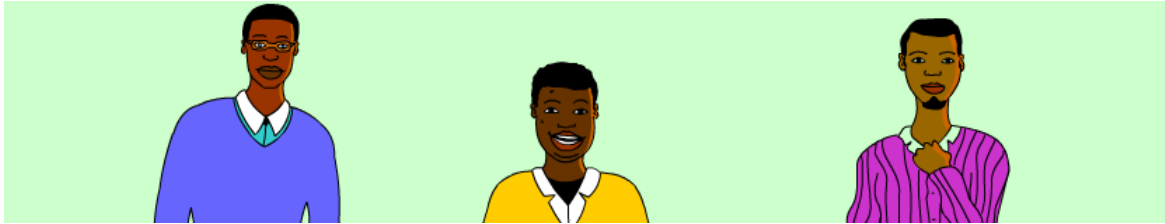


# FACTSHEET: WHAT HAPPENS TO BOYS IN PUBERTY?



## Growing up.....What happens to my body?

You are now at an age of growing up. Your body and mind are changing and you will experience emotional ups and downs and new feelings. We call this puberty. Puberty starts for most boys when they are around 13 years old and continues until they are about 18 years old. But sometimes it starts earlier or later and takes longer or shorter. Don't worry, it's all quite normal.

**In puberty your body is going to change... Let's read what is happening.**

### **Growing very fast**

The first thing you will notice is that your hands and feet are starting to grow. But your body will also grow. You will notice your shoulders will become bigger, same with your chest. Some boys suddenly get small breasts. You may feel very embarrassed, but actually this can happen with many boys. And this is only temporary. Don't worry, this will disappear soon.

### **Hair everywhere**

First short and soft hairs will appear between your legs and around your genitals. Later this hair will become dark and curly. We call this pubic hair. Under your armpits also hair will grow. The same is happening on your legs. And after some time short hairs will appearing on your face, first on your upper lip, then on your chin and cheeks. Much later you will also get hair on your chest.

### **Sweating**

You tend to sweat more under your arms. That's normal, but you have to take care of your body hygiene. So wash yourself every day and change your clothes in time.

### **A different voice**

Your voice is changing. Sometimes your voice sounds suddenly lower but then it becomes high again. It happens because the 'Adam's apple' in your throat is growing bigger, stretching the vocal cords which makes your voice sound lower.

### **Pimples and spots**

Some young people get pimples on their cheeks and spots on their noses. Clean your face every day and don't touch the pimples with dirty nails or hands.

### **Wet dreams**

Hormones will be produced in your body and these hormones cause changes; not only on the outside of your body but also on the inside.

Your feelings become stronger when you think about sexuality or look at something that excites you. This is normal at your age and many boys (and also girls) have the same feelings.

These hormones will start the production of semen in the boy's body. And one day (but most of the time this happens during your sleep) this semen suddenly comes out of your penis. This is called an ejaculation. An ejaculation can happen when masturbating or spontaneously, for instance in your sleep when you dream of sexual things (about a girl or boy); this is called a wet dream. Dreaming of sexuality and having wet dreams are normal occurrences, it happens to everyone. During puberty, however, it can happen more often because of the production of hormones. This dreaming happens involuntarily (you cannot control it) and it is not bad. It is normal.

### Did you know some people have wrong ideas about wet dreams?

**\* Some think: Girls do not get wet dreams.**

Not true! Although it is less common than for boys, girls can have wet dreams too, only a girl doesn't ejaculate. When a girl has a wet dream, her body may produce a bit more vaginal discharge than she is used to. But usually a wet dream for a girl goes unnoticed.

**\* Some think: Someone who has a wet dream is always thinking of sex.**

Not true! A wet dream is a natural way to (for men) release stored sperm cells and the physical and mental tensions and emotions. This is not initiated by too much thinking about sex. By the way, a wet dream can also happen without dreaming of sex.

**\* Some think: Experiencing wet dreams is a sickness or makes you inhuman.**

No! Wet dreams are a normal part of every human being growing up. There's nothing you can do to control or stop wet dreams. Even if you have a lot of wet dreams, you aren't sick - there's nothing wrong with you!

**Remember these are myths! In spite of what you might hear from others, these are not true!**

### Sperm

When you ejaculate, semen comes out of the penis. The semen contains a spoonful of clear fluid with millions of invisible sperms in it. Every boy in puberty and every adult man continually produce sperm; it doesn't stop and there is always enough sperm. The semen and the sperm can only leave the body through the penis by ejaculation. For an ejaculation the penis has to have an erection.

### Erection

Erection of the penis means that the penis becomes hard and stiff. Boys experience erections all through their lives. Even babies can have erections. In puberty erections appear more often. An erection appears when a boy or man is thinking about sexuality or when he is touched or touches himself on sensitive parts of the body. But an erection can also happen in a scary or stressing situation. For instance when a boy has to present a lesson in front of the whole class or in a scary situation.

An erection of the penis does not always have to lead to or end with an ejaculation, the emission of semen from your penis. Many erections can dissolve or disappear by themselves or by forcing yourself to think of another situation. Counting difficult numbers in your head or finding distraction can help to make the erection disappear.

## What else is going to change during puberty?

### **Becoming independent**

In puberty your body is changing as the start of adolescence. Changes will happen in your behaviour as well as in your feelings. You want to become more independent. This period of becoming more autonomous and emotionally stable is called adolescence. Becoming more autonomous means you need less support from your parents and want to spend more time with your peers. Your friends and peers become more important for you.

### **Uncertain/non-confident**

Because you experience so many changes in and on your body, it can make you uncertain at times. You want to know how your peers perceive you and you doubt if they still like you.

### **Mood swings**

During puberty you can feel very happy but your mood can change suddenly. You may feel depressed or sad without an obvious reason. You start to reflect more about yourself, the world and other things. These mood swings are normal. During adolescence you will learn to cope with mood swings and become emotionally more stable.

### **Feelings of love**

During puberty you can feel attracted to girls. You like to watch girls and think about girls. You want girls to look at you and you hope they like you. Sometimes you fall in love with a girl. You feel nervous whenever you see her and you cannot stop thinking about her. Some young people feel attracted to the same sex, which makes them feel confused. Feelings of attraction to the opposite sex or the same sex are normal at your age. But you have to think carefully what to do with these feelings.



### **Friendly relationships with girls**

There are many misconceptions about friendships with someone from the opposite sex. Friendship doesn't have to finish in sexual behaviour or early marriage. Friendship with the opposite sex is possible, also during puberty. Boys and girls can learn a lot from each other as long as they treat each other as equals and respect each other's feelings and limits. In a good friendship boys and girls support each other and do not expect more. Friends protect and support each other and do not force their friend to do something against his/her will.

### **Sexual relationships**

To many people having sex means having intercourse. But sex means so much more, such as feelings, thoughts, beliefs and values. Some of the sexual activities people engage in can be: holding hands, kissing, having fantasies, petting, masturbation, oral sex and sexual intercourse. And sometimes people do not act, but only fantasize about all these things. Be aware of the consequences and the impact a sexual relation can have on your life and future. Make up your mind first before acting.

### **Masturbation**

Masturbation is a way to deal with your sexual feelings in an individual way. Many people, young or old, married or not married, masturbate, and some people do not. Masturbation is NOT harmful for your health. It helps you to release sexual feelings. Masturbation is normal in every man's or woman's life, also in puberty and there is no need to feel ashamed or guilty about it. Boys masturbate more frequently than girls. Girls have to beware of sharp nails, dirty fingers or using sharp objects as these can be harmful to their bodies.

## Frequently asked questions

### 1. Is a wet dream a disease?

No, a wet dream is not a disease. It is normal and often happens during puberty. When a boy is dreaming involuntarily of sexual matters his penis gets erected and eventually he can have an ejaculation. Semen comes out of his penis while sleeping and this is called a wet dream. Because this happens during sleeping, the boy has no control over this. It is not possible to prevent wet dreams by any medication or treatment. Wet dreams are a normal process in all adolescent boys and adult men. It is not harmful at all.

### 2. Can girls have wet dreams?

Because a wet dream happens when someone is dreaming of something sexual, this can happen with girls also. But girls do not have a penis, so they cannot have an erection nor an ejaculation. That's why we do not call it a wet dream with girls. We do not have a word for girls who dream of sexual things. But they do.

### 3. Is masturbation harmful?

Masturbation is not harmful. It can be a relief for sexual feelings in your body. It can also be a way to explore your own body and your genitals. Many boys and men, young and old, married or not, masturbate, but there are also people who do not. Also some girls masturbate. During puberty the need to masturbate can be higher because you experience unusual and unexpected strong sexual feelings. If someone chooses to masturbate to relieve sexual urges, it is not harmful to do that. Even if this happens often. Masturbation will become a problem when it is excessive and disturbing your daily life and work.

### 4. How can I stop my sexual feelings?

Having sexual feelings is very normal in every human's life. When you are married or you have a sexual relationship, you can enjoy your sexual feelings with your wife or lover. But having sexual feelings is not always suitable in every situation. If you do not have a partner, if you have to do your homework or when you are busy with your daily activities, having sexual feelings can hamper this. A trick to decrease sexual feelings can be to distract yourself by having physical exercise, like sports. Or to concentrate on your studies. Or to meet friends. It means distracting your attention from sexual issues to physical and mental energy can help.

### 5. What is a normal size for a penis?

The size of the penis will change during puberty. Not only in length, but also in width. Many boys wonder if the size of their penis is normal or not. First of all, it's important to realize that every penis is different, so try not to compare yours with others. Try not to compare your penis with the images you may see on the internet or on videos, because these are of an unusual size and appearance most of the time. Secondly, it's important to know that a penis in non-erection may be small, but in erection it may have the average size of the penis of many boys and men. And thirdly, it is good to know that the average size of the penis differs in different cultures. The average size of the penis varies from 3.5-3.9 inches when non erected to 5-6 inches when in erection. And the most important thing to remember is that size does not matter to have and give sexual pleasure.