

PUBERTY

Quick Lesson

4-6
Elementary

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LEARNER OUTCOME¹ W-4.3:

Describe physical, emotional and social changes that occur during puberty; e.g., menstruation, secondary sexual characteristics, changing identity and moods.



MATERIALS:

1. HANDOUT: "They Tell Me I'm Going Through Puberty"
2. CARDS: Boys/Girls/Both
3. ANSWER KEY: Puberty Changes



INTRODUCTION:

This lesson plan provides teachers with a quick and easy approach to puberty for elementary grade children. It may be used as an introduction to puberty or as a review of physical changes and practical coping strategies. Teachers may want to supplement this lesson with some of the more comprehensive plans available on the website.

Puberty is a time of change and growth that can be both exciting and frightening. This lesson will give students the opportunity to learn about the basic physical changes that occur during puberty. Students will learn that boys and girls have similar and different experiences during puberty. They will have the opportunity to discuss the changes that are similar and unique to each gender. Students will also learn to identify positive coping strategies during puberty.



Keep in mind that students with differing abilities are also going through physical, emotional, and social changes. They may have very different interpretations or concerns with regards to what is happening with their bodies. Please visit the differing abilities lesson plans to access a series of lessons you can adapt to meet the needs of students with differing abilities.



APPROACHES/STRATEGIES:

NOTES:

A. Ground Rules

Ensure ground rules are established before beginning this lesson. For classes that have already established ground rules, quickly reviewing them can promote a successful lesson.

(5-15 min)

B. Puberty Discussion Questions

These discussion questions will help students identify puberty as a time of change and development.

1. What do we mean when we use the term puberty?
 - Changing from a child to a teenager is called “PUBERTY”. A teenager is sometimes called an “ADOLESCENT”.
 - Puberty happens to everyone.
 - You will begin to notice body changes, thought changes and relationship changes as you go through puberty.
2. Do boys and girls go through puberty at the same age?
 - The changes that you experience in puberty can happen to different people at different times, and can begin as early as 8 and continue until 18.
 - Girls usually experience puberty earlier than boys.
 - Each person has a body clock that is right for him/her. You can't decide when you want to go through puberty and you can't stop it happening. Everyone is different.

(5-10 min)



Girls usually begin puberty changes between the ages of 8 and 16. For boys this age range is 12-18. The changes are generally complete by the age of 18 for girls and 20 for boys. It is very important that you emphasize to students that everyone is different and there is no correct time for these changes to happen, their bodies will know when the changes should take place.

Students who notice signs of puberty earlier or later than their peers may feel embarrassed and uncomfortable with their changing bodies. This can be a difficult transition for some students, be sure to watch for and address signs of bullying with your students.

For more information and support to help stop bullying please visit:
<http://www.education.alberta.ca/teachers/safeschools/bullying-prevention.aspx>

C. They tell Me I'm Going Through Puberty

Students discover that puberty changes are similar between boys and girls.

1. Have students listen to “They Tell Me I'm Going Through Puberty” as you read Chris's story aloud.
2. When you are done, ask students this question:
 - Do you think Chris is a boy or a girl, or are you unsure?
3. Have students share their answers with a nearby classmate and discuss their reasons for choosing boy, girl, unsure.

(15-20 minutes)

D. Boys, Girls, Both

Students examine puberty changes and determine changes that are unique to one gender and changes that are common to both genders.

1. Post the following titles on the wall:
 - Boy
 - Girl
 - Both
2. Distribute the Boys/Girls/Both cards, one to each student, or have students take a card from a pile.
3. Students can work in pairs or alone to place each card under the title which best fits the puberty change described.
4. As a class, review the card placements, and make the necessary changes according to the Puberty Changes answer key. Explain changes that participants do not understand.
5. Refer back to Chris's story (re-read if time) and ask students this question:
 - How many of you (raise your hands) think Chris is a boy? A girl? Can't tell?
6. Follow up with a discussion emphasizing the following points:
 - No change that is happening to Chris would indicate one gender over another.
 - The changes happening to Chris are NORMAL and could happen to anyone.
 - The changes Chris is going through are all signs of puberty and will happen to different people at different times.



A very informative 27 page Booklet called *Growing Up Ok* by Alberta Health and Wellness about puberty can be accessed at:
<http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/growing-up-ok.pdf>

E. Coping With Body Changes (optional)

(20-25 min)

You may choose to use this activity in another session.

This activity encourages students to identify tools they can use to help with some of the more challenging aspects of puberty. The Puberty Kit is an optional tool that may be used to assist in teaching about puberty and personal hygiene.

Elementary Puberty Kit Contents & Discussion Points:

Active Living (Photo)

Physical and recreational activities such as sports, walking, having fun with friends outside, etc. improve energy, physical and mental wellbeing.

Antiperspirant and/ or Deodorant (Product)/Baking Soda in Box (Photo)

Can be used as an inexpensive, absorbent foot powder.

Ball Cap (Product)

Hats or caps can become dirty. Wash them or change hats to keep dirt from the face or hair. Hats are good protection from the sun's heat and damaging rays.

Bra (Product)

Girls can wear a bra for comfort as their breasts develop. Some boys develop breast tissue for a year or more, but this will usually go away.

Healthy Nutrition (Photo)

Eating healthy food choices improves energy, physical and mental well-being. Work towards increasing fruits, vegetables, and whole grains while minimizing high fat and high sugar foods and drinks.

Hot Water Bottle (Photo)

Exercise and warmth may help with menstrual cramps.

Jockey Short Boy's Cotton (Product)

Boys may choose to wear boxers or briefs. Cotton underwear allows the skin to "breathe" and keep moisture away from the body. Underwear should be comfortably loose. The scrotum moves close to or away from the body to adjust the temperature of the testicles, to promote the growth of healthy sperm. It is important to change underwear every day.

Menstruation Supplies: (Product X 5: Pad, Pad with "Wings", Pantiliner, Cardboard Tampon & Plastic Tampon)



It is important for the teacher to be familiar with the puberty kit's contents and discussion points for each item before the following activity.

Pads are available at pharmacies and grocery stores and come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Choose pads that are unscented. Pads attach to the inside of underwear by sticky strips. The wings wrap around the leg openings of the underwear. Pads catch menstrual flow. Keep pads in a backpack, locker or bag. Change and dispose of used pads often (wrap in toilet paper and put in the garbage.)

Pantliners are similar to pads. Used to catch light menstrual flow or vaginal discharge.

Tampons are best not to use until you are a teenager. Tampons need to be changed often (at least every 4 – 6 hours) and come with either cardboard or plastic applicators. To dispose of used tampons, wrap them in toilet paper and throw them into the garbage. You may need parental support to help remind you to remove them. Avoid super-absorbent tampons. Choose unscented tampons. Using tampons incorrectly could result in Toxic Shock Syndrome, a rare but serious infection.

Razor in Baggie (Product)

Some men shave their facial hair and some women shave the hair on their legs and underarms. Talk to your parents about what you should do.

Shampoo (Product)

Wash hair often to clean away the oil and dirt. Some people wash their hair every day, some less often.

Shaving Foam (Photo)

Shaving with moisture feels better. Some people use shaving foam, or soap and water.

Soap Unscented (Product)

A mild, unscented soap in bar or liquid form is used for showering or bathing daily and for washing the face twice daily. Scented, deodorant soaps can cause dry skin.

Sock (Product)

Wash feet and change socks every day. Occasionally, wash the insoles of shoes.

Toothbrush, Paste, and Floss (Product)

Brush and floss teeth at least twice a day. For fresh breath also brush the tongue.

T-Shirt Cotton (Product)

Natural fibers such as cotton allow the skin to “breathe”. Clothes made from these fabrics may be more comfortable to wear.

Underwear Girl's Cotton (Product)

Cotton underwear is more comfortable as this natural fiber allows the skin to “breathe”. Synthetic underwear (e.g., nylon, polyester, rayon) may not allow the skin to “breathe”. Some synthetic underwear and pantyhose have cotton crotches to allow moisture to leave the body. Trapped moisture could cause vaginal infections.

Wash Cloth (Product)

A clean washcloth or sponge can be used twice daily to wash the face with warm water and mild soap. No other skin care products are necessary unless advised by a doctor or parents.

Water Bottle (Product)

Drinking to thirst and more is important especially during physical activities and in hot weather. Plain water is the easiest and least expensive and doesn't cause tooth decay.

Don't share water bottles and other objects like lip balm, lipstick, and straws even with close friends or family members. These items can spread germs the mouth that could make you sick or give you an infection in or around your mouth.

Procedure:

1. Introduce the Puberty Kit. Tell the students that you are going to use it to teach them about the tools that they have to help them get through the challenging parts of puberty.
2. Have students brainstorm the changes that occur during puberty that could be challenging.
3. Have students (or pairs of students) choose an item from the kit. You may also give students items, which would allow you to be sensitive to student needs, or to cluster products (i.e., washing items such as shampoo, soap and washcloth could go together).
4. Have students brainstorm answers to these questions:
 - What is the item?
 - How would the item be used?
 - How does this item relate to puberty changes?
5. Inform students that each item in the kit relates to a puberty change, and that they will complete a handout after this activity that tests their knowledge about each item.
6. Students present each item to the class, with the teacher adding comments to the discussion. Use comments from the

overheads and the discussion points to enhance the discussion about items in the kit. Students who are unsure about what the item is or how it would be used can simply state that they do not know.

7. Allow students to pass the items around so they have a chance to examine them.
8. Debrief this activity using the following questions:
 - What items from the kit are most helpful for shaving? Menstruation? Preventing acne? Smelling good? Looking good? Feeling good?
 - Where can you find or buy most of the items in the puberty kit?
 - Who can you talk to about getting items in this kit?



QUESTION BOX:

(10 min)

Introduce the question box. You could have students fill out questions every lesson, or have students begin to think about questions that they might ask next lesson.



SELF REFLECTION:

- During the lesson, were:
- Ground rules being followed?
 - Good practices established regarding discussion?

What will you change for future classes with this group?

What will you change for future use of this lesson?



STUDENT ASSESSMENT:

During the lesson, did students:

- Knowledge:**
- Identify various changes that occur during puberty?
 - Categorize changes into those that happen to boys, girls or both?
 - Describe ways to cope with physical and emotional changes?
 - Identify who they can go to or where they can go to talk about puberty changes?
- Skills:**
- Demonstrate appropriate listening and speaking skills during class

- Attitudes:** discussion?
- Accept that change is a part of puberty?
 - Anticipate the changes that will occur during puberty?
 - Acknowledge that changes happen to everyone?

¹ Alberta Education. (2002). *Health and life skills guide to implementation: Kindergarten to grade 9*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.alberta.ca/media/352993/pos.pdf>