

Girls and Puberty

Adolescence includes puberty, physical changes, a change in thinking ability, and all the social and emotional changes that happen during this stage of life. It lasts roughly from age 9 until adulthood. Adolescence can be an exciting time and a tough time in a girl's life.

Puberty starts at the beginning of adolescence and is the time when hormones begin to change and a girl matures physically into a young woman. She develops breasts and her hips widen. Like boys, she experiences increases in height and weight, pubic and body hair, and she also begins menstruating (period). Her brain is also maturing while her body is changing. It is during puberty that the female reproductive organs mature and the body becomes ready for reproduction. Once a girl's reproductive organs begin maturing, she can get pregnant if she has sex.

There is a "master" gland in a female that controls all of this development. It's called the pituitary gland. It's located in the brain and is about the size of a pea. The pituitary gland produces hormones that cause the ovaries to produce the female sex hormone. These hormones cause some of the physical changes that turn a girl's body into a young woman's body.

To learn about a female's reproductive organs, visit [Female Reproductive System](#). This can help you know about the changes your daughter's body will go through.

Girls go through many physical and emotional changes during puberty. Both boys and girls begin to feel more and more independent. So it's important to talk to your daughter a lot during this time to help her understand her changing body and her maturing brain. It's a good time to talk about what you expect, about her goals and how her choices will affect her future. It is important for you to always be there for your daughter. She needs to feel comfortable talking with you. And your teen daughter is looking to you to model responsible behavior - something especially important during the teen years.

Revised: April 2008

Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Physical Changes During Puberty for Girls

- Breasts develop.
- Height and weight increase.
- Hips and waist become more defined.
- Menstruation begins.
- Mood changes may occur.
- Body hair grows in the pubic area, under the arms, and becomes thicker on the arms and legs.
- Muscles become stronger.
- Fat tissue normally increases.
- Vocal cords get thicker and longer.
- Sweat and oil glands become more active, and body odor changes.
- Acne may develop.
- Reproductive system matures.