

TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT BODY CHANGES

As your child grows up, they will go through puberty. This happens at different times for each child. You may see body changes when your child is in the later years of elementary school or in middle school. Puberty can be a very awkward part of your child's life. You can help your child get ready for these changes by talking to them early.

What happens when my child goes through puberty?

Your child will begin growing at a faster pace. Your child's body will start to look more mature and their voices may change. It is normal for them to become more conscious of their bodies and curious about their sexuality. They may also develop acne, or pimples, on their face and body. Your child will also sweat more and smell differently. They will grow body hair. If you have a daughter, she will get her first period during puberty.

Why is it important to talk to your child about puberty?

Puberty is natural and it happens to all children. You want to prepare your child for the changes they will go through. You also want to reassure them that puberty is normal, even if they feel different. Puberty will change how your child looks and feels. This can be scary for them. If puberty isn't talked about, your child may feel alone and out of place.

What can I say to my child?

- Build healthy hygiene habits from a young age. Teaching your child to bathe with soap and focus on sweaty areas will help them keep good hygiene as they go through puberty.
- Explain to your child that using deodorant, bathing, and wearing clean clothes is important. It will help them feel fresh and clean. It will also control smells that start developing because of puberty.
- If you have a daughter, you can teach to use feminine care products for her period. You can teach her to check and change her pad often. You can also help her take care of accidents by having her extra pads and spare underwear.
- Tell your child that their body is going through changes. You can explain to them what will happen. Remember to let them know that these are normal changes. Remind them that all children go through puberty. But it can happen at different times and speeds for each child.
- Help your child understand that bodies come in different shapes and sizes. During puberty kids become more conscious of their bodies. Body image can affect their self-esteem. You can help your child see their own body as beautiful.
- Let your child know it's OK to ask questions. As a parent, you can be a great teacher. Answering questions honestly can make puberty less scary for kids. If you don't know the answers be honest and tell your child you can find out for them.