

Puberty is a natural developmental phase during which a child's body transitions into an adult body capable of reproduction. This phase involves various changes in physical, emotional, cognitive, and social aspects.

Key Physical Changes

Growth Spurt: Rapid increase in height, usually earlier in girls (ages 9-14) and later in boys (ages 10-16).

Secondary Characteristics:

Girls:

- The development of breasts, wider hips and thighs.
- The growth of pubic, underarm and leg hair
- Girls typically begin menstruating between ages 10 and 15.

Boys:

- Changes in vocal cords leading to a deeper voice
- The growth of pubic, facial and body hair
- Gain muscle mass and genital enlargement.

Acne: Hormonal shifts increase skin oil production, often causing acne in both boys and girls

Emotional Changes

Mood Swings: Hormonal changes can cause emotional fluctuations.

Complex Emotions: Adolescents may experience romantic attraction, jealousy, and insecurity.

Independence Seeking: Teenagers begin to seek privacy and independence.

Cognitive Changes

Critical Thinking: Development of advanced thinking skills and questioning societal norms.

Abstract Thinking: Ability to consider complex concepts and ideas.

Decision-Making: More sophisticated decision-making processes and risk assessment.

Social Changes

Peer Relationships: Increased desire for social connections and fitting in with peer groups.

Identity Exploration: Experimentation with different social roles and identities.

Social Dynamics: Navigating romantic relationships and peer pressure.



Supporting Your Child

Open Communication

- **Be Direct and Honest:** Use clear language and avoid euphemisms.
- **Share Personal Experiences:** Provide realistic insights from your own experiences.

Discussing Key Topics

- **Physical and Emotional Changes:** Explain what to expect during puberty.
- **Self-Care and Hygiene:** Teach the importance of regular hygiene practices.
- **Social Interactions:** Discuss navigating social dynamics and peer pressure.
- **Healthy Relationships:** Emphasise respect, consent, and boundaries.

Building Self-Esteem

- **Positive Reinforcement:** Encourage and praise your child's achievements.
- **Healthy Self-Image:** Discuss the unrealistic standards often portrayed in media.
- **Handling Bullying:** Teach strategies for dealing with negative peer interactions.

Practical Tips for Parents

Developing a Hygiene Routine

- **Regular Showering:** Establish a consistent showering schedule.
- **Use of Deodorant:** Teach proper use of deodorant to manage body odour.
- **Skincare:** Introduce a basic skincare routine to manage acne.
- **Dental Hygiene:** Encourage regular brushing and flossing.

Encouraging Independence

- **Task Breakdown:** Help your child break down complex tasks into manageable steps.
- **Visual Schedules:** Use visual aids to remind your child of daily routines.
- **Time Management:** Teach prioritising tasks and managing their time effectively.

Emotional Regulation

- **Safe Environment:** Create a nonjudgmental space for your child to express emotions.
- **Coping Strategies:** Introduce healthy coping mechanisms like exercise, journaling, and meditation.
- **Education:** Provide information about puberty to alleviate anxiety and confusion.

Navigating Social Situations

- **Discuss Peer Pressure:** Teach strategies to resist negative influences.
- **Promote Self-Confidence:** Encourage your child to pursue their interests and strengths.
- **Empathy and Inclusivity:** Emphasise the importance of empathy and standing against bullying.
- **Healthy Relationships:** Guide your child in developing supportive friendships.

Nutrition and Physical Health

- **Balanced Diet:** Encourage a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains.
- **Regular Exercise:** Promote at least 60 minutes of physical movement or activity per day.
- **Hydration:** Ensure your child drinks plenty of water daily.
- **Healthy Sleep Patterns:** Establish a regular sleep routine for adequate rest.

Emotional and Mental Health Support

- **Monitor Mental Health:** Be aware of signs of anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues.
- **Professional Help:** Seek support from counsellors or therapists if needed.
- **Stress Management:** Teach stress-relief techniques like mindfulness and relaxation exercises.

Sexual Education

- **Basic Information:** Provide age-appropriate information about sexual health.
- **Safe Practices:** Discuss the importance of consent and safe sexual practices.
- **Open Discussions:** Encourage questions and provide honest answers.

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

- **Support Exploration:** Support your child as they explore their gender identity and sexual orientation.
- **Resources:** Provide access to books, websites, and support groups.
- **Acceptance:** Create an accepting and inclusive environment at home.

Managing Technology and Social Media

- **Healthy Use:** Set boundaries for screen time and social media use.
- **Positive Interactions:** Encourage positive and respectful online behaviour.
- **Digital Literacy:** Teach your child about online safety and critical thinking regarding online content.

Peer and School Support

- **Collaborate with Schools:** Work with teachers and school counsellors to support your child.
- **Social Skills:** Encourage participation in school activities and clubs.
- **Bullying Prevention:** Advocate for anti-bullying programs and policies at school.



Tips for Teenagers

Stay Informed: Educate yourself about puberty and its changes. Knowledge empowers you to understand what's happening to your body.

Open Communication: Don't be afraid to talk to your parents or a trusted adult about your questions or concerns. They're there to help and support you.

Self-Care is Important: Establish a daily hygiene, skincare, and dental care routine. Taking care of yourself boosts confidence and overall well-being.

Healthy Lifestyle: Eat nutritious foods, stay hydrated, and exercise regularly. Your physical health impacts your mood and energy levels.

Manage Emotions: Hormonal changes can lead to mood swings. Find healthy ways to manage stress, like sports, art, or talking to friends.

Peer Pressure Awareness: Be aware of peer pressure and trust your instincts. Surround yourself with friends who support and respect you.

Self-Discovery: Explore your interests and passions. Puberty is a time to discover who you are and what you enjoy.

Healthy Relationships: Respect yourself and others. Learn about consent, boundaries, and what makes a supportive relationship.

Stay Safe Online: Use social media responsibly. Be mindful of what you share and how you interact with others online.

Reach Out for Support: If you feel overwhelmed or need guidance, talk to a school counsellor, therapist, or healthcare professional.

How Explore and Soar Occupational Therapists Can Help You and Your Family

Goal-Based Face-to-Face Intervention:

Individualised Approach: Personalized interventions to meet each child's needs.

Skill Development: Focus on achieving independence in self-care and daily activities.

Building Independence: Enhance awareness of body cues and routines.

Parent Coaching and Collaborative Sessions:

Education: Inform parents about changes in puberty and support strategies.

Empowerment: Equip parents with tools to reinforce skills at home.

Community and Group Therapy:

Social Groups: Group therapy programs to develop social interaction, motor skills, executive functioning, and more.

If you have any questions or need further support, please contact us. We are here to help you and your child navigate this important transition with confidence and ease.



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