

Facts Up Front

Preteens ages 8-12

Talking to your child about sexuality.

- The changes of puberty usually begin between the ages of 9-13 in girls and 9½–14 in boys. It is important to talk to your child about puberty before it begins.
- The physical changes of puberty include: rapid increase in height, increased oiliness of the skin, acne, hair growth around the genitals, under the arms, on the legs and arms, and the growth of the genital organs.
- In addition, boys experience: the development of hair on the face and often the chest, development of broader shoulders and chest, deepening of the voice, beginning of sperm production by the testicles and spontaneous erections of the penis and “wet dreams” (nocturnal emissions).
- In addition, girls experience: the development of a more womanlike shape as the breast and hips become more rounded, beginning of ovulation-the release of mature egg cells, increased vaginal lubrication and discharge. The average age of menarche (a girl’s first period) is 12.
- Dealing with the changes of puberty can be stressful for your preteen. Not only does the body develop, but increased hormone levels result in new feelings and emotions.
- Encourage your preteen to talk about feeling of love, jealousy, anger and other intense emotions.
- Recognize that emotional mood swings will occur. Don’t take them personally. Ask your preteen what is wrong, before you offer to help.
- Communicate a positive attitude about the changes of puberty to your preteen. Reassure your preteen that these changes are normal and occur at different times for each person.
- Support your preteens desire to become independent by encouraging him/her to make decisions, try new things and grow as a person.

Questions often asked by pre-teens:

- Are my breasts too small? Will they grow?
 - When can I shave my legs/ underarms?
 - Why do I have sudden erections?
 - Why is my voice cracking?
 - How can I tell if I’m really in love?
 - Am I normal?

Recommended Reading: “But I’m Almost 13!”

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