

Lesson 34/35

Understanding a Growing Body



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**During puberty,
the sexual and
reproductive
parts of a
person's body
develop.**

**Each person's
body changes at
its own pace.**

Understanding a Growing Body

Puberty is the time when your body starts to change from a child's body to an adult's. The reproductive parts of a person's body are sometimes used to have sex and make babies. Some of these parts are outside the body. There are also reproductive parts inside the body.

Some bodies have a penis and the other parts that go with it. Some bodies have a vulva and the other parts that go with it. People are usually assigned a sex at birth based on the reproductive parts on the outside of their body. The sex a person is assigned at birth—male or female—doesn't always match the person's inside sense of their gender.

Every body is different. But no matter which body parts you have, it's important to know how to keep the reproductive parts of your body healthy.

A Body with a Penis

This picture shows a body with a penis and scrotum outside the body. During puberty, the penis and scrotum develop, and body hair grows in the pubic area.

These changes are very common. Other important changes take place inside the body. How soon or how fast the changes happen is different for each person.

The penis is the sexual organ that allows for urine (or pee) to leave the body. It is also the passageway for sperm to leave the body. The inside of the penis is made up of soft tissue. When the person is sexually excited, the tissue inside the penis fills with blood to make the penis firm. This is called an erection. When ejaculation occurs, semen containing sperm is released through the penis. It's common for a person with a penis to experience erections and ejaculation during sleep. These are often called wet dreams.

The scrotum is a sac of skin that hangs behind the penis. Inside the scrotum are two testicles that make sperm cells and the hormone testosterone. The scrotum holds and protects the testicles.

Circumcision

When a person with a penis is born, the tip of the penis is surrounded by a piece of skin called the foreskin. Some families decide to have the foreskin removed at birth for different reasons. These reasons include religious practices or family ideas and traditions. Some penises have been circumcised, others have not.

(continued)

A Body with a Vulva

This picture shows the *breasts* on the chest and the *vulva* between the legs in the pubic area. During puberty the breasts and vulva develop, and body hair grows in the pubic area.

These changes are very common. Other important changes take place inside the body. How soon or how fast the changes happen is different for each person.

The **breasts** and **nipples** are the part of the reproductive system that produces milk for a newborn baby. The breasts are made of soft, fatty tissue. Breasts come in all sizes and shapes. Nipples also may be different shades and shapes.

The **vulva** is a mound of soft, fatty tissue. Inside the vulva are the urinary opening, where urine (or pee) comes out, and the opening of the *vagina*. The vulva protects these openings.

Inside a body with a vulva, the vagina is the passageway that connects to the uterus. The uterus is the organ where a baby develops when a person is pregnant. Two *ovaries* inside the body hold egg cells and make the hormones *estrogen* and *progesterone*.

Menstruation

During puberty, person with a uterus begins to menstruate. Menstruation is a process that happens for many years of the person's life. During menstruation, the built-up lining of the uterus slowly passes out of the body through the vagina. This happens about once a month. It is also known as having a period.

Periods are different for each person. A person may start having periods as young as age 9 or as old as age 16. Often, the period happens about every 28 days, although the time between periods can be as short as 21 days or as long as 40 days. Periods may last from 1 to 5 days. There may be a lot of blood or a little. Some people may feel cramps in the belly or lower back.

A person can wear a pad, tampon, cup or special underwear during a period to collect the blood. Menstruating can be a little uncomfortable at times. But most people can continue to be active and do all the things they usually do.

(continued)

Name _____

A Growing Body

Part 1

Match each body part to its definition.

Penis	Organs that produce sperm and make hormones
Breasts	The passageway that connects to the uterus
Scrotum	Organs that hold egg cells and make hormones
Vulva	Sac of skin that holds the testicles
Vagina	Mound of soft tissue that protects the opening to the vagina
Testicles	Organ that allows urine and sperm to leave the body
Uterus	Organ in which a baby develops when a person is pregnant
Ovaries	Body parts that produce milk for a newborn baby

Part 2: What Would You Say?

I feel embarrassed that I'm growing up faster than the other people in my class...

My voice has gotten deeper and it keeps cracking when I talk...

My best friend started their period, but I haven't yet...

I'm worried my body isn't ever going to start changing...

