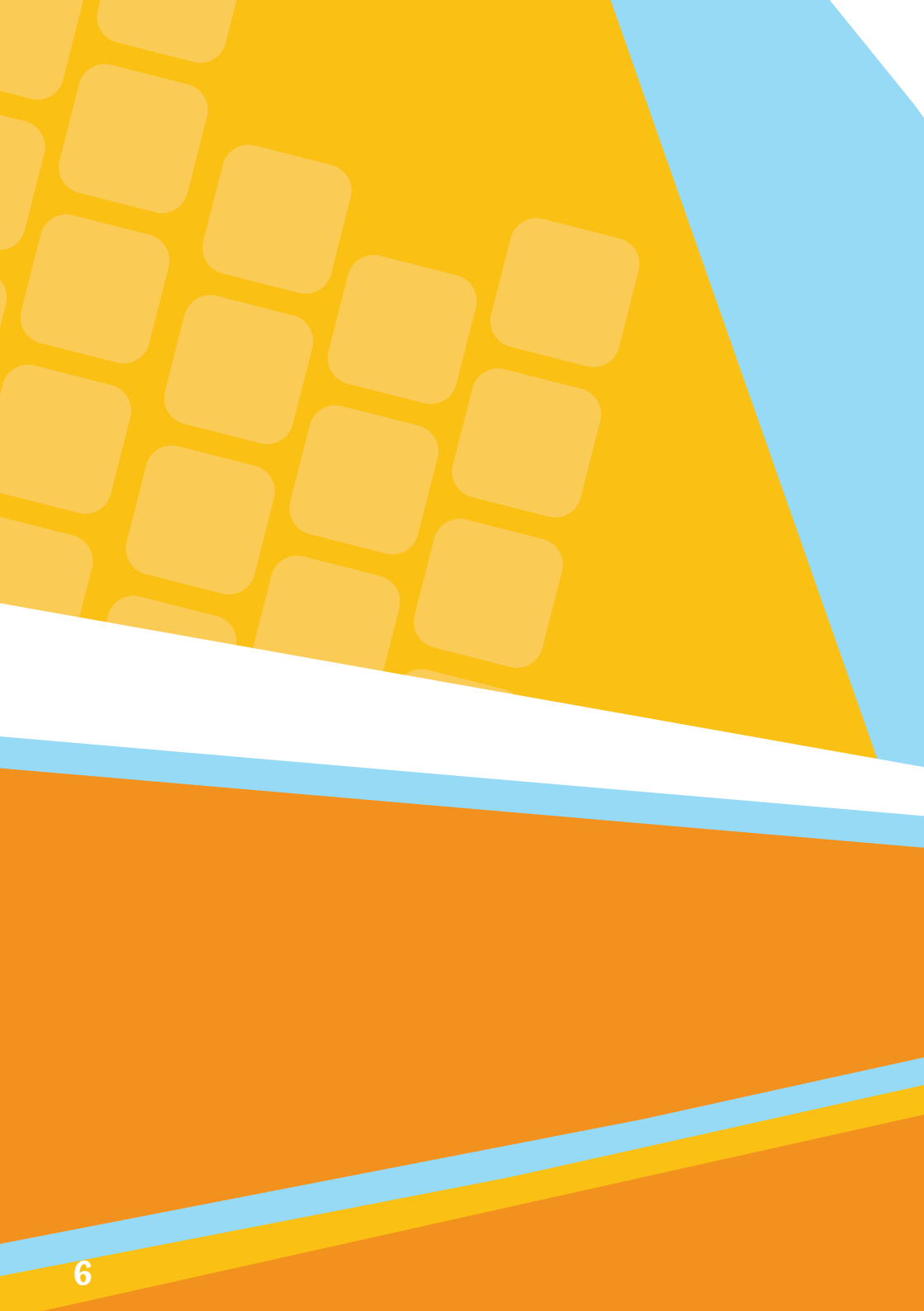
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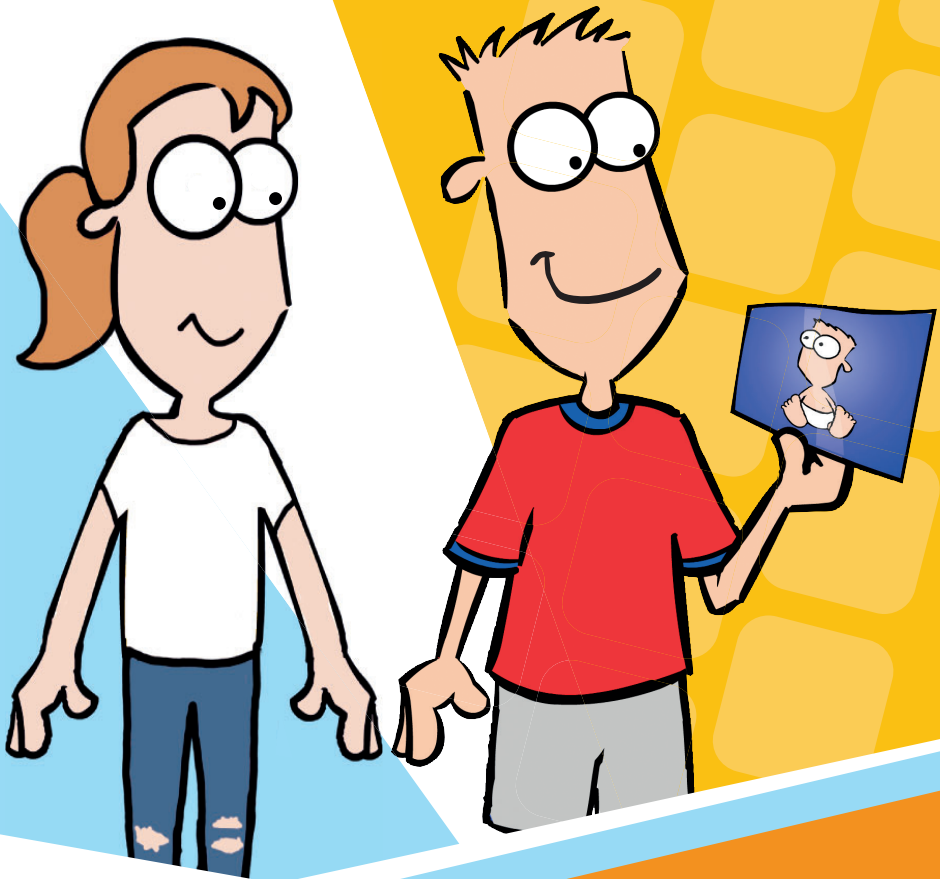
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Introducing

Puberty

Introducing Puberty

This can be a very busy time in your life.

You will soon be changing school. You will be meeting lots of new people, making new friends and learning new things.

You may start to lose interest in some of the games and toys that you used to enjoy.

And you will begin to notice your body changing and that your feelings are changing too.



*That's why
we call it a
Busy Body*

Your body is (or it soon will be) starting to develop and change in different ways, getting ready to become an adult body.



PUBERTY

🔊 "PYOU-ber-tee"

The time in your life when all these changes are happening to your body is called **puberty**.

The time when your body gradually changes from a child's body into the body of an adult.

These changes happen slowly, over a number of years.

You will not suddenly become an adult, but your body is getting ready for life as an adult.

Puberty usually starts in the female body at around the age of 10 to 12, though it can be much earlier (even as young as 8) or a good bit later (14 or older). Puberty usually starts a little later in the male body (9 - 14) but this is not always the case.

Changes can happen any time between the ages of 8 and 18. It is different for everyone.

Our bodies change at their own pace. By the time you are grown up, you will have an adult body, even if while you are young it feels as if it is never going to happen.

Puberty can be a very exciting time, but it can be confusing too.

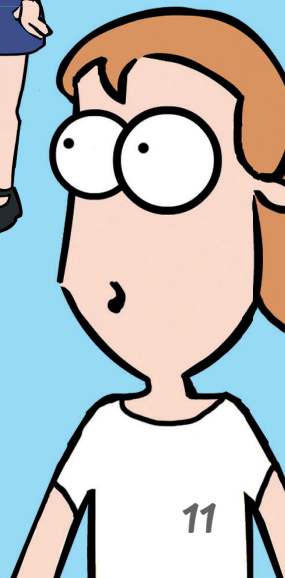
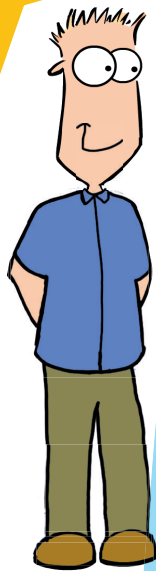
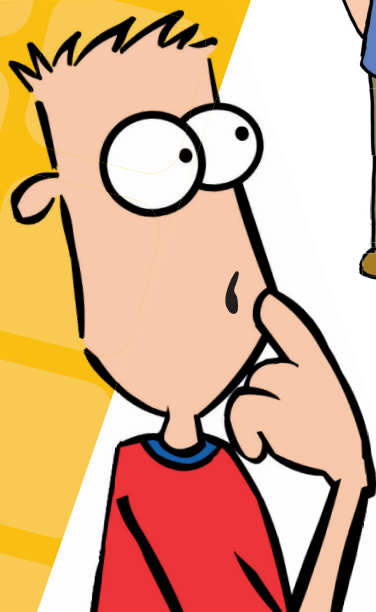
If you are confused or worried about how your body is changing, (or about how it is not changing yet), it is a good idea to talk to your parents/carers and other trusted adults about it.

Your teacher might also be a good person to talk to.



Remember:
*the adults you know have all
learned about growing up and the
changes it brings.*

Why Does Puberty Happen?

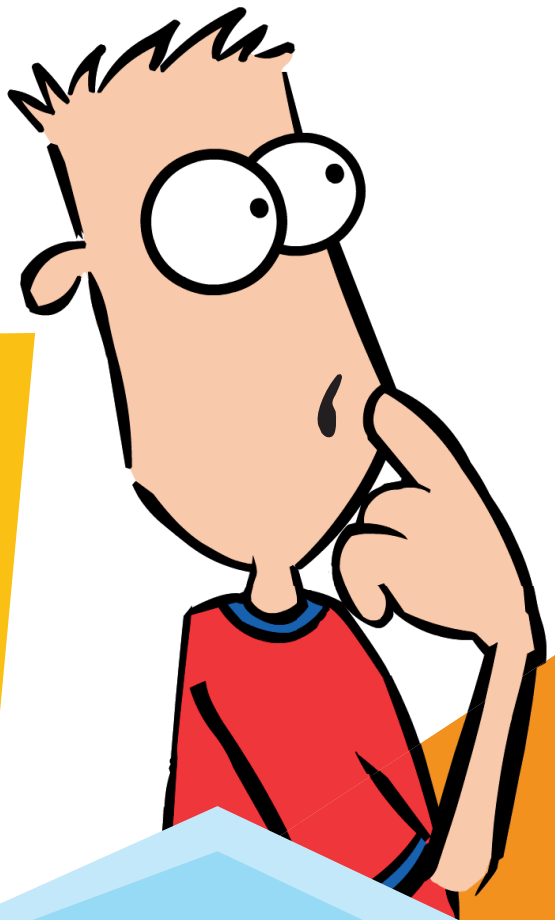


Why Does Puberty Happen?

Puberty is a part of growing up. Puberty happens because your body produces chemicals called **sex hormones**.

Sex hormones

Chemicals that make your body act like an adult body.

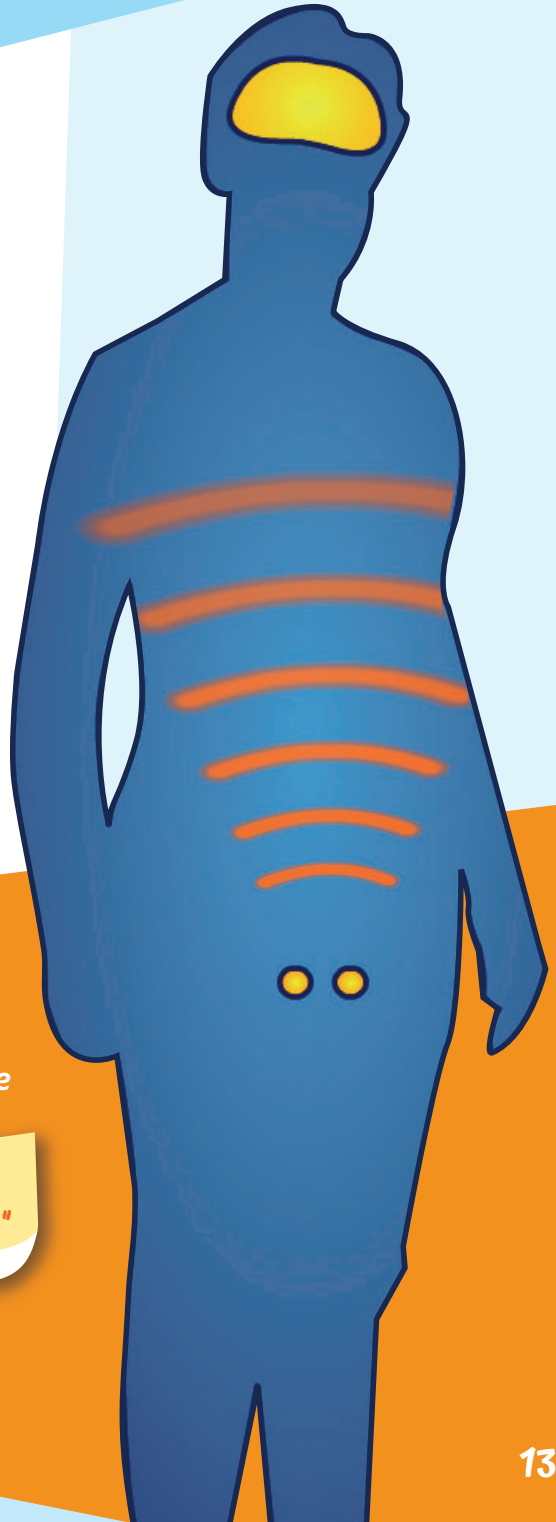


When you reach the age of puberty these chemicals start to become active. They give a signal to your body to start changing and developing into an adult.

That is what makes puberty happen. But remember it's different for everybody.

In a male body, the main sex hormone is testosterone.

This hormone causes changes, both inside and outside, to help the body become an adult male body.



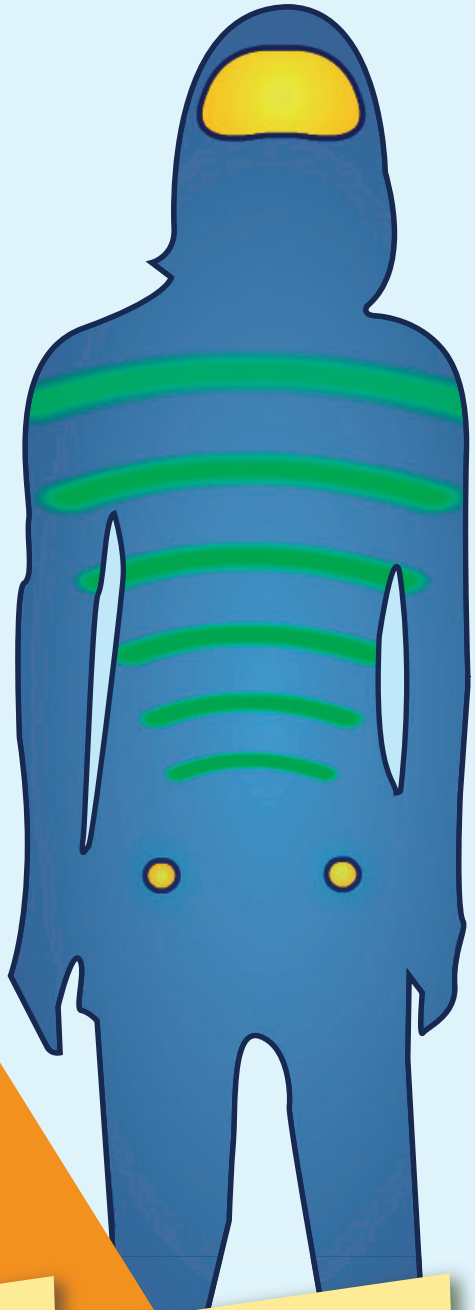
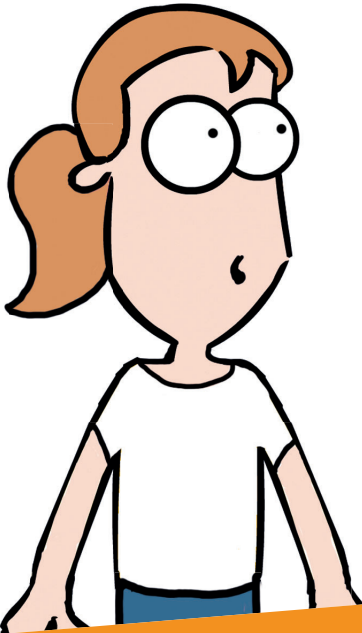
Testosterone

The main male sex hormone



In a female body, the main sex hormones are oestrogen and progesterone.

These hormones cause changes, both inside and outside, to help the body become an adult female body

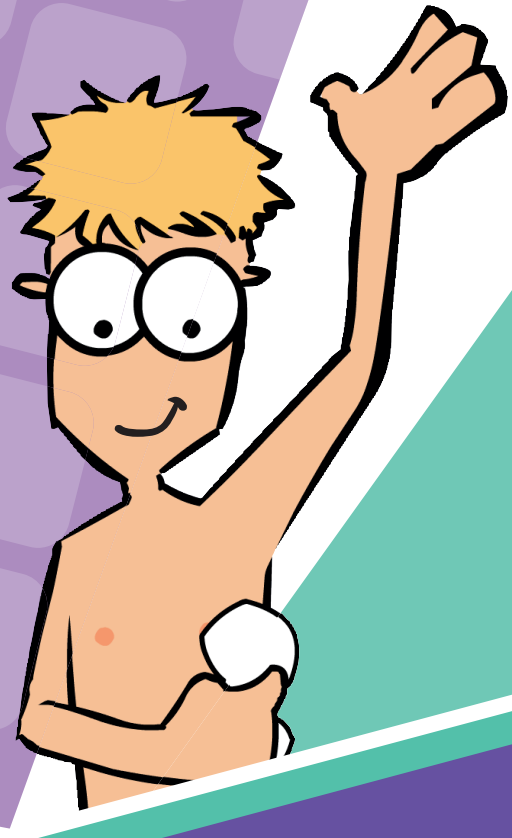


Oestrogen and Progesterone

The two main female sex hormones

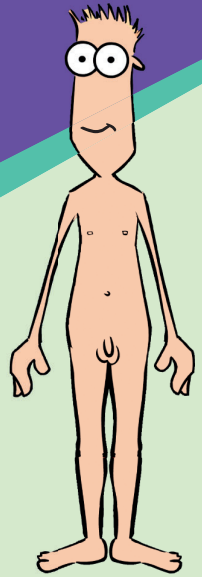
OESTROGEN
"EAST-roe-jen"

PROGESTERONE
"pro-JEST-er-own"



What Happens to the Male Body?

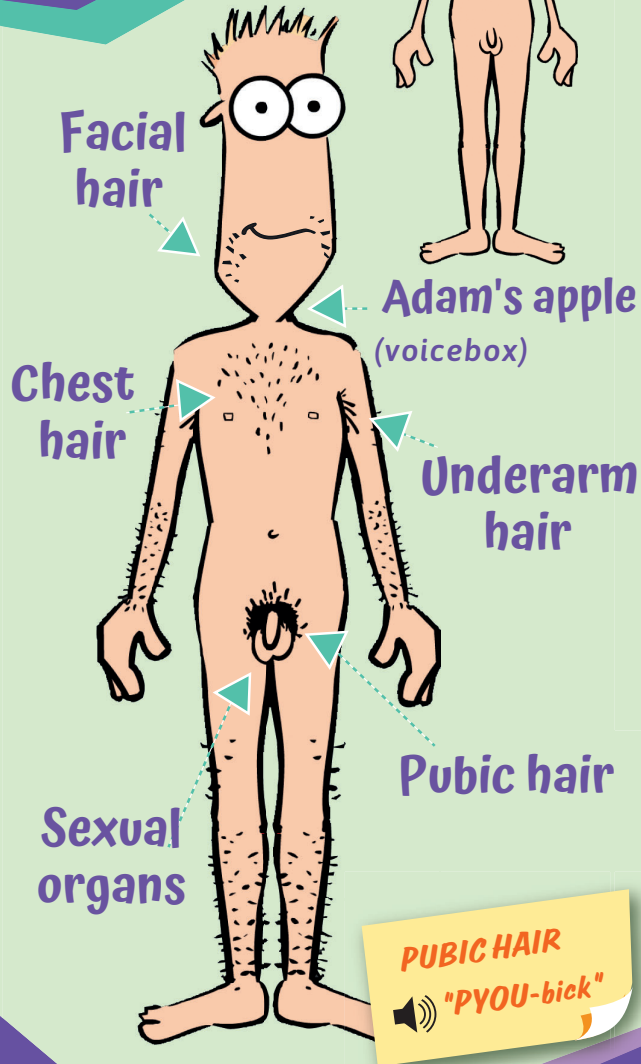
What Happens to the Male Body?



All through your childhood, your body has been growing. But as you reach puberty, your body starts to develop in a different way.

You might notice that you suddenly get taller and your chest and shoulders gradually start to get broader.

As puberty kicks in, you will start to grow hair on your body, particularly above your penis (**pubic hair**) and under your arms.



Body hair grows quite slowly. You may be an adult before it has all grown.

Later you may get some hair on your chest too and on your arms and legs.

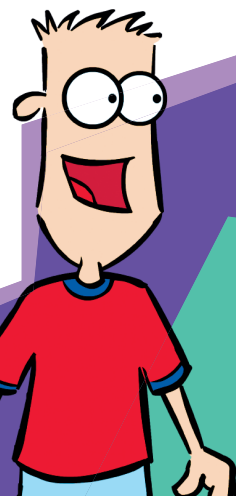
You will also start to grow hair on your face, though this might not be for a long time yet. This is called **facial hair**.

At your age, facial hair grows slowly and you will probably not be able to grow an actual beard until you are a good bit older.

When you start to get facial hair, you can begin to shave it off if you like, though you won't need to do this very often until you are older.

You could ask your parents/carers or another trusted adult for advice about shaving.

It's quite tricky to get it right in the beginning, so it's good to have a bit of help.



Some adults do not start to shave regularly until they are in their twenties.



And other adults choose not to shave at all.

One of the most noticeable things that happens to you at puberty is that your voice changes or 'breaks'.

This means that the sound of your voice deepens.

It does not change all at once and, for some time, your voice can be at an in-between stage. Sometimes it can be quite deep and then suddenly it might be higher.

This is completely normal and it will settle down in time.

You may have heard other words for these body parts, but on this diagram you can see the correct ones.

TESTICLES
"TEST-ickles"

FORESKIN
"four-skin"

SCROTUM
"scro-tum"

Penis

A part of the body out of which urine and semen come. These do not come out at the same time!

Foreskin

Fold of skin at the tip of the penis

PENIS
"PEE-niss"

Bladder

A part of the body that stores urine

BLADDER
"blah-der"

URETHRA
"your EE-Thra"

Testicles

These hang outside the body, behind the penis

Scrotum

This is a kind of bag of skin that holds the testicles

Urethra

The urethra carries urine from the bladder down through the penis

Circumcision

Some families have their male children circumcised, usually when they are babies. This means that the fold of skin at the tip of the penis (foreskin) is cut away. This is done for medical, religious or cultural reasons.

CIRCUMCISION
"sir-come-SIZZH-un"

Your sexual organs will also grow and develop during puberty.

Your **penis** will get a bit longer and thicker and it may get darker in colour.



Some people worry about the size of their penis, and that is quite normal. But penises come in all shapes and sizes and that's perfectly normal too.

Semen

Fluid that carries sperm

SEMEN

🔊 "SEE-min"

It is important to make sure that your penis stays clean. If you are circumcised (your foreskin is removed) your penis will automatically be washed with the rest of your body when you are in the bath or shower. If you have a foreskin, gently pull it back a little and wash underneath with warm water. Never pull your foreskin back any further than it will easily go as this may cause injury. Use a mild or non-perfumed soap to avoid making your skin sore.

Your **testicles** will also grow during puberty. It's normal for each testicle to be a little different in size.

Testicles make testosterone, and once puberty begins, they will also start to make **sperm**.

Semen is a whitish fluid which carries millions and millions of tiny sperm cells.

Sperm

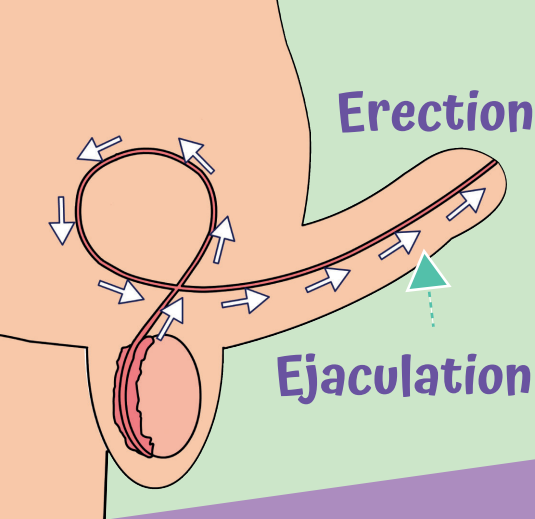
Tiny tadpole-shaped cells

SPERM

🔊 "sp-ERM"




A sperm cell from a male body is needed to fertilise an egg (ovum) from a female body to make a baby.




As you can see on the diagram, semen comes out of your body from the same place as urine (pee) – but not, of course, at the same time.

ERECTION

 "ee-WRECK-shun"

EJACULATION

 "ee-jack-you-LAY-shun"

As you get older you will probably get more **erections**.

An erection is when extra blood rushes into your penis, making it hard for a while. Sometimes semen may spurt out from the tip. Your penis will then shrink back to its normal size.

When semen comes out of your penis, this is called **ejaculation**. You don't always ejaculate when you have an erection.

An erection usually happens when your body becomes sexually excited, but during puberty, erections can happen for no particular reason.

They are really a sign that your body is developing and getting ready for adulthood.

Sometimes you can ejaculate in your sleep. This is called having a 'wet dream' and it is very common during puberty.

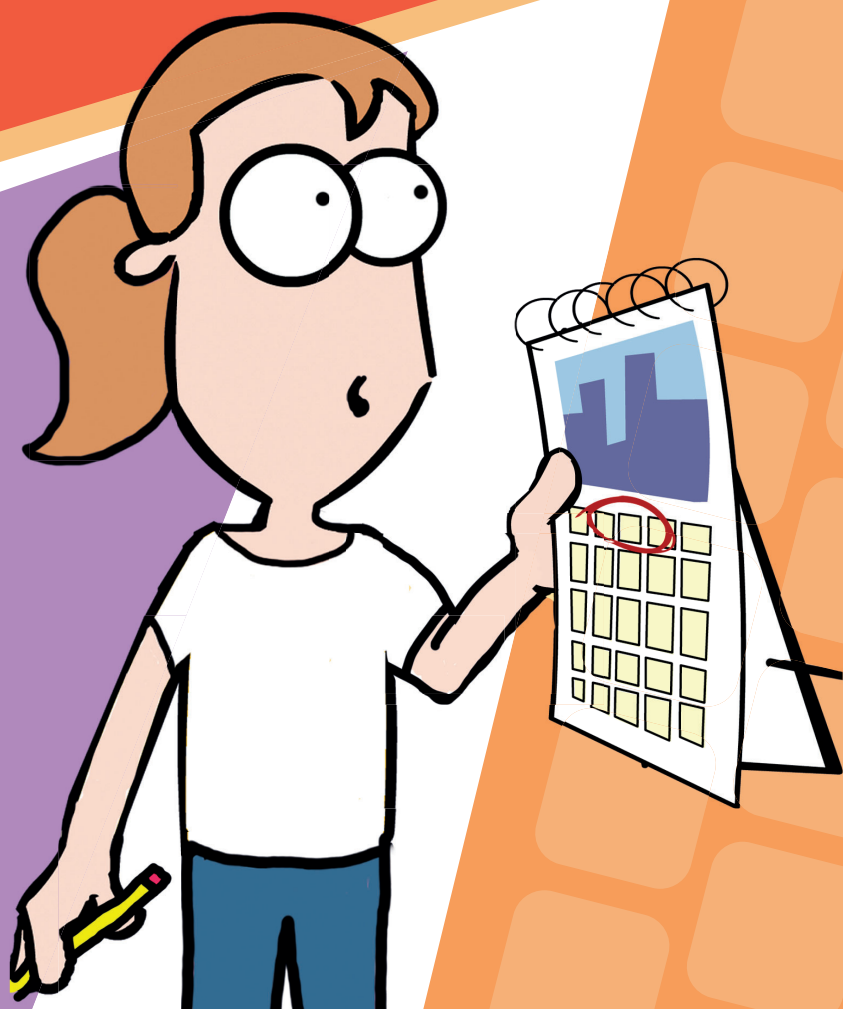


It's important during puberty to get to know your body and how it feels, looks and works. Changes at this time are normal, but it is important to talk to parents/carers and other trusted adults if you have questions or are worried about anything.

Remember:

Everyone is different and everyone's body develops at its own pace and in its own way.

What Happens to the Female Body?

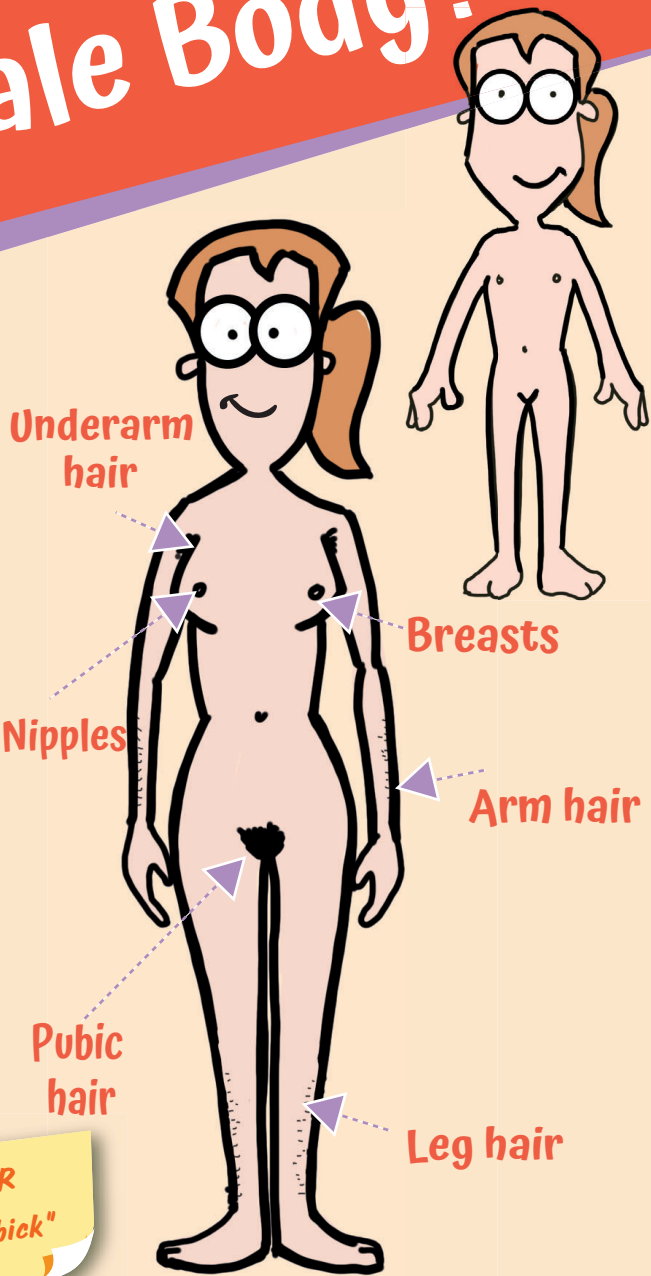


What Happens to the Female Body?

All through your childhood, your body has been growing, but as you reach puberty, your body starts to develop in a different way.

As you come to the age of puberty, you might notice that you get a bit taller and your shape slowly starts to change.

Over time, your hips will start to get a little wider and your **breasts** will start to develop. Your overall body shape usually changes as you grow. This is all perfectly normal.



PUBIC HAIR



"PYOU-bick"



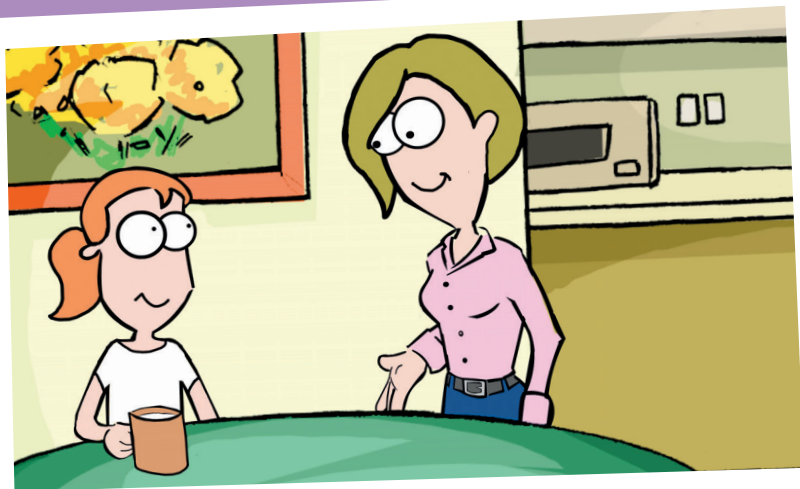
You will start to get hair under your arms and some on your legs too.

There is no health reason to get rid of body hair, some people do and some don't. It's a completely personal choice.

If you decide you want to do this, you could ask your parents/carers or other trusted adults for advice.

You may also get hair at the base of your tummy, and between your legs. This is called **pubic hair**.

Some girls worry about the size of their breasts, and that is quite normal. But breasts come in all shapes and sizes. Your breasts can also be different from each other. This is perfectly normal too!



Urethra

Where urine comes out of your body.

Clitoris

A sensitive organ that is mostly inside the body. Its tip is visible in the vulva.

Vulva

All of the outside sexual organs.

URETHRA

"your-EE-thra"

CLITORIS

"CLIT-or-iss"

VULVA

"vul-va"

VAGINA

"vaj-EYE-na"

LABIA

"LAY-bee-ya"

Labia

Folds of skin covering the urethra and the entrance to the vagina.

Vagina

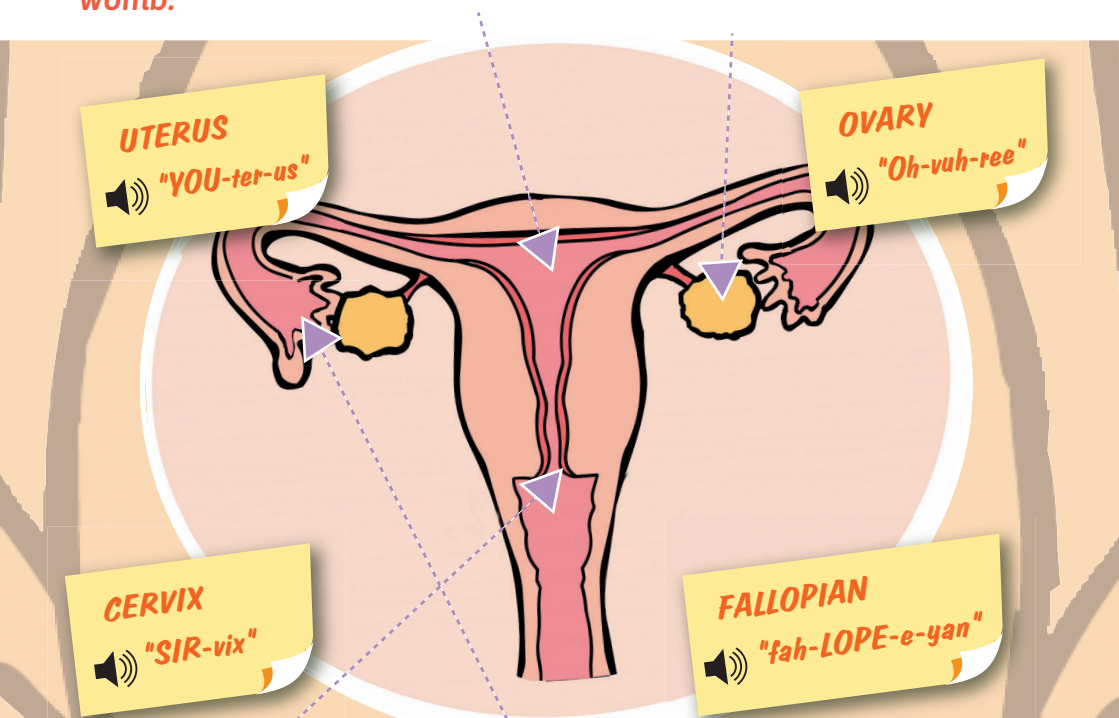
A muscular passage leading from the uterus/womb to the vulva.

Uterus/Womb

This is a place where a baby can grow. Another word for the uterus is the womb.

Ovary

You have two ovaries, each of which contains lots of tiny ova (eggs).



Cervix

Narrow opening of the uterus/womb.

From puberty on, you may notice a yellow or white stain in your underwear at times. This is a normal fluid or discharge that helps clean and moisten your **vagina**.

You will usually get your period about 6–12 months after you first see this fluid from your vagina.

Fallopian Tube

Connects the ovaries to the uterus/womb.

It's good to wash the **vulva** area every day. This can be done just with warm water, or you can use a mild or non-perfumed soap to avoid skin irritation. Never wash inside your vagina. It is not necessary and can cause it to become sore or itchy.

Menstruation (Periods)

One of the big changes that happens to your body when you reach puberty is that you will start to have **periods**.

This means that, for a few days every month, blood comes slowly from your uterus and goes out of the body through the vagina.

In order to understand why you have periods, you first need to understand what goes on inside the female body.

Every month, the female body goes through a whole set of changes.

It begins with a process you usually don't even feel, called **ovulation**.

When you were born, your body already had a whole lot of eggs inside.

These eggs are tiny cells, so small that it would be hard to see one, even if it was outside your body.

MENSTRUATION

🔊 "mens-true-AY-shun"

The correct word
for having periods is
menstruating

OVULATION

🔊 "of-you-LAY-shun"

The correct word
for these eggs
is **ova** .
(just like the
word 'oval'
– egg-shaped!)

Your body's eggs are in your ovaries, and once a month-or so, (after you reach puberty), one of the eggs ripens.

This ripening of the egg is called ovulation.

At ovulation, the egg moves out of its ovary and travels along the fallopian tube towards the uterus.

If the egg joins with a sperm while it is in the fallopian tube, it might grow into a baby when it gets to the uterus.

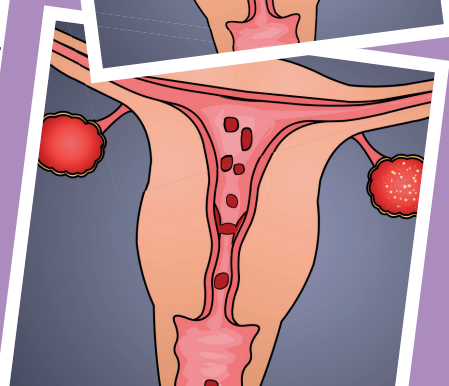
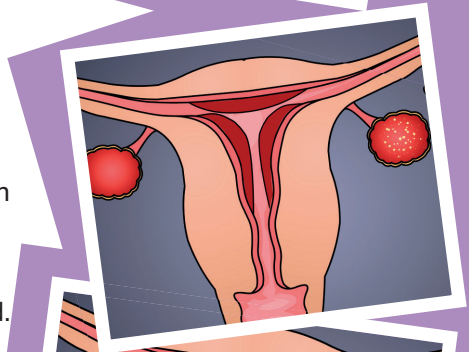
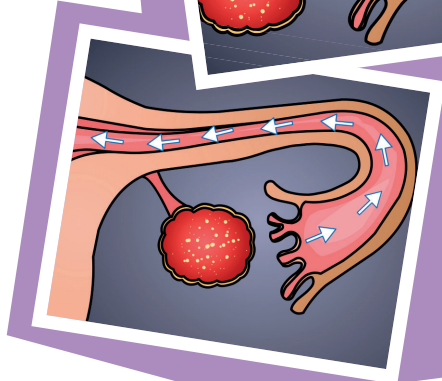
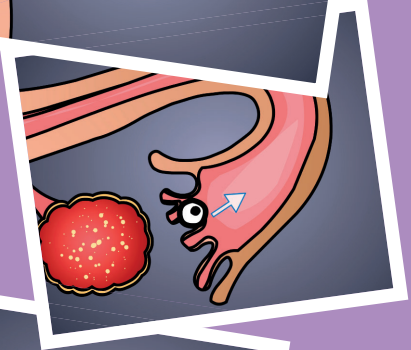
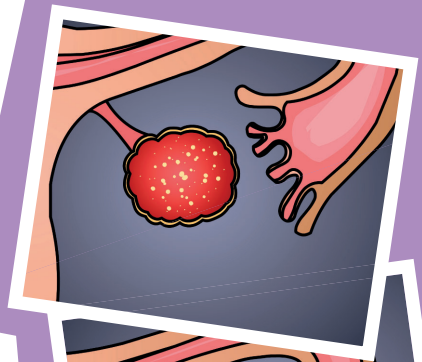
Even though most eggs do not grow into a baby, your body prepares for a possible pregnancy each time.

The lining of the uterus gets thick and soft, like a nest, getting ready for the baby that might grow there.

After a while, if there is no baby starting to grow, your body will release the egg and the lining of the uterus. These come out, in a slow flow of blood, through your vagina.

Menstrual blood is thicker and darker than the blood you would see if you cut your finger because it comes from the uterus and contains body tissue as well as blood.

After a few days, the flow of blood stops. The next month, it starts all over again with another egg. This is called the **menstrual cycle**.



What to Do When You Get Your Period

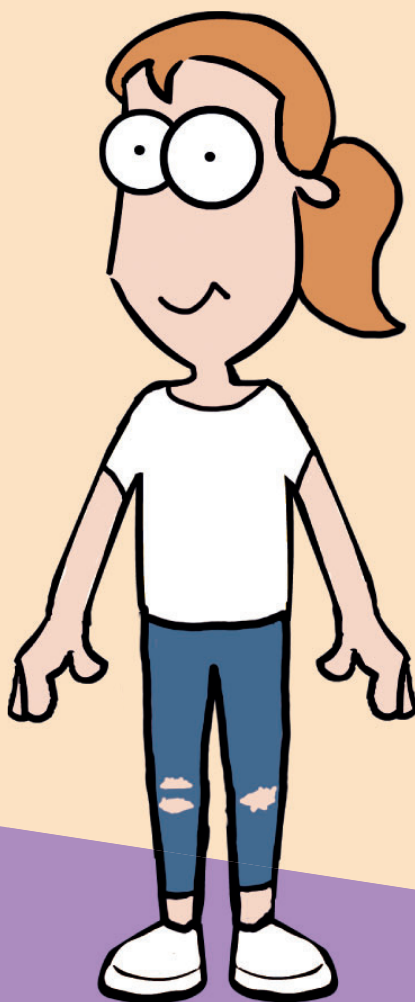
Having periods takes a bit of getting used to. To protect your underwear during a period you can use various things, including a **menstrual/period pad**, **menstrual underwear** or a **tampon**.

When you first get periods it is probably better to use pads or menstrual underwear rather than tampons, because they are easier to use.

A menstrual/period pad is made of soft, absorbent material.

It has a sticky strip on the back. The strip is protected by a piece of plastic which you pull away and you can then stick the pad to the inside of your underwear.

You will need to use menstrual/period pads, menstrual underwear or tampons during your period to keep your clothes clean.



Some people have a heavier blood flow than others, and your flow can change during your period.

Menstrual/period underwear looks like normal underwear, but has several layers to absorb menstrual blood, so you can wear it on its own or as a backup with other menstrual protection.

You need to change this pad every few hours especially on the first few days of each period because that is when the flow of blood is at its heaviest.

Wrap the used pad in toilet paper, and put it in a bin. Don't flush it down the toilet, or it might block the system!

You should put on a fresh pad (or maybe even use two, or a larger sized one) before you go to bed.

After a while, when you are used to dealing with periods, you could change to tampons or other more sustainable period products if you like.

A **tampon** is a tightly packed tube of cotton wool which goes into your vagina.

Tampons come in a range of sizes. You should always use the smallest size that best suits your blood flow. Some people find tampons more comfortable to use during their period, especially if they are very physically active or involved in sport.



Tampon

What to Do When You Get Your Period

When you are putting the tampon into your vagina make sure the loop of thread hangs outside your body.

Once the tampon is in place, you can't feel it.

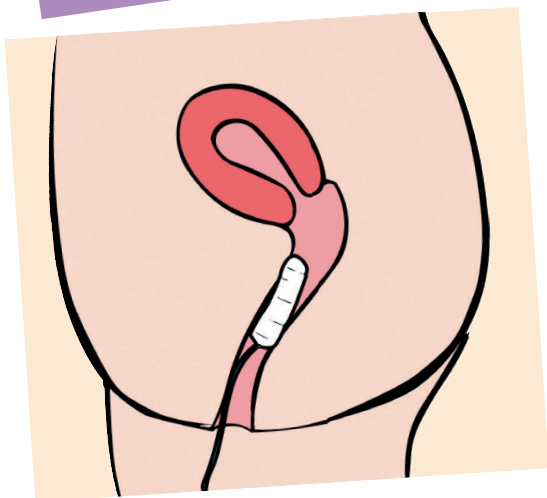
It is particularly important to change your tampon every few hours as it is not good for your body to leave one in for too long.

You tug gently on the loop of thread that hangs outside your body and the tampon will slide out.

Once you start to have periods or, if you think your body is nearly ready, you could keep a menstrual/period pad or underwear handy in your schoolbag. If your period starts while you are in school, don't worry, there will be staff there to help you. It's a good idea to make a note of when each period starts so that you will know roughly when the next one is due and be ready for it.

It is important to wash your hands before and after changing a pad or tampon.

Used tampons should not be flushed down a toilet. They should be wrapped in tissue and put in a bin.



Remember to change your tampon regularly and to remove the final one at the end of your period.

When you first start to get periods they will probably not come regularly every month.

In time, most bodies settle into a rhythm and you will find it easier to know when a period is due.

You may feel a bit grumpy and tired a few days before each period begins.

Usually this feeling of being in a bad mood goes away once your period actually starts.

You may get a pain or a kind of dragging feeling down in the lower part of your tummy just before or during your period.

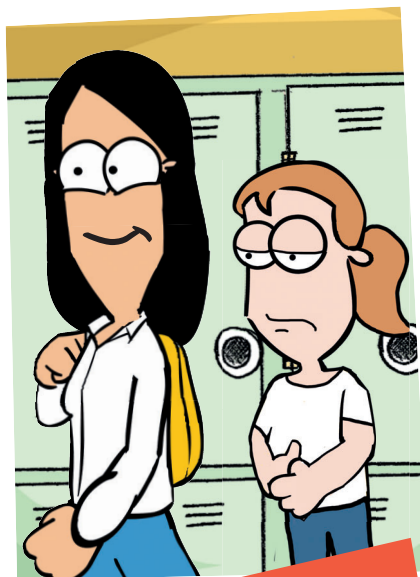
A pain like this is usually at its worst on the first day of your period, and it should ease off after that.

Some people don't get period pains, but most have some pain or discomfort with their periods from time to time.

If you have a bad pain, you should talk to your parents/carers and other trusted adults. They will be able to give you advice.

There are eco-friendly pads, tampons and menstrual underwear available. There are also things like menstrual cups that can be washed and reused. You might want to check these out when you are a little older.

Having a shower every day, or at least a good wash, is important during your period, and it will help you to feel better.



The word 'cramp' is sometimes used to describe period pain.

What to Do When You Get Your Period

You could take tablets for pain but having a good soak in a warm bath can also be very comforting. So can having a little heat on your tummy, especially at night time.

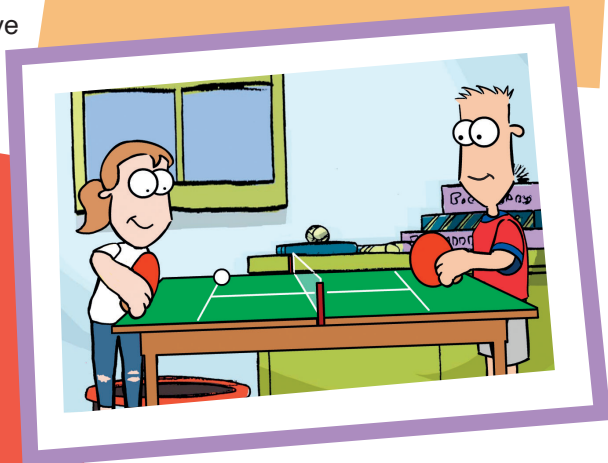
Gentle exercise can also help.

Having your period may make you feel out of sorts. But it should not stop you from doing the things you enjoy, such as playing sports or running around.

If your period is very heavy or painful, or if you find yourself feeling quite down before or during your period, you should ask your parents/carers to make an appointment with your family doctor. They will be able to give you help and advice.



If you want to swim during your period, you will need to use a tampon or period swimwear instead of a pad.



Remember:

Everyone is different and everyone's body develops at its own pace and in its own way.



Conception and Birth

Conception and Birth

Now that you know a little about how bodies change during puberty to make it possible for adults to have babies, it is a good idea to know a little bit about how that happens.

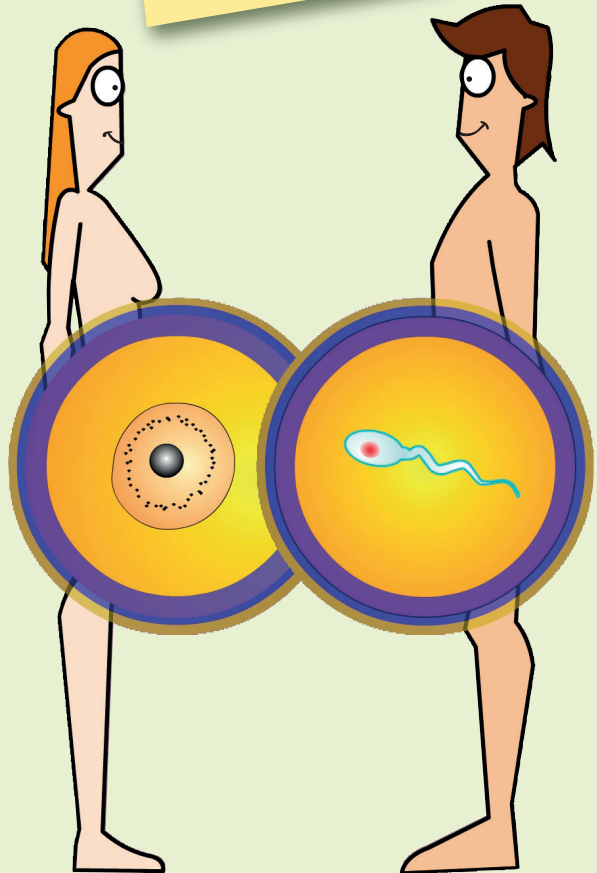
Conception happens when a sperm from a male body and an ovum (egg) from a female body come together. This is how a baby is made (conceived).

The sperm and the egg can come together to make a baby in a few different ways. Most babies are made when a man and a woman have sexual intercourse.

Sexual intercourse is sometimes called 'having sex' or 'sleeping with' someone.

CONCEPTION

🔊 "con-SEP-shun"



CONCEIVED

🔊 "con-SEE-vd"

Some people need medical help to have a baby. There are a number of reasons for this and a number of ways doctors can help.

Before sexual intercourse the male and female bodies become excited.

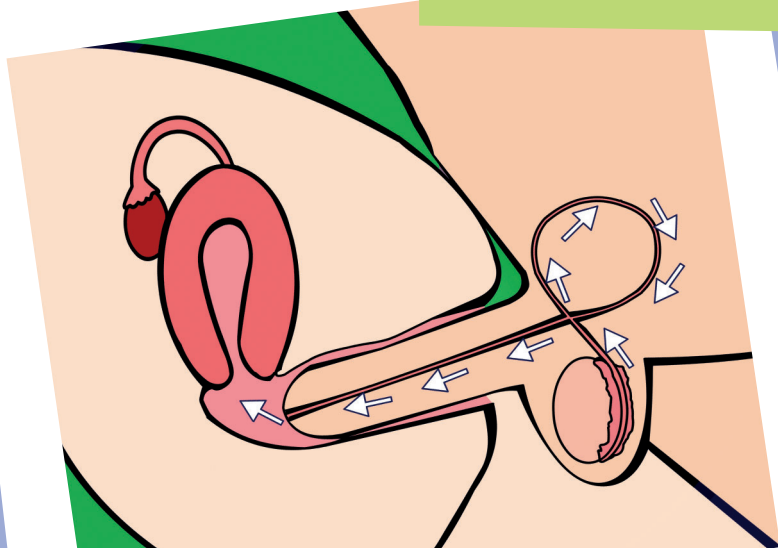
This means that the penis becomes hard and erect, and the vagina becomes wet (this is normal – it's not urine!).

Sexual intercourse between a man and a woman happens when a man's erect penis enters into a woman's vagina.

After a while, a fluid called semen comes out of the penis. This is called ejaculation.

When you reach puberty, your body is getting ready for making babies. But it will be a long time yet before you are ready to decide if you want to have sex or make babies. You still have a lot of changing and growing to do, and lots of new things to learn before then.

In fact, the law in Ireland protects you from feeling any pressure about having sex too soon by making it illegal for anyone to have sex with a young person under 17.



Penis in the vagina

The semen carries millions of tiny sperm, which immediately start to swim up the vagina, towards the woman's uterus (womb), through the cervix.

If the woman has ovulated recently, there will be an egg inside her body that is ready to be fertilised.

When one of the millions of sperm reaches the egg, it may join with it and fertilise it. This can be the beginning of the egg's development into a baby.

The fertilised egg may then travel down one of the fallopian tubes and settle into the womb, which has a nice thick lining in place, ready for the growing baby.

When a baby starts to develop inside the uterus, this is called a pregnancy.

The woman doesn't feel this part, and she can't see it either. It is all happening on the inside of her body.

It only takes a single sperm to do this. The first sperm to enter the egg is the one that fertilises it.

If the woman has not ovulated recently, there will be no egg ready for the sperm. There will be no chance of pregnancy this time.

Go back to pages 26-27 if you need to remind yourself about ovulation.



And after about nine months, the baby is ready to be born.

The muscles of the uterus start to work hard to push the baby out of the uterus, down the vagina and out into the world. Sometimes the woman needs an operation to help the baby to be born. This is called having a **caesarean section**.

CAESAREAN

🔊 "se-ZAIR-e-an"

Sexual intercourse does not always naturally result in a pregnancy. There are also things people can do to stop the sperm and the egg from joining together and making a baby. The word for this is **contraception**. There are different types of contraception, and you will learn more about this at post primary school and as you get older.

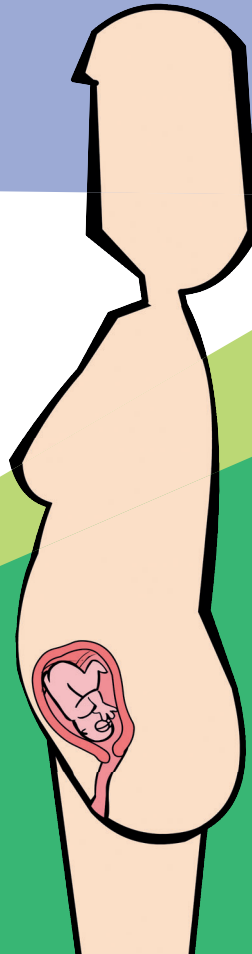
CONTRACEPTION

🔊 "con-tra-SEP-shun"

Ovulation and periods stop during pregnancy.

A missed period is often how someone first notices they are pregnant.

It is important for someone who is, or who may become, pregnant to take a vitamin called folic acid to help keep the growing baby healthy.



When a woman has a baby, her breasts naturally make milk to feed the baby.

The woman holds her baby close to her body, and the baby sucks the milk from her breasts.

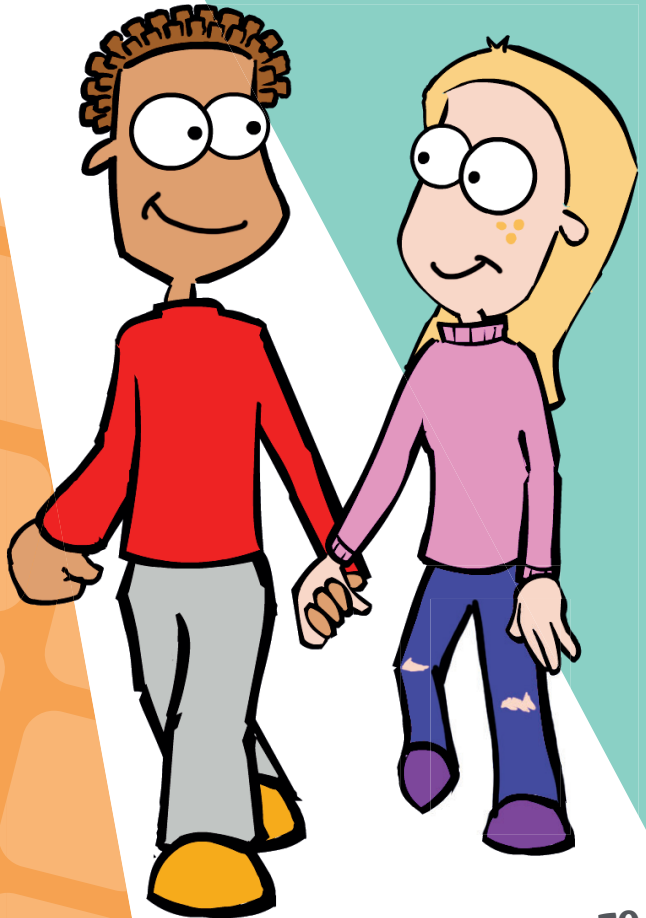
This is called **breastfeeding**.

Breastfeeding is best for babies. It provides food, strengthens their immune system, helps the brain to develop and reduces the chance of them becoming overweight.

However, if someone is unable to or decides not to breastfeed, a baby can be fed from a bottle with breast milk or by using a shop-bought baby formula.



Introducing Adolescence



Introducing Adolescence

As your body changes during puberty, you will begin to notice other changes in the way you feel, think and behave. This is because you have begun your journey to becoming an adult.

This stage between being a child and being an adult is called 'adolescence' and people in this stage are often called 'adolescents'.

Your feelings and interests will change. You will have more of your own opinions. You will be able to make more decisions for yourself, and your parents and teachers may give you more responsibility and freedom.

This will all help you to grow up to become an independent adult.



Gender Stereotypes

A stereotype is when people have an, often unfair, belief about a group of people based on something like their appearance, where they're from, or something else.

Stereotypes can make us think that everyone in a particular group of people should, or does, look and behave in a similar way. This might make us think about and treat some individuals and groups better, or worse, than others.

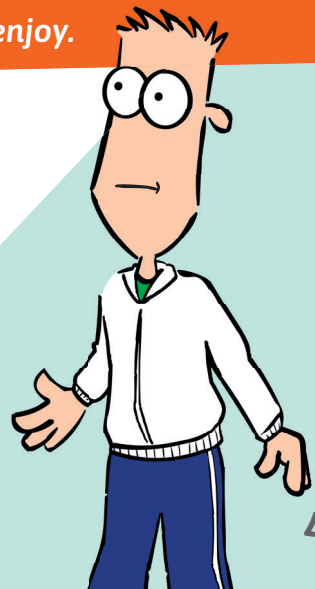
Sometimes people expect boys and girls should look, think and behave in certain ways, based on their gender. This is called gender stereotyping.

Gender stereotyping can put pressure on people to look and behave in ways that fit with traditional ideas for that gender. This can make us feel uncomfortable if we enjoy, or are good at, things that do not fit with the gender stereotypes.

For instance, gender stereotyping may make children feel they have to dress a particular way or be interested in certain hobbies.

But in fact, most people are interested in, and are good at, a mixture of things. Some of these are traditionally linked with being a boy, and some are traditionally linked with being a girl. But a person's interests don't make them any more or less of a boy or girl.

There are many different ways to be and you don't have to let gender stereotypes hold you back from the things in life that you are interested in, are good at and enjoy.



Gender Identity

Gender identity is how we think of ourselves as a boy, a girl, neither or both.

This is separate to our biological sex, whether our bodies are male or female.

Most people who are born female, feel and know that they are a girl and most people born male, feel and know that they are a boy.

A small number of people have a deep sense that their gender identity is different from the gender that is usually linked with their sex at birth, and they may describe themselves as transgender.

You will learn more about this in post-primary school and as you get older.

Puberty can be a particularly confusing time if you have questions about your gender identity. Talk to trusted adults in your life, including your parents, wider family and teachers. They will be able to find you the right information and support and give you all the reassurance and love you need.

Looking After Yourself

Feelings


Your hormones are very active at this time and hormones can really affect your moods and feelings.

You may find that you lose your temper more easily and you can sometimes have rows with your family or friends for no real reason.

It's all normal, but it can feel hard at the time. And you might feel like you're the only one going through this. But actually, it's all part of growing up and many others feel like this too.

If you feel low, it's good to talk to someone: your parents, other trusted adults, your brother or sister or your friends.

They might not be able to cheer you up, but just talking helps.



**Why does this
only happen
to me?**

**They don't
understand me. I hate
them all.**

Staying Fit and Healthy

Another way to cope with all the confusing feelings is to concentrate on looking after your body.

Eating well is one way you can have more energy. It also makes your muscles and bones strong and healthy and gives you healthy-looking hair and nails. And you'll feel your best too.

Calcium helps build strong bones. Eat foods like milk, yoghurt, cheese, plant-based milks and tofu with added calcium, and leafy green vegetables.

Remember, taking regular meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) gives your body the energy you need to grow, work and play.

Try to choose healthy snacks between meals and save sweets, chocolate and crisps for occasional treats.

And remember to drink enough water. Your body needs about eight to ten cups of fluid each day.

At least 60 mins of physical activity during your day will help you stay fit. It can also improve your mental health, and make you feel calmer and less stressed.

Physical activity can be fun. Find a friend who likes the same kinds of exercise as you do – running, cycling, dancing – or take up a sport – there are lots to choose from.

If you do something you really enjoy you'll want to do even more of it.



Hygiene

In adolescence your body sweats more, especially when you exercise.

Having a shower or a good wash every day, especially after you have been playing games or running around, will help you to keep fresh.

You can use a deodorant under your arms after you have washed – but do wash first!

And remember to change your socks and underwear every day.

Looking after your skin

Your skin makes oil all the time to keep it soft.

During adolescence it can tend to make a bit more oil than it needs. The oil clogs up your pores, and you can get spots on your face and body.

Wash thoroughly with a mild soap and don't pick your spots – it only makes them worse.

As you get older your skin will generally settle down and the spots will go away.

If you have a lot of spots and it worries you, talk to your your parents/carers as a first step.



Your family doctor will be able to advise you on how to take care of your skin and can prescribe helpful treatments, if necessary.

Healthy Relationships

During adolescence your relationships with family, friends and others will slowly begin to change. Bit by bit, you will make more choices and decisions for yourself.

This includes choices and decisions about how you treat others and how you expect them to treat you, so that your relationships are healthy and respectful.

In all healthy relationships, people make decisions about what they feel ok about doing, and other people respect this and don't push them to do things that they don't want to do.

Asking people if they want to do things is called '**looking for consent**'. People may say 'yes' or 'no' and their choice has to be respected

When do you need to ask for consent?

We need to ask for consent when we are doing most things with other people. Some examples of this might include:

- *borrowing something*
- *deciding on activities*
- *touching another person (kissing, hugging, etc.).*

Remember, consent is not only about saying what you want and don't want to do; it also means listening to and respecting the other person and their choices, even if the answer is 'No'.

While this might be disappointing, it is important to understand that no one should be pressurised into doing something that is not right or comfortable for them.

Here are some ways of saying 'No':

No, I don't want to...

No thanks...

I don't feel like that
right now...

I don't like that...

Ask me again another time...

I have changed my mind.
I don't want to do
it anymore...



Remember, just because someone has agreed to something before, it doesn't mean that they have to keep on doing it. People have the right to change their minds at any time and say 'No'.

Consent of different kinds is something that you will learn more about as you grow up.

Consent about the body, who touches it and in what way, is always important.

As you go through adolescence and maybe start 'going out' with someone there will be even more times when it will be important for you to give and get consent.

When do you need to ask for consent?

Because some decisions are big and can have long-lasting results, the law says that there are limits to what a child or young person is legally allowed to agree or consent to.

For example, you have to be 16 or older to be able to consent to medical treatment and you have to be 17 or older to consent to sexual activity with someone.

To protect a young person from pressure to have sex, the law says it is a crime for anyone to have sex with a young person under 17.

This means that you are not legally old enough to agree to (or consent to) having sex until you are 17.

Many people wait until they are 17 or older, and in a relationship that is important to them, before they have sex for the first time.

17 is the age of sexual consent in Ireland.

This is really important for you to know and understand.

If anyone wants to touch you sexually or have you touch them, you should tell a trusted adult immediately.

You might be asked to keep it a secret. The person might say that what's happening is your fault or that it's because they love you but that's not true.

A trusted adult such as a parent, relative, teacher, youth worker, etc. will help you.

Attraction and Sexual Orientation



During your teenage years, you may find that you become extremely interested in and attracted to a particular person. You may feel that you are in love with that person as you think about them so much.

You might be attracted to someone of the same gender, someone of a different gender, both or neither. This is called your '**sexual orientation**' and it may change over time or stay the same.

It is important to know that all of these feelings are ok. It's also ok not to have any of these feelings at all.

It can feel great if the person you are attracted to feels the same about you,

but it can feel hard if they don't like you as much as you like them.

During adolescence, some young people start 'going out' together but many don't. People want different things at different times in their lives and this is completely normal. Try not to feel under pressure to 'go out' with someone just because your friends might be.

Sometimes it can seem that you are not like other people your age and that can be hard. The truth is most people feel like this. If you are confused about any of your feelings as you go through adolescence, it can really help to talk to somebody.

Taking care of yourself online



During adolescence you might start using social media more. This can be a great way to chat with your friends, to share interests, to get help with schoolwork and lots more.

On the downside, social media can also be used to hurt people, or to bully them. This is called **cyberbullying**. Cyberbullying is usually when something mean or nasty is posted about someone, or to someone, online or by text or emoji. It can be

sent directly to the person, or it can sometimes be shared with other people through social media. Just like any bullying, this can be used to cause real hurt to people.

The problem with cyberbullying is that things can be spread really quickly. Lots of people, even strangers, can post comments, emojis or likes. Once something is posted on social media it's very difficult, or even impossible to remove it.

Think about how you might feel if this happened to you. Staying quiet about a mean comment or 'liking' it – is also contributing to cyberbullying.

As you get older and are using the internet more, you might be asked to send pictures of yourself to someone, or they might ask you to do something that you know is not good for you.

If someone asks you to do something that makes you feel uncomfortable, or if someone posts a cruel comment:

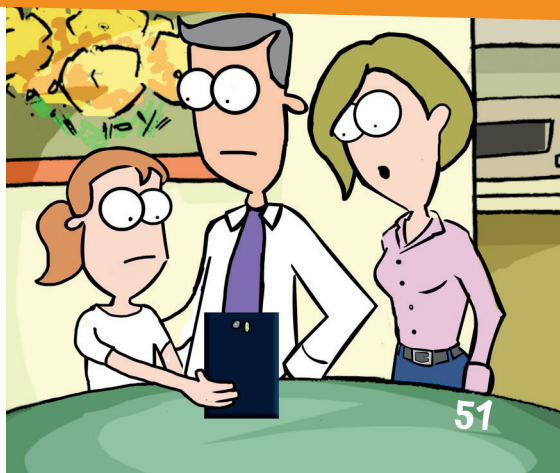
- **Don't reply**
- **Take a screen shot**
- **Block the sender**
- **Tell your parents or another adult you trust**

Remember that in Ireland it is against the law for anyone to send or receive sexual pictures of someone under 18. This includes people under 18 sharing sexual pictures of themselves. It is also illegal to threaten to, or to share, sexual pictures of someone else. Sexual pictures usually show people's genitals, breasts or sexual activity.

If you have sent or received pictures like this (whether or not you asked for them), it is really important to tell a trusted adult so that they can help you.

Tips to help you be safe online:

- **Think before you post – once something goes online you have no control over it**
- **Don't share your password.**
- **Make sure not to post personal things like your name, school name or home address online**
- **Don't 'friend' someone unless you know them**
- **Don't use your real name on profiles**
- **Don't post, like or share anything that can cause hurt to someone else**
- **Don't ask anyone for naked or semi-naked pictures of themselves**
- **Don't share naked or semi-naked pictures of yourself or other people**



Taking care of yourself online

Sometimes you might see something online that's not appropriate for your age. It can happen by accident or you might just be curious and search online for words or phrases that you have heard. This can often happen if you search for information on sex or sexual health.

If you decide to do this, depending on the site that you use, you might see sexual pictures or videos.

This content is not suitable for children and young people and some of it may even be illegal for adults to watch.

As a first step, turn off, close or turn over the device.

It is important for you to know that:

- *These websites are not suitable for you*
- *These websites do not teach you about respect or how to communicate with someone about sex*
- *Online sexual activity is usually only a performance. It is nothing like enjoyable, healthy sexual relationships between consenting adults in real-life*

It is normal to be curious, but the internet can sometimes give you harmful messages.

Remember:

If you see something online that upsets you or if you share or receive something that makes you feel uncomfortable, talk to your parents/carers and other trusted adults.



And Finally...

The changes that are described in this book happen very gradually, over several years. So you will have time to get used to everything and learn all you need to know about yourself along the way.

There will be challenges but also fun as you go through adolescence.

There are lots of people to learn from so don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.





...Enjoy
Growing Up!

Busy Bodies

This edition of the Busy Bodies booklet was produced by:

HSE, Sexual Health Programme

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