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## TEACHING GUIDE



### MEET THE NEW YOU! For Girls

No. 9570

Recommended for Grades 3-5

You asked and we delivered! This introduction to puberty includes new music, new information and a fresh, new take on the changes coming soon for girls! Prepare your youngest student with the basics of puberty.

Topics include:

- When to expect the onset of puberty
- Physical and emotional changes
- Menstruation
- The importance of good hygiene, nutrition, exercise and sleep
- Self-esteem

## SCRIPT

GIRL 1: New!

GIRL 2: New!

GIRL 3: New!

ALL GIRLS: NEW!

Everyone loves something new. New clothes, new shoes, new songs, or . . . making new friends, or . . . starting a new school year. New things . . . are exciting!

And the world and nature is always changing, always starting anew. Springtime brings new flowers; winter brings new snow; summer brings new adventures; and fall brings new color to the leaves.

And how about . . . YOU? Do you feel new? Well, you're reaching an age where physical changes and all sorts of new feelings will start happening to you. This is a very special time in your life. And that time has a name! It's called PUBERTY!

Your body is going to start going through some very interesting developments. Some of these changes can be a little embarrassing – and challenging! But most will be very exciting and new! It's time . . . to Meet the New You!

**Puberty – whoa, that word kind of scares me.  
What does it mean?**

Puberty is the word that describes the time when the human body changes from a child into an adult. Puberty for girls can begin at any time between the ages of 8 and 16. And it usually starts a little earlier for girls than for boys.

Puberty happens at different times for different people. It can start early for some girls and much later for other girls. There is a wide range of normal, and YOU will start puberty when YOUR body is ready. And don't worry, not all of the changes happen suddenly, or at the same time.

During this time you'll start to develop the physical traits of a female adult. Your height and weight will increase and you'll start to look like a young woman. Your breasts will begin to develop and may become more sensitive. Hair will start to grow under your arms, on your legs and in the pubic area. Your hips will begin to round out as the bones of your pelvis widen.

### **How does my body know when to start puberty?**

Your body is an amazing machine, with many different systems to make it function. One of the most important systems is the glandular system.

Glands in your body make substances you need to grow and to live. There are oil glands, sweat glands, and glands that help you digest your food. Some glands produce chemicals called hormones that act like messengers in the body. They travel from the glands to other parts of the body where they help control how cells and organs do their work.

One of the most influential glands is the pituitary gland, which is located at the base of your brain. The pituitary gland controls many important functions, including growth and development. The hormones from the pituitary gland are what trigger the growth spurt and the many changes that start during puberty.

### **I can see the changes that happen OUTSIDE my body, but what are the changes that are happening INSIDE my body?**

Let's take a look! The pituitary gland produces hormones that cause changes to occur in organs that are located in your pelvic area. These organs are the uterus, the ovaries and the Fallopian tubes. The uterus is a muscular organ, located in the center of the abdomen. On each side of the uterus are the ovaries. The ovaries are connected to the uterus by the Fallopian tubes. The uterus leads to the vagina, a hollow tube that connects the uterus to the outside of the body.

The opening of the vagina is located between the legs, between the urethra and the anus. The job of the urethra is to discharge liquid waste as urine. The job of the anus is to discharge solid waste as a bowel movement.

During the month, the uterus builds up a soft lining of blood and tissue. Every 26 to 32 days, the uterus sheds this lining of blood and tissue, and it flows out of the body through the vagina. This process is called menstruation, and the days during which it happens are called a period. Having your period means that you are growing up and it happens to every girl.

**I'm getting taller and gaining weight.  
Do these changes mean that I'll be  
having my first period soon?**

Not necessarily. Every girl is different; every girl starts and goes through puberty on her body's own schedule. Some girls may have their first period soon after they see the first signs of puberty. But for other girls, it may be 1 or 2 years later. Don't worry – you can't hurry puberty and you can't slow it down. All of these changes, including the start of your first period, will begin when your body is ready.

When your period first starts, you will notice a small amount of blood in your underwear. Don't be alarmed. Tell your parent, guardian, or the school nurse, and they will help you.

During your period, the flow of blood must be absorbed. When you first start your period, it is best to use pads, which attach to the inside of your underwear with self-adhesive strips. Pads are comfortable, and they can't be seen through your clothing. Some girls use tampons to absorb the flow of menstrual blood. Instead of being worn like a pad, a tampon is placed inside the vagina.

**Which is better to use, pads or tampons?**

It's best to use a pad when your period first starts,

until it becomes regular, and you learn your body's cycle. You should talk to your parent, or the school nurse, about tampon use, and what is best for you.

Pads or tampons should be changed several times a day. The used pad or tampon should be wrapped in toilet tissue and placed in a special waste container in the restroom. Please remember, pads and tampons should never be flushed down the toilet. It's also a good idea to carry a pad or tampon with you in case you start menstruating when you're away from home. You can avoid some surprises by keeping pads or tampons in your purse, backpack or locker at school.

At first your menstrual period may not be regular, but eventually, you can expect to menstruate about once a month for about three to seven days.

### **Will I feel OK during my period?**

Your menstrual period shouldn't prevent you from enjoying your usual activities, including most sports. Physically you should feel fine during your period, although you may have mild abdominal cramps. Usually these cramps can be eased by a heating pad, but staying active is the best way to relieve discomfort.

Some days you may have a headache, feel hungrier than usual, or a little moody or tired. Your breasts may feel sensitive, or you may have a bloated feeling – like your clothes won't fit. You may experience some of these symptoms, or you may not have any symptoms at all.

If you are experiencing some of these symptoms, here are a few things you can do to help you feel better:

Exercise regularly.

Limit drinking caffeinated drinks like colas.

Avoid salt.

Check with a parent or guardian to see if you can take an over-the-counter medication.

**It's a lot more important to me now to feel clean and take care of my appearance. Why is that?**

When you were a little kid and you played hard, you might have gotten sweaty and dirty. But you're older now. How you act, how you look, and, yes, how you SMELL, are very important in developing social skills and relationships.

During puberty, sweat glands in your body become very active. Hormones cause your body to produce more oils. These oils can combine with sweat and bacteria to cause . . . body odor.

It's important to take a shower or a bath every day, especially during your menstrual period.

Wash your body with soap and water. Be sure to wash your face, under your arms, your feet, and your private parts. It is also important to change your underwear and socks every day. Many girls also start to use an underarm deodorant or antiperspirant during puberty.

Wash your hair with shampoo whenever it needs it, but at least every two or three days. Clean hair looks nice and smells nice too. You should also brush your hair every day. Brushing keeps your hair neat.

You should brush your teeth once in the morning, after breakfast; and once in the evening, just before bed. Brushing your teeth keeps them strong and healthy, and makes your breath smell fresh. Use dental floss every day to clean between your teeth.

Puberty is also a time when some girls start to shave their legs and armpits for cosmetic reasons. But before trying this yourself, you should check with your parent or another trusted adult. They can show you how to avoid injuries. And remember don't ever share razors as it can spread disease.

**I wish I was taller!**  
**I wish I looked older!**  
**I wish my hair was different!**

Another important issue, especially for girls, is body image. Almost every girl wishes there were something different about her body. Keep in mind, the media (TV, movies, websites, and magazines) often create unrealistic images that girls try to live up to. They use special lighting, makeup, and digital effects to make models and actors look . . . well, perfect. And nobody's perfect! Part of growing up is being healthy and happy with who you really are, and what you really look like.

**Why do I get pimples?**  
**Is there anything I can do about it?**

You'll discover that your oil glands will begin to produce more oil, particularly on your face. With the increase in oil, it's likely you'll have to deal with some blemishes, such as pimples and blackheads. The best way to fight blemishes is to keep your skin clean. Wash your face gently with a mild soap and water or cleanser once or twice a day. Cleaning your skin more often than that can dry it out too much.

Keeping your hands clean and avoiding touching pimples will also help. Talk to your parent or school nurse about over-the-counter medications to treat pimples and blackheads.

**It seems like I'm hungry all of the time!**  
**Should I worry about gaining weight?**

Gaining some weight at this time in your life is normal! You're getting taller, and your shape is changing, so it's natural to weigh a little more. But being overweight is becoming a big problem for some young people. The main cause of this is too many sugary and fatty foods, and not enough exercise.

It's important to know what foods are good for your body, and to eat a variety of those foods. A healthy diet, combined with regular exercise (sports, swimming, running, even taking a walk) will help you feel your best, and keep a proper weight for your height and body type.

When you're thirsty, there are lots of different choices. But the best choice for your body – the best way to relieve your thirst – is to drink plenty of water! Sports drinks can be used if you've been exercising especially hard. Fruit juice has lots of calories, and, of course, soda pop is bad for your bones and teeth and has too much sugar and caffeine. Water is still the best choice.

### **How much sleep should I be getting?**

The right amount of sleep is essential for success in school, sports, and life! Most kids need about 8 ½ to more than 10 hours of sleep each night. Unfortunately, though, many don't get enough sleep. Here are some tips to help you get the rest you need:

- Set a regular bedtime. Going to bed at the same time each night signals to your body that it's time to sleep. Waking up at the same time every day can also help establish healthy sleep patterns.
- Exercise regularly, but not too close to bedtime. Exercising in late afternoon can help you get a good night's sleep.
- Don't nap too much. Naps of more than 30 minutes during the day may keep you from falling asleep later.
- Avoid stimulants. Don't drink beverages with caffeine, such as soda and coffee.
- Relax your mind. Avoid scary or violent movies, TV shows, or books right before bedtime.

### **Some days are difficult and confusing. Who should I talk to when I have problems or questions?**

Big changes are happening to your body, inside and out. Along with these physical changes, there



are new emotions and feelings that will happen, too. One day you might feel happy, and the next day you might feel sad or really tired for no reason at all. You might find that some things get on your nerves, or make you angry, or make you feel frustrated. This is normal – even though some days it may be difficult to deal with.

It can really help to talk to an adult you trust and feel comfortable with. A parent or special caregiver can answer your questions, and help you discuss problems or difficult situations in your life. You might also talk to a school counselor or nurse, or a trusted teacher. These adults were kids once too, and they can give you advice and be good listeners.

**Sometimes I feel really awkward,  
and like everybody is staring at me.  
Why am I so self-conscious?**

Some days you might look in the mirror and think, “Who is that?” The changes to your body are happening so fast and this can make you feel self-conscious. You might think your feet are too big, or you’re getting too tall, or you’re still too short, or you’re changing too fast, or not changing fast enough! Take a deep breath – everyone your age is going through these changes, too. Give it some time – you will get used to this brand new you!

Do you know what “self-esteem” means? Self-esteem is how you see yourself! It’s about how good, and how valuable you think you are. It’s about liking yourself.

This is a good time to get to know yourself better. Try out new things – you might be surprised at what you’re good at. You’ll discover new things that make you feel happy and fulfilled. And you’ll learn that making other people happy can make you happy too.

Another thing you can do to feel better about your body, and about yourself, is to get plenty

of exercise. If you enjoy sports – that’s great. Find a team that works for you. If sports aren’t your thing, there are still a lot of fun ways to get exercise. Even taking a walk can give you the exercise you need. 60 minutes a day, all or most days of the week, will make you feel better, look better, maintain a healthy weight, and have more energy.

**Spending time with my friends is becoming more and more important to me.**

Spending time with your friends, caring about what they think about you and wanting to fit into social groups will all increase during puberty. Peer pressure, pressure to do what your friends are doing, can happen a lot during this stage of life, and most people don’t like to feel excluded.

When problems with your friends or your classmates arise, this is another good time to have a trusted adult you can talk to. A parent, guardian, school nurse or counselor can give you good advice about how to handle tough or confusing situations. And if things get really difficult, if you are bullied or intimidated, you have the right to be protected. Tell your parents or school counselor about any dangerous situations. They’ll help you figure out the best way to make it stop!

As you become a young adult, you’ll find out it’s a big world out there. And with all the new changes that are happening to you, you’ll find out that your world is full of new experiences and new adventures. Make good choices, make good friends, and get to know yourself. You will discover new abilities, new talents, and new possibilities that you never could have imagined when you were younger.

MEET THE NEW YOU!

*The End*

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## VOCABULARY

Abdomen	Peer Pressure
Anus	Pelvic Area
Bacteria	Pimples
Blackheads	Pituitary Gland
Blemishes	Puberty
Fallopian tubes	Self-conscious
Glandular System	Self-esteem
Hygiene	Sweat Glands
Hormones	Urethra
Menstrual Cycle	Uterus
Ovaries	Vagina

## INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To describe the physical changes girls will experience during puberty.
2. To promote healthy habits during puberty.
3. To stress the importance of good hygiene.
4. To explain the menstrual cycle.
5. To describe emotional changes girls may experience during puberty.
6. To promote self-esteem and healthy body image.

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. Encourage students to become familiar with the terminology and concepts of puberty by labeling prepared illustrations or discussing the basic biology and function of the parts that make up the female reproductive system.

2. Invite students to write down information they have learned about puberty from various sources, such as a friend or sibling. Use the information to create a “Fact or Fiction” information sheet about puberty.
3. Puberty is a time in life when girls can become overwhelmed with the changes in their lives. Have students identify ways to deal with these changes in a positive way. Volunteering, physical activity, music and art are some examples of positive ways to relieve stress and increase self-esteem.
4. Long-term goals may seem far away and unattainable at this age. Encourage students to list short term goals that can be accomplished now that may lead to long-term goals. Volunteering at your local Zoo or Humane Society could be an excellent short-term goal for students interested in becoming a veterinarian!
5. Puberty can be a great time to try new things and learn new skills. It’s a time for getting to know yourself better. Give students some time to think about themselves and to assess some strong points. Doing so is an important part of growing up and preparing for a productive and satisfying future. Have students make a list of things they are good at to keep as a reminder.
6. Bullying can be a problem at any age, but can be even more prevalent during puberty. Role-play situations of bullying and techniques for alerting a trusted adult. Make sure to include the four sides of bullying (person being bullied, bully, by-stander, person who intervenes) in your role-play.

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