



Puberty: Glossary of Terms

This is a glossary of terms that Staff and parents can refer to when having discussion with children. Children have the opportunity to ask questions in KS2 by writing down their question and placing it within a box for their teacher to look at before answering, anonymously, to the class. If the answer is not age appropriate or within the curriculum content for that year group then the child will be spoken to individually and encouraged to talk to a trusted adult at home.

Puberty: Glossary of terms

Acne –Spots or blemishes brought on by hormonal changes. Can usually be treated with creams, facial washes and ointment.

Anus –The small opening at the end of the rectum or bottom, where poo comes out.

Balls –see testicles.

Bra –Underwear to support the breasts.

Breasts –These develop and grow during puberty. Sometimes one can grow bigger than the other. Breasts come in all shapes and sizes, and can be round or flat, soft or firm. Breasts produce milk after childbirth, to feed a baby.

Cervix –The plug at the end of the vaginal passage and the start (neck) of the uterus.

Clitoris –Small, soft pea shaped bud which lies above the urinary opening. Very sensitive part of the body and when touched or rubbed.

Deodorant –Can help mask or prevent body odour but does not make up for daily washing, and changing and washing clothes often.

Discharge –it is normal for girls to have a slight clear or milky discharge from the vagina. This keeps the vagina healthy and can vary from day to day. Discharge can increase at ovulation (to help sperm swim up the vagina) and also during sex (to ease penetration). Thick, smelly discharge can be a sign of an infection and should be checked.

Ejaculation –Muscles in the base of the penis cause contractions, forcing semen to spurt out of the end of the penis. The muscle in the penis can contract between 3-15 times, ejaculating about a teaspoon of semen containing up to 300 million sperm!

Erection –An aroused, stiff/hard penis.

Emotions –Feelings we experience such as anger, joy, sorrow, loneliness, jealousy, happiness. Our feelings can change during puberty, with the release of new hormones and changes happening to our bodies and in our relations. It is normal to feel angrier and moodier during puberty.

Fallopian tubes –2 tubes which the ova (eggs) travel along to reach the uterus (womb).

Female Genital Mutilation –A procedure where the female genitals are deliberately cut, injured or changed, but where there's no medical reason for this to be done. It is done for cultural reasons, not religious and is illegal in the UK.

Foreskin –A sleeve of skin which covers the head of the penis. With an erection, the foreskin stretches, exposing the head of the penis. Sometimes foreskins can be too tight, causing painful erections but this can be sorted out. Some people have them removed for religious, health or cultural reasons.

Growth –Bodies grow a lot during puberty and we have a lot of adapting to do. Areas that develop include: chests, breasts, hips and sexual organs.

Genitals –Name given to all the external sexual organs

Hair –Body hair appears around the genitals first (pubic hair) and then grows under the arms and on the legs. Young men also grow hair on their chest and face.

Hygiene –Changes to a young person's hormones and sweat glands, produce new body odours and sweat, which can be smelly. The best way to keep clean is to wash under arms and around the hair and genital area with soap and water regularly (ideally at least once a day) and to change pants and socks every day.

Hormone –chemical substances in the body that give messages to different parts of the body to start changing/developing during puberty.

Inner Lips –The smaller lips that surround the entrance to the vagina and urethra (wee hole), just inside the outer lips (also known as labia).

IVF –where specialist doctors fertilise the egg of the woman with the sperm of the man, but outside of the body. The fertilised egg creates an embryo which is then put back inside the woman so she becomes pregnant and grows the baby inside her uterus/womb.

Masturbation –Rubbing, stroking or touching one's own penis, clitoris and vagina for pleasure, (because it feels good). It's not bad for a person or harmful. It can help a person to learn about their body and what gives it pleasure.

Menstruation –Another word for periods. Also known as 'time of the month'. A loss of blood (usually monthly) as the unused ovum(egg) comes out of the vaginal opening along with the lining of the uterus. Girls who start menstruating can become pregnant, if having unprotected sexual intercourse.

Oestrogen/progesterone –The female sex hormones. During puberty, oestrogen stimulates breast development and causes the vagina, uterus (womb) and Fallopian tubes (that carry eggs to the womb) to mature. Progesterone plays a part in regulating a girl's menstrual cycle.

Outer Lips -Outer lips of the vulva, which cover the sexual parts of a woman's or girl's body including her clitoris, urethra and the entrance to the vagina (also known as labia).

Ova –plural of ovum (eggs)

Ovary –where the ova (eggs) are kept. There are usually two.

Ovum –the egg from a female that could potentially become a baby if it meets with a sperm.

Period(s) –See menstruation

Puberty –Emotional and physical changes that happen in early adolescence, as the body begins to mature sexually and develop into adulthood.

Penis –This is the shaft shaped reproductive organ that hangs outside the male body. The penis can become hard and sexually aroused, and ejaculation can happen.

Progesterone –One of the female sex hormone that plays a part in regulating a girl's menstrual cycle.

Prostate Gland –The muscles of the prostate gland help propel semen into the urethra during ejaculation.

Pubic hair –Hair which starts to grow around the genitals during puberty.

Relationships –Intimate and close friendships or emotional attachments. These can take on more importance as we reach puberty.

Sanitary towels –made up of pads of cotton wool that a girl or woman presses onto the inside of a pair of knickers to catch the blood during a period to protect her clothes.

Semen –Contains sperm, the male reproductive agent, produced in their millions every day from puberty, in the testicles.

Sexual Intercourse –Sexual contact between individuals involving penetration, especially the insertion of a man's erect penis into a woman's vagina, typically culminating in orgasm and the ejaculation of semen. If it occurs when the woman is ovulating (releasing an egg), it can lead to conception, where the sperm fertilises the egg.

Sexual Reproduction –Occurs when a male sex cell (sperm) and the female sex cell (egg) join. This fusion of sex cells is called fertilisation. Sexual reproduction allows some of the genetic information from each parent to mix, producing offspring that resemble their parents, but are not identical to them. In this way, sexual reproduction leads to variety in the offspring. In humans this process may happen through sexual intercourse or IVF.

Scrotum –Sack or pouch which hold testicles. During puberty the scrotum becomes baggy, helping the testicles to hang away from the body. This helps to keep the temperature down, which allows sperm to be produced.

Smegma—A creamy substance which builds up under the foreskin. It is normal but can be smelly if left unwashed. To wash under the foreskin, pull it back gently and gradually and wash around the head of the penis with soapy water.

Sperm duct –Also known as ‘Vas Deferens’. The job of these tubes is to carry sperm to the urethra before ejaculation.

Spots –See Acne.

Sweat –During puberty new sweat glands start to work, producing a distinct body odour. Washing every day with soap and water and changing clothes regularly becomes important.

Tampon –a compressed pad of cotton wool created into a plug that can be inserted into the body in the vaginal passage by the girl or woman to soak up the period blood before it leaves the body in order to protect her clothes and to allow her to go swimming during her period, if she chooses.

Testicles –These are held in the scrotum (sack) found below the penis, which produce millions of sperm every day.

Testosterone –The male sex hormone. During puberty, rising levels of testosterone encourage the growth of the testicles, penis, and pubic hair. The voice begins to deepen, and muscles and body hair grow.

Urethra –The tube which runs from the bladder through the penis. It carries sperm to the penis and urine (wee) from the bladder to the penis.

Urinary opening –Opening of the urethra, a separate opening from the vagina (lying above it), where urine (wee) comes out.

Uterus –A fertilised egg (one that has joined a sperm) embeds itself into the lining of the uterus and grows into a baby. If this doesn’t happen the lining of the uterus comes away as part of a period and renews itself for the next month.

Vagina –The opening of the reproductive part of the girl’s body (the passage which leads to the womb). This is also the passage through which the penis enters during sexual intercourse.

Voice –For boys, puberty brings changes to the voice box. Voices ‘drop’ and become deeper. This happens as the larynx (voice box) grows and this makes voices deeper. Voice sometimes comes out as a squeak when the muscles of the larynx go out of control for a moment.

Vulva –Vulva refers to the external parts of the girl’s genitals which you can see. This includes the clitoris, two sets of lips-the inner and the outer (also known as labia) and the entrance to the vagina.

Wet dreams –Ejaculating while you are asleep. This is normal for boys during puberty and is a sign of sexual awakening. Sometimes boys will notice a wet stain in their pyjamas or on their sheets.

Womb –(See uterus)