

PUBERTY



What You Will Learn In This Chapter

- ☆ The definition of puberty
- ☆ What puberty feels like to an adolescent
- ☆ First signs of puberty in girls and boys
- ☆ Physical and physiological development in puberty
- ☆ Brain development during puberty
- ☆ Hormone changes during puberty
- ☆ Cognitive development during puberty
- ☆ Moral development during puberty
- ☆ Social development during puberty

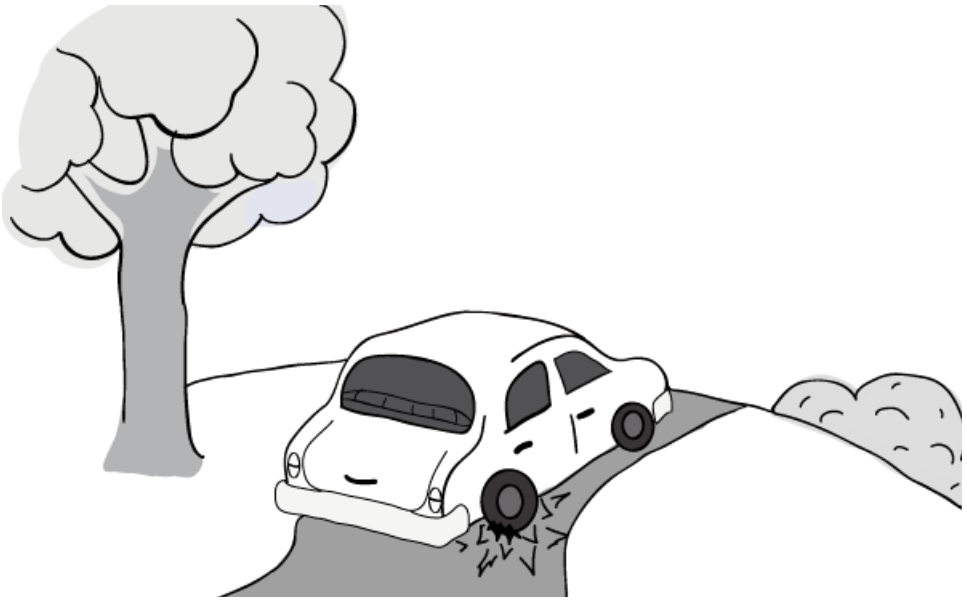
Think of yourself driving down the freeway. You are at the wheel of your car and you feel a sense of control and confidence. You are relaxed heading toward your destination. Then BANG . . . POP . . . BANG! Your back tire explodes. Your car shakes and begins to swerve. You hold on to the steering wheel and try to regain control. Your relaxed state is gone—replaced by fear and anxiety. Your confidence and sense of control has vanished. You find yourself struggling to pull the car to safety. You are no longer clear about your destination. Your goal at the moment is survival. All the cars on the freeway are moving around you. Some drivers seem aware of your dilemma and are trying to move out of your way to help you get to safety. Others seem oblivious to your crisis and are actually

hindering your safety and well-being. Your life has changed in an instant and you are doing your best to adjust to it.

This is what “puberty” is like for a great number of children. They are just going along in life. They are comfortable with their body. Life seems fine and then puberty begins. Everything about their body feels like it’s changing. It can be very scary and cause an enormous amount of anxiety, especially when adolescents don’t understand what is happening.

For some children it seems like puberty starts overnight. Other children become anxious because they feel like they are the only one in their class that hasn’t begun to change.

Puberty can be difficult either way and our job as parents is to help our children understand what is happening to their bodies so that we can normalize the changes and minimize the anxiety and fear.



PUBERTY CAN FEEL LIKE HAVING A TIRE BLOWING OUT ON THE FREEWAY.
AN ADOLESCENT’S SENSE OF SAFETY IN LIFE CAN BE CHANGED IN AN INSTANT.

Webster’s Dictionary[®] defines *puberty* as the stage of physical development when secondary sex characteristics develop and sexual reproduction first becomes possible. In common law, the age of puberty is generally fixed at fourteen for boys and twelve for girls.

According to the research presented in 2000 by the American Academy of Family Physicians, puberty may start in girls as early as six or seven years of age.

It usually begins around eleven years of age. In boys puberty may start as early as nine years of age, but it usually begins around twelve years of age. The process goes on for several years. The majority of girls seem to be physically mature between fourteen and sixteen years old. Boys seem to be physically mature by sixteen or eighteen.

The first signs of puberty in girls is usually breast development and in boys an increase in the size of their testicles and their penis. Menstruation usually happens last for girls. Acne and facial hair show up last for boys. With all of this said, some children demonstrate different patterns, and this doesn't mean that there is any reason for concern. Puberty runs both early and late in some families. A good rule of thumb is that if your daughter has not shown any breast development or your son has not shown any testicle development by the age of fourteen, bring your concerns up to your pediatrician. In most cases, there is no serious cause for late puberty. It's simply a variation of normal puberty, and no treatment is needed. In some cases, a medical cause is found and treated. Your job as the parent is to help your child understand the process and help them with their self-esteem throughout this period in their lives. Children's self-acceptance and self-confidence is directly related with the way they perceive their bodies.

This chapter is going to take a look at the various developmental stages which occur during puberty in order to help you help your child. This chapter will specifically look at the changes that are happening in your child's physical and psychological development, his cognitive development, his ethical and moral development, and his social development.

Physical And Physiological Development

Boys

During puberty boys can grow anywhere from two inches to a foot. It can seem like your son is growing every week. With this growth spurt, your son can feel actual growing pains in his body. Some boys put on weight prior to a growth spurt. Other boys seem to be able to eat anything, anywhere, at anytime, and not put on a pound. With your son's growth, you will notice a new body shape and configuration. A relative you haven't seen in a few years may even question if your son is the same boy he saw just a few years before. Many teenage boys develop a skin condition called acne during this time. This is hard on a young teen emotionally because a boy might have pimples on his face for years. During puberty a young boy's voice changes from the high pitched voice of a child to the lower voice of a young man. During this change, your son might often feel