

## Need help with the puberty talk?

### **You don't have to tackle this subject alone.**

You can provide your child with access to puberty and development books from a bookstore or local library to get the conversation started. Just make sure you read the books first to make sure they are appropriate for your child and communicate in a tone that works for your family. Then allow your child to read them independently. Encourage boys to read chapters about their development and changes happening to girls, and vice versa. Then, come back together as a family to ask kids what questions they have about what they've read.

**If you have any concerns about your child's development, reach out to their health care provider. They can evaluate your child and determine if they're developing properly.**



## Puberty

### **Talk about puberty with your child before it starts.**




WithinReach

Call the WithinReach Help Me Grow Washington  
Hotline at **1-800-322-2588** (711 TTY relay)  
or [www.ParentHelp123.org](http://www.ParentHelp123.org)



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DOH 820-278 June 2024

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## What is puberty?

Puberty is the period of time in your child's life when they transition from a child to an adult (capable of sexual reproduction). Not everyone will go through puberty at the same time. Puberty for girls usually starts between the ages of 8 and 13. Boys begin puberty sometime between the ages of 9 and 14.

## What are the signs of puberty?

- The first physical signs of puberty include oily skin, acne, and body odor.
- Girls and boys may grow body hair in the armpit and pubic area and facial hair (in boys).
- Girls may start breast development and boys may have testicle and penis enlargement.
- Girls will typically start their period (menstruation) around age 12 (usually around the same age their mother's and sisters' periods began).



## Will my child learn about puberty at school?

Yes. In Washington schools, required sexual health education begins in grades 4 to 5.

As a result, your child will:

- Gain a basic understanding of human growth and development.
- Understand and respect personal boundaries.
- Learn how to develop healthy friendships.

You can check with your child's school district to see what curriculum is currently used or planned for use.



## How do I talk to my child about puberty?

Parents should have a conversation with their child about puberty before the changes start happening to their body. Here are some helpful tips to get started:

- Look for natural opportunities (driving in the car, doing chores, or taking a walk) to start a conversation in your day-to-day life.
- Encourage your child to come to you with their questions about body changes and development as they arise.
- Adopt a tone that's calm, supportive, and informative rather than anxious or hurried. You want to show that you are comfortable and prepared to discuss whatever your child may be wondering. If you seem awkward or uncomfortable, children pick up on that sense and may not feel comfortable coming to you to ask questions again.
- Keep your answers simple and use the proper terms. By approaching the topic in a straightforward, factual manner, you help kids understand they don't need to feel embarrassed or ashamed about the very normal changes happening to their bodies.
- It's okay for a parent of a different gender to talk to a child about puberty, as long as they are comfortable with the subject, which in turn can help a child feel comfortable asking questions.