

# 4 YOU

Growing up – what's it all about?



# GROWING UP ...

## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

**You** may have noticed things about yourself and your friends that are starting to **change**. Changing **bodies**, changing **feelings**, changing **relationships**.

A stylized illustration of a diverse group of young people. In the background, a woman with dark skin and braided hair is on the left, and a man with light skin and short blonde hair is on the right. In the foreground, there are four more people: a woman with long brown hair on the left, a woman with dark skin and braided hair in the center, a man with orange hair and freckles on the right, and a woman with dark skin and short dark hair on the far right. The style is simple with bold outlines and flat colors.

Or maybe you're **not changing at all** – at least **not yet**.

This booklet gives you some facts about what to expect. And some ideas on how to cope if it doesn't happen quite like you thought it would.

Many of these changes have to do with sex. But what is sex?

Yes, you may already know it's about making **babies**. But it's a lot of **other** things as well.

It's easier to explain by looking at those **body changes** in more detail ...



**First, a word about words.** It's good to know about your body, and it's important to know the **names** for the parts you're learning about.

**But** there are many different words, and not all of the words you use with your family or friends will be liked or understood if you use them with other people.

The words in this booklet are generally understood by most people.



nipple  
breast

anus

**FEMALE  
GENITALS**

The **vulva** is the outer area between a girl's legs.

opening to the **urethra** (where urine comes out)

**clitoris** (sensitive bump)

**labia** (lips) surround the opening to the **vagina**

**pubic hair**

**A person's body changes throughout life.** But here we're talking about particular changes called **puberty**.

**Puberty** is when your body changes from being a child to a young adult.

**Puberty** usually starts **earlier in girls than boys**. In girls it can start as young as eight (but usually later), and continue until 15 or 16.

**The changes** happen because the body produces chemicals called **sex hormones**.

**Everyone** changes at their own **rate**. Sometimes it's hard not to compare yourself to other people but there's no need. **Everybody** gets there in the end.

nipple

MALE  
GENITALS

opening to the **urethra**  
(where urine comes out)

pubic hair

The **scrotum** is a bag that contains two **testicles**

penis

During **puberty**, a girl's body starts to change shape. **She** grows **taller** and **heavier**, and her hips and breasts get **bigger**.

The body starts to **sweat** more and the sweat is **smellier**, so girls need to **wash** more.

The **reproductive organs** inside a girl's body start to develop.

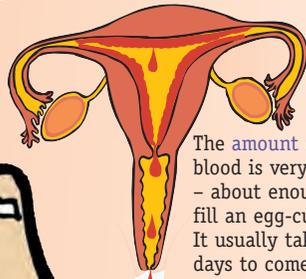
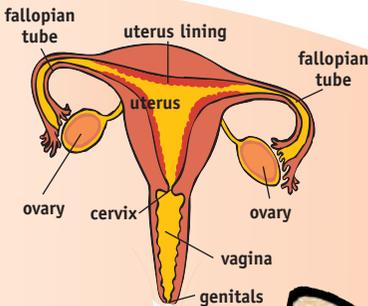
We can't see from looking at the outside of our bodies so let's have a look **inside**.

**Hair** grows in her **armpits** and around her **vulva**.

Puberty is also the time when changes happen **inside** your body preparing your body for having a baby one day, if you choose to. Each month a tiny **egg** (too small to see) is released from one of the **ovaries** and it moves down the **fallopian tube**.

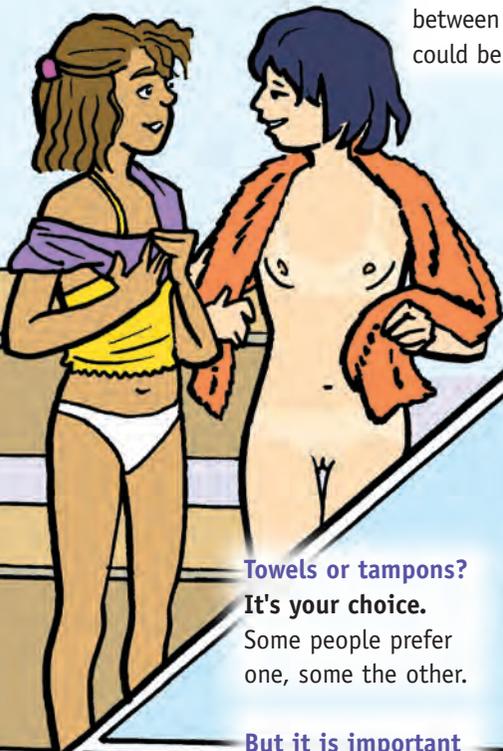
At the same time the lining of the uterus (**womb**) is becoming thick and soft. When your body knows that no baby is growing, the egg is re-absorbed into your body. The lining passes out of your body as **blood** through the vagina.

This is called **having a period**.



The **amount** of blood is very small - about enough to fill an egg-cup. It usually takes 4-5 days to come out.

**Starting your periods** can feel like a **big change**. For most girls it happens between the ages of 11 and 15 but you could be any age from eight to 18.



**Some** girls notice an increase in **vaginal discharge** about two weeks before each period. This may look like a creamy stain in their pants.

**To begin with** your periods might not come regularly but after a while they settle down and come about **once a month**.

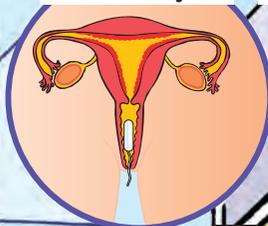
### **Towels or tampons?** **It's your choice.**

Some people prefer one, some the other.

**But it is important to be prepared.** So talk to a grown-up that you trust, maybe a parent, carer, or school nurse, about what's going to happen and what to do when it does.

**Tampons** fit inside the vagina and soak up blood before it leaves the body.

**Towels** stick to the inside of your pants. They soak up the blood as it leaves the body.



**Girls** and women use **sanitary towels** or **tampons** to soak up the blood. Towels and tampons have to be changed **every few hours**.



**Don't** flush a tampon or towel down the toilet as this may block it. **Wrap it up and put it in a bin**, if possible. At school, there may be a special bin for you to use. If you're not sure, ask your teacher or school nurse.



**In boys**, puberty usually starts later than in girls – after the age of ten or 11.

**A boy's voice** becomes deeper – this is known as 'breaking'.

**Hair** grows in various places on the body – including the **face**, **under the arms**, and **around the base of the penis**.

**The testicles** start to make millions of **sperm** every day. When sperm are ejaculated they swim around in a creamy fluid called **semen**.

**The body** starts to **sweat** more – and the sweat is **smellier** so boys need to wash more.

**The penis** gets **thicker** and **longer**, and the **testicles** get **bigger**.

Boys often worry that their penis isn't as big as other boys'. **Sizes do vary but not as much as people think.**

**Some men** are **circumcised** – the flap of skin round the end of the penis (**foreskin**) is cut away, often for religious reasons, when they are a baby.

uncircumcised penis

circumcised penis

If your penis is not circumcised, it's very important to clean under the foreskin. You should be able to pull the foreskin back to expose the head of your penis.

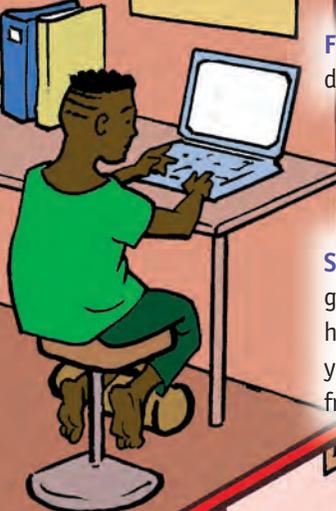
An **erection** is when the **penis stiffens and sticks out from the body**. This often happens for no reason at all or can happen when you think about people or see pictures that you like.

**Ejaculation** is when a **small amount of semen is squirted out of the erect penis**. The amount varies, but it's usually less than a teaspoonful.

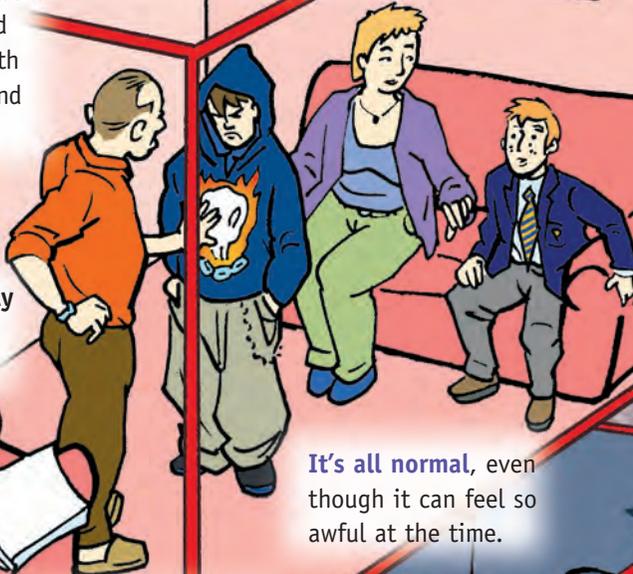
When ejaculation happens at night, during sleep, it is called a **wet dream**. Wet dreams are **completely natural**. Not everyone notices they have them.

**The penis** is also used for **urinating**, but urination and ejaculation **can't happen at the same time**.

**You** might want to talk to someone about what's happening to you. If your parents or your carer haven't already talked to you, try asking them. They may be embarrassed, and you may be too, but they'll probably be pleased you asked. You may also be able to talk to another relative, or an older friend or teacher. And you can always talk to the school nurse.



**Feelings!** It's not just a young person's body that changes during puberty – **minds and feelings change too.**

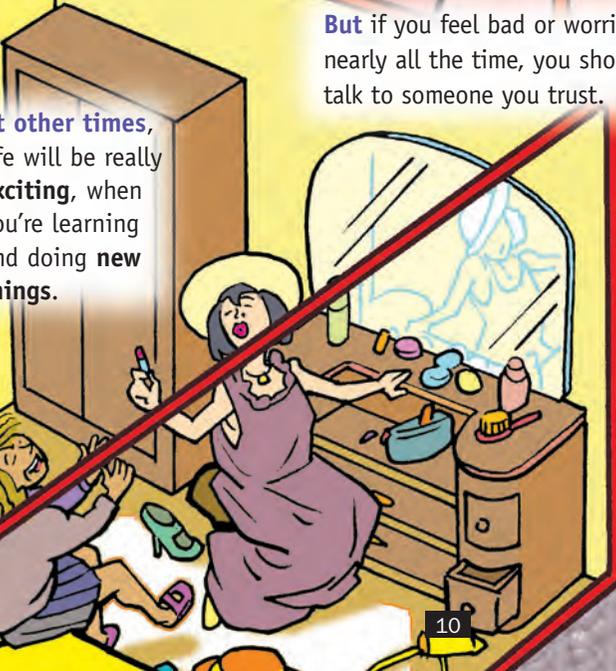


**You're** likely to have **emotional ups and downs.**

**Sometimes** you'll get **angry** and have **rows** with your family and friends.

**Or** feel **moody** and **totally fed up** – often for no particular reason.

**It's all normal**, even though it can feel so awful at the time.



**But** if you feel bad or worried nearly all the time, you should talk to someone you trust.

**At other times**, life will be really **exciting**, when you're learning and doing **new things**.



**SLAM!**

None of my family ever knocks before they come into my room and it makes me really MAD!

**Fancying** people is part of growing up. You may get exciting feelings when you think about them – and may imagine yourself kissing or being close to them. These are called **sexual feelings**.

**Sometimes** you fancy people you know. Sometimes you fancy someone famous. They may be the opposite sex from you, or the same sex.

**But** you can be good friends with lots of people without fancying them. Sometimes you may not fancy anyone at all.

**Masturbation** is when a person touches or strokes their own sexual organs because it feels good. (For a boy it's the penis, for a girl the clitoris.)

**Masturbation** is private. Some people masturbate, others don't. People of all ages may do it. Sometimes people disagree about it. Masturbation isn't harmful, and it can be a way to find out about sexual feelings and learn about your body.

Sometimes, it might seem like sex is everywhere and everyone's doing it ...

You hear sex talked about on TV and radio, in songs and conversations.

You see magazines and advertisements showing sexy people.

You hear jokes about sex, or people calling out horrible things.

Perhaps you've done this yourself.

Often people act this way because they're **embarrassed** about sex, or because they **don't understand** what they're saying, or because they think it's grown-up – **but it isn't.**

**Everyone** is curious about the world when growing up and it's natural to want to try things out. One day when you're grown up, you will probably want to have sex but this should be when you and a partner are both ready.

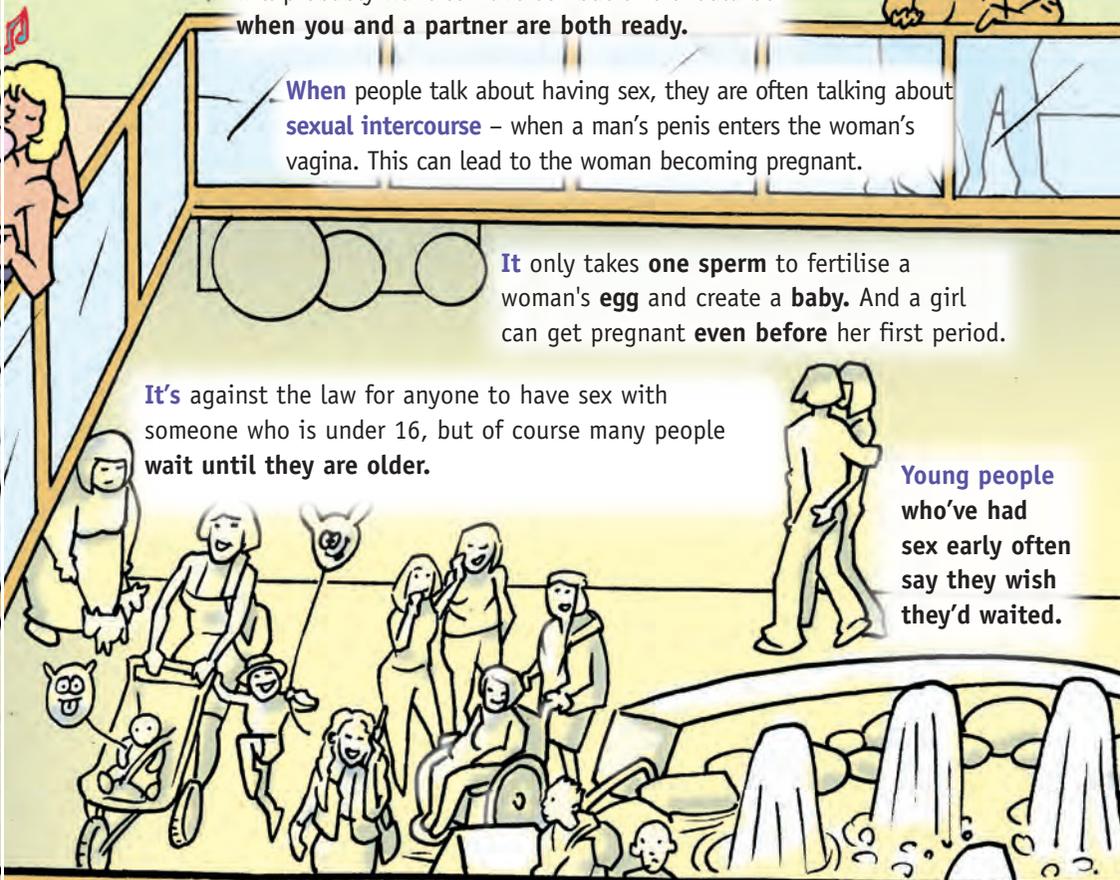


**When** people talk about having sex, they are often talking about **sexual intercourse** – when a man's penis enters the woman's vagina. This can lead to the woman becoming pregnant.

**It** only takes **one sperm** to fertilise a woman's **egg** and create a **baby**. And a girl can get pregnant **even before** her first period.

**It's** against the law for anyone to have sex with someone who is under 16, but of course many people wait until they are older.

**Young people** who've had sex early often say they wish they'd waited.



**Being grown-up about sex** is treating yourself and other people with respect, and not being afraid to ask for help if you need it or if you don't understand something.



**Sometimes** you'll hear things about sex that you're really not sure about.

**So** you need to be able to **check out** these things, and asking friends your own age isn't always the best way.

**It's great** if you can talk to a **parent** or your **carer**, but sometimes you can't. Other **family members** may be really helpful – **older brothers or sisters, uncles or aunts, grandparents**. There are other people too, perhaps a **teacher** or an **older friend** you trust. And you can always talk to a **school nurse**.

**Growing up and sex** are normal everyday parts of life that happen to everyone.

**Sometimes** sex can be scary. If you are touched in a bad way and forced into doing things you don't want to do, by anyone (even someone you know), get to a safe place as soon as you can and tell someone you can trust.

**Don't keep it a secret** – it's important to get help.



## A WORD TO PARENTS OR CARERS

**Did your parents talk to you?** If they didn't, do you wish they had? What do you wish they'd said? Giving your child the right information will help them make sense of growing up.

FPA has a range of publications to help parents talk with their children including

*Talking to Your Child about Sex and Relationships.*

*The Parents' Pack* contains the FPA leaflets for young people and *Talking to Your Child about Sex and Relationships.*

For more information contact FPA (see back page).

*Speakeasy* is an FPA course for mums, dads and carers of children of all ages. It can help you talk to your children about sex, relationships and growing up.

"My parents were always completely honest and open with me. I could always ask them questions."

"I want my children to know as much as I did."

"I was told some really funny ideas when I was young. It was years before I learnt how wrong they were!"

"I made some big mistakes in my life and I don't want my children doing the same thing."

**Ask your child's school about their sex and relationships education (SRE) policy and their approach to SRE.** If you have a daughter, ask the school about their facilities for coping with periods.

**You don't have to wait** until your children ask. Your children will be interested in **what you think.**

**MORE INFORMATION  
ABOUT SEX AND  
GROWING UP**



**USEFUL  
BOOKLETS**

**Periods – what  
you need to know**  
(aged 9+)

**4Girls** (aged 12+)

**4Boys** (aged 12+)



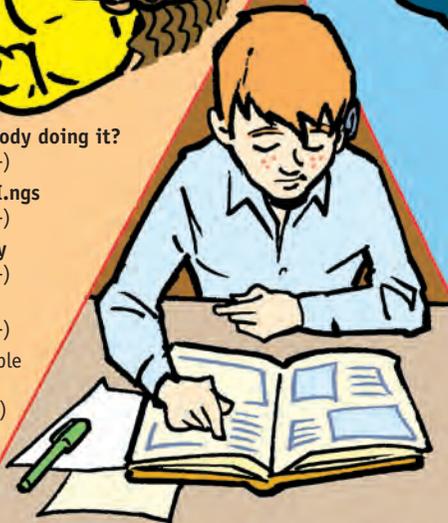
**Is everybody doing it?**  
(aged 12+)

**Love S.T.I.ngs**  
(aged 12+)

**Pregnancy**  
(aged 12+)

**Abortion**  
(aged 12+)

All available  
from FPA  
(see right)



**USEFUL BOOKS** – from school, libraries, bookshops.

**Let's talk about where babies come from** Robie Harris, Walker Books  
**Let's talk about sex** Robie Harris, Walker Books

And you'll probably be taught about sex and relationships at school,  
so make the most of **lessons** and all the different resources available.



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[www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk)

FPA has an online  
teaching resource for  
primary schools called  
**Growing up with  
Yasmine and Tom.**



The sexual health charity FPA.

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