

IT'S A GUY THING



You might be noticing changes in your body. Even in your personality. These changes might seem confusing and strange. But don't worry. This is a dramatic time in a guy's life. This is **puberty**. Adolescence. You're on your way to becoming a man.

YOUR CHANGING BODY

Outside and inside, all sorts of stuff is happening. Puberty is kind of cool. It means you're growing up. Sometimes the growing process can feel really strange. Not to worry. Everybody goes through puberty, although every body is different. That's ok. That's exactly how puberty works.

For boys, puberty usually lasts between the ages of 11 and 17. Not all of the changes will happen at the same time. A million different experiences are all normal, so don't panic. Relax and learn the facts.

You'll notice changes on the outside of your body and they're all caused

by changes on the inside. A gland near your brain called the **pituitary gland** "announces" to your body that puberty is going to begin. It sends out chemicals called **hormones** that cause changes to take place.

One important hormone in guys is called **testosterone**. It tells your body that it's time to grow. Testosterone causes all sorts of changes to happen as you grow from a boy into a man. Let's take a look at these changes:

- Growth spurts – you'll get taller and your muscles will develop.
- Your voice will get deeper as your larynx (Adam's apple) grows.
- You might have new feelings, and lots of them – happy, sad, angry, depressed, excited, confused...
- Pubic hair grows around your penis and scrotum.
- Hair grows on your legs, chest, face and underarms.
- You might develop acne (pimples, zits).
- You will sweat more. It's time to really pay attention to keeping clean!
- Your penis and testicles will grow.
- You'll start getting erections from time to time, or have "wet dreams" while you sleep.



THE GROWING GUY

The most basic, obvious change is that you're going to become taller. No big deal; you've been growing taller all your life. But now, it might seem to happen a little faster. Don't worry if you are not growing as quickly as the other kids in your class – or if you're already much taller than they are. Each person grows at his or her own rate.

*Your voice will crack and deepen as your **larynx** (voice box) grows. You'll notice that your muscles are more developed. You might feel a lot stronger too!*



PRIVATE PARTS

Hey, what's going on down there? That might be a big question in your mind now. After all, many of the changes we've explained affect your genital area.



*The **penis** is made up of the shaft and the glans, or head of the penis. There is a small opening at the tip where urine and semen flow out. **Semen** is the white fluid that carries sperm.*

*The **scrotum** is the soft sac behind the penis that contains and protects the testicles. **Sperm** is created inside the testicles at the start of puberty. You'll produce millions of sperm for the rest of your life. When a single sperm meets a woman's egg, it can create a baby.*

*During puberty, your penis and **testicles** grow larger and the skin grows darker in color. The testicles will hang lower. Don't worry if one side hangs lower than the other. It's totally normal. Soon enough, they will even out.*



Penis size often worries guys during puberty. But just as each guy is different in height and weight, the size and shape of the penis varies with each individual male. Your overall height and build don't have anything to do with the size of your penis. There is no "right" or "ideal" size. Your penis will be shorter when it's flaccid, or soft, and longer when you have an erection.

*An **erection** happens when the penis fills with blood. This makes the penis hard and it sticks out from your body. An erection mostly happens when a guy is sexually excited. It can also happen for no reason at all, especially during puberty. This can be embarrassing but just relax and try to focus on something else. When it passes, your muscles will relax and it's back to business as usual. Sometimes you can get an erection while you are sleeping, which can cause you to ejaculate and release semen. This is called a "**wet dream**" or **nocturnal emission**, and it happens to just about every guy.*



HAIR THERE

Here's the deal with shaving... Facial hair develops in guys between the ages of 14 and 16. You'll probably notice the first few hairs forming above your upper lip. The first hairs are usually scattered all over and don't form a thick mustache or beard. It will get thicker later on.

The first shave can be tricky. First, decide whether you want to use a hand razor or an electric razor. Ask an older brother, your dad, mom, or another trusted adult for recommendations. And don't share razors with anyone else.

Here's the step-by-step lowdown on shaving with a hand razor:

- *It's best to shave after you shower when your pores are open.*
- *If you're using a hand razor, lather your face with warm water and shaving cream.*
- *Shave in the direction the hair grows (downward motion).*
- *Keep clean, sharp razors on hand. They feel better, shave better and even cut down on pimples.*
- *You can put aftershave lotion over your face after shaving if you want. This helps disinfect your face.*
- *If your face burns after you shave, you might want to use a gentle lotion with aloe to help calm the burn.*



For an electric razor:

- Wash and dry your face.
- Shave in a circular motion.
- Never, never, never use an electric razor in the shower!

Hair will also start to grow on your chest, legs, face, and underarms. Around your genital area, you'll notice that pubic hair will start to sprout. These hairs are short and curly and will get thicker as you continue to grow.

SAY HI TO HYGIENE

Zits, B.O. The things that make puberty just so much fun.



*At this point in your life, your oil and sweat glands are starting to work hard. That's why keeping clean is more important than ever. Good **hygiene** means staying clean and healthy. Now that you're growing hair under your arms and starting to sweat a little more in your armpits, it's a good idea to begin using an anti-perspirant/deodorant to control sweat and body odor. It is also very important to wear clean*

clothes and shower or bathe daily to keep body odors away.

*Wash your hair daily (or every other day). Keep your face clean. Wash daily with mild soap and water. Try to keep your hands and hair off your face. (That makes your skin oily). **Acne** can occur when dirt and oil build up under the skin. You can treat some pimples with cleanser, lotion, or gel that combines benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid. If your skin problems are really bad, ask your parents to take you to a **dermatologist** (a skin doctor).*

FEELING FINE...AND FREAKING OUT

The world seems ok one minute. The next minute, it's all a mess. Guess what? That's normal.

OK, you know about what physical changes to expect. Now let's talk about emotional changes. Your hormones not only make your body change, they can also make you feel kind of different. You might be happy one minute, and sad the next. You might lost your temper more quickly. Or you might feel like you just want to be left alone sometimes. A lot of guys experience mood changes like this during puberty.



You may also notice that your friendships are changing. Guys and girls at your age sometimes develop crushes on each other. Crushes can be a fun part of growing up. They can also hurt sometimes if your feelings aren't returned.



Even your friendships with other guys might start to change as you grow and develop new interests. You might make a lot of new friends or start to drift apart from the old ones. That's normal. Just use common sense, be yourself, and you'll be fine.



GIRLS

Girls are changing too. Here's how...

Some of the changes girls experience are the same ones guys experience. Some changes are girls-only, though, just like there are some changes that are guy-only. That's because girls' changes are spurred by different hormones than guys' changes. Testosterone is the hormone that triggers puberty in boys. In girls, the hormones that cause changes during puberty are called **progesterone** and **estrogen**.

Girls begin **menstruation**, which is also called a **period**. A girl's menstrual period can begin any time between the ages of about 9 and 16. Every month, a girl loses a small amount of blood and tissue through the vagina. Girls use feminine care products - pads, pantliners, and tampons - to absorb the menstrual flow. It's simply a natural process of maturing that prepares them to have babies later in life.



GET MOVING AND EAT RIGHT

The changes you're going through make your body seem like it's totally out of your control. But it's not.

Exercising during puberty helps your bones and muscles grow and keeps you fit and healthy. Stay in shape by biking, inline skating, taking your dog for long walks, shooting hoops - whatever you like, as long as you're working your body!



Remember, exercise will cause you to sweat. Avoid the “P-U of puberty” by using a deodorant under your arms before you get active, and shower or bathe with soap afterwards.



When you’re getting all that exercise, your growing body needs energy. Stay energized with a good diet. Eat food from all the basic food groups: grains, vegetables, fruit, dairy and meat and beans.