

Talking with Your Child about Puberty

Why talk about Puberty?

Growing up can be exciting and confusing for young people. Their bodies go through many changes during puberty. It is also a time when they are discovering who they are, how they feel, and what they think. Parents have an important part to play. They can help their children learn the facts and develop healthy beliefs and values. Let children know that you are there to listen and help. This information sheet has some suggestions.

The right time and place

It is best to begin talking about puberty when your child is young. Don't worry about starting too early. Children need different information at different times. As the years pass, you can bring up information when your child is ready to understand it.

It is often easier to talk when you are doing something together:

- Making or eating a meal
- Walking through the park
- Driving in the car

The subject of puberty may also come up in other ways:

- After a TV or radio show about puberty or young people
- When your child gets some information on puberty at school

Feeling Embarrassed

Both parents and young people may feel uncomfortable about talking about puberty. Your child may be embarrassed to bring up the subject or ask questions. Here are some ways you might deal with these feelings:

- Say something like “I think we both feel a little uncomfortable talking about...”
- Try to make sure you and your child will be left alone to talk
- Pay attention to your child's feelings – teasing at this time may be hurtful
- Keep your answers short
- Use your sense of humour

Self Esteem

Young people often feel unsure of themselves as they go through the changes of puberty. They compare themselves to their friends. They worry about how they look. We can help children develop self-esteem and “feel good” about themselves. Your child needs to feel that you like and accept the “new self”. Encourage your child with positive words. Try not to allow hurtful remarks or teasing in the family. Offer your love and support when it is needed.



Beliefs and Values

It is important to talk to children about puberty. At the same time you can help your child understand your beliefs and values. Remember to listen, answer questions and give support. Explain what you think is right and important, but try not to argue or lecture.

Want more information about Puberty?

There are many books and videos at your school library, public library and bookstores. Here are a few titles:

Book list

- Bourgeois, Paulette and Kim Martyn (2005). *Changes in You and Me; A book about puberty Mostly for Boys*
And
Changes in You and Me; A book about puberty Mostly for Girls
- Harris, R. (2004). *It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, growing up, sex and sexual health.*
- Hickling, Meg (2005). *The New Speaking of Sex: What your children need to know and when they need to know it.*
- Movessian, Shushann (2004). *Puberty Girl*
- Price, Geoff (2005). *Puberty Boy*



Other fact sheets on parenting are available at your local Community Health Office/ Centre or online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca>

For more information,

Contact your public health nurse at the community health center/office near you.

www.vch.ca/community/community_health_centres.htm

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