

Concerns Boys Have About Puberty

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Puberty is the time in your life when your body starts changing from that of a child to that of an adult. While there's no "right" time for puberty to begin, girls usually start a little earlier than boys—usually between 8 and 13 years of age. Puberty for boys usually starts at about 10 to 14 years of age.

Girls are not alone in experiencing stress over the way their bodies are changing. Boys have pubertal concerns and worries, too, including:

Voice Change. As your larynx (or voice box) enlarges and the muscles or vocal cords grow, your voice may "crack" as you speak. While this can be embarrassing and annoying, it's a normal part of the growth process.

Wet Dreams. Boys may awaken in the morning with damp pajamas and sheets. These "wet dreams," or nocturnal emissions, are caused by an ejaculation, not urination, that occurs during sleep; they are *not* an indication that you were having a sexual dream. You cannot prevent it from happening. Wet dreams are just part of growing up.

Involuntary Erections. During puberty, boys get erections spontaneously, without touching their penis and without having sexual thoughts. These unexpected erections can be quite embarrassing, especially if they occur in public—at school, for example. Even though you may feel embarrassed, try to remember that unless you draw attention to it, most people won't even notice your erection. These unexpected erections are normal and are a sign that your body is maturing. This happens to ALL boys during puberty; with the passage of time they will become less frequent.

Breast Enlargement. Many boys experience swelling of the breasts during the early years of puberty. Most often, you may feel a flat, button like bump under one or both nipples. Your breasts may also feel tender or even painful. After a few months—sometimes longer—the swelling will disappear; you will NOT develop true breasts.

One Testicle Lower than the Other. Uneven testicles, although they may be embarrassing in the boys' locker room, are both normal and common.

Hair: During puberty, soft hair starts to grow in the pubic area (the area between your legs and around your penis). This hair will become thick and very curly. You may also notice hair under your arms and on your legs. Boys might get hair on their faces or chests. Shaving is a personal choice. However, if you shave, use only an electric shaver.

Zits: Another change that happens during puberty is that your skin gets oilier and you may start to sweat more. This is because your glands are growing too. It's important to **wash every day** to keep your skin clean, and to **use a deodorant or antiperspirant to keep odor and wetness under control**.

Don't be surprised, even if you wash your face every day, that you still get pimples. This is called acne, and it's normal during this time when your hormone levels are high. Almost all teens get acne at one time or another. Whether your case is mild or severe, there are things you can do to keep it under control. For more information on controlling acne, talk with your pediatrician.

Curves and Muscles: As you go through puberty, you'll get taller, your shoulders will get broader, and as your muscles get bigger your weight will increase. Sometimes the weight gain of puberty causes girls and boys to feel so uncomfortable with how they look that they try to lose weight by throwing up, not eating, or taking medicines. This is not a healthy way to lose weight and may make you very sick. If you feel this way, or have tried any of these ways to lose weight, please talk with your parents or your pediatrician.

Does size matter? The size of your penis has nothing to do with manliness or sexual functioning.

Privacy: As you approach and enter puberty, it is normal to become more modest while you bathe, or change clothes. Ask your parents and siblings to respect this desire for privacy, not only as it relates to your body but also in other aspects of life as well, such as not reading your mail and remembering to knock before entering your room.

It is also normal to become more sensitive about your body image during this time. For many boys, the interest in grooming increases, and you may become more self-conscious about your appearance.

Parents should avoid even good-natured teasing about your pubertal development. Because most teens feel self-conscious during this time, they will become embarrassed if they are kidded about the changing shape of their bodies or their deepening voices. If your parent or parents are teasing, politely ask them to refrain from doing so.

New Feelings: In addition to all the physical changes you will go through during puberty, there are many emotional changes as well. For example, you may start to care more about what other people think about you because you want to be accepted and liked. Your relationships with others may begin to change. Some become more important and some less so. You'll start to separate more from your parents and identify with others your age. You may begin to make decisions that could affect the rest of your life. At times you may not like the attention of your parents and other adults, but they too are trying to adjust to the changes that you're going through.

Masturbation

Masturbation marks a young person's sexual awakening. A boy may experience nocturnal emissions before he learns to masturbate, but "wet dreams," as they're known, occur *involuntarily* while he is asleep. Masturbation is a *conscious* act of self-stimulation for the purpose of achieving sexual pleasure.

In one study of fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds, three-fourths of the boys and more than half the girls admitted to masturbating. Pediatricians believe that the real figures are substantially higher, particularly for boys. There's an old joke that 99 percent of teenage boys masturbate and the other 1 percent lie about it. That's probably closer to the truth.

The only potential consequence to masturbation is skin irritation, and possibly discomfort during urination, if done excessively. Otherwise, any of the allegedly dreadful consequences you might hear attributed to masturbation (insanity, blindness, acne) are pure bunk.

Nevertheless, boys can feel conflicted about the practice. On the one hand, they know that it feels good, but for boys the sight of semen is often unnerving at first, especially early ejaculations, which may be tinged with blood. Children who grow up in religions and/or cultures where masturbation is still regarded as wrong may feel guilty that they enjoy doing it.

However, masturbating is normal human behavior, and nothing to be ashamed of. By the way, not masturbating is normal too.