



# Puberty

In this lesson, students will explore the physical changes that occur in boys and girls during puberty and the impact this can have on an individual's emotions, identity and sexuality.

Using peer-to-peer discussion, scenarios and videos, pupils will be encouraged to examine the impact of puberty and find ways in which they can seek support if they are finding puberty challenging.



Recommended age: 11–14

## Learning objectives

We are learning about the physical and emotional changes that occur in young people during puberty and the impact this can have.

## Learning outcomes

Pupils can:

- describe the physical and emotional changes that occur during puberty
- identify ways of managing the changes that occur during puberty
- explain where to seek advice and support about the changes that occur during puberty, such as school nurses.

## Preparation

Before delivering the lesson:

- visit the Rise Above website ([riseabove.org.uk](https://riseabove.org.uk)) and [Rise Above YouTube](#) channel and familiarise yourself with its content
- read through [Guidance for learning in a safe environment](#)
- read through the **classroom tips** included in the download pack.

## >> Resources

- [Video on puberty from a girl's perspective](#)
- [Video on puberty from a boy's perspective](#)
- [Video 'Can puberty affect your head as well as your body?'](#)
- [Video on the weird and wonderful experiences of growing up](#)
- Access to the Rise Above website
- Blank A4 paper and pens
- Rise Above puberty scenario worksheet

## >> Time

55 minutes approximately

## >> Key vocabulary

Puberty, hormones, desire, emotional, angry, insecurity, pain, acne, body conscious, pituitary gland, prefrontal cortex



## Lesson stimulus (3–4 minutes)

Write the following stimulus on the board:

*What is puberty and when does this happen to a person?*

You can communicate whether this is carried out in silence upon entering the class, as a thinking activity and baseline assessment, discussed in pairs, or shared as a whole class.

NOTE: The outcome of the lesson stimuli should be a clear message from the teacher that puberty can occur within a very large age range, any time from 8-19, and sometimes earlier or later than this. The variety in these ages is perfectly normal and there is no 'right' age to start puberty.

## Baseline assessment



### How do you feel? (5 minutes)

You can choose how to conduct this activity. Students can complete individually on paper, or verbally in pairs/groups. You could also use 'traffic lights' (red/amber/green) or self-assessment statements e.g. "I understand where to get help and advice about puberty", depending on preference.

Students should answer the four baseline questions on a confidence scale (0 = not confident, 10 = extremely confident) for each of the following questions:

- A) How confident are you about knowing the physical changes that occur during puberty?
- B) How confident are you about knowing the emotional changes that can occur during puberty?
- C) How confident are you in knowing how to manage the changes that occur during puberty?
- D) How confident are you in knowing where to look for guidance and support about puberty?



## Core activity 1



### My body (25 minutes)

#### The body

1. Students are instructed to get into groups of no more than four people and are provided with two gender neutral outlines of a body, or students can draw their own outlines.
2. Students watch the first video on the physical changes in girls and mark where the physical changes take place and label a description of what may happen. This is repeated with the second video for the physical changes in boys. (These could be carried out in same-sex groups or mixed sex-groups.)

Girls [Video on puberty from a girl's perspective](#) (4 minutes 30 seconds)

Boys [Video on puberty from a boy's perspective](#) (5 minutes)

#### The mind:

3. Students watch the following video and using a different coloured pen add on the emotional changes that take place (can be done on either outline): [Can puberty affect your head as well as your body?](#) (6 minutes 30 seconds)
4. Students discuss the following questions:

#### All

- What are the similarities and differences in the physical and emotional changes that occur in males and females?
- What challenges do young people face when changing during puberty?
- How can young people support each other during puberty?

#### Further challenge

- What could be challenging about feelings of attraction or arousal during puberty?
- What are the challenges for boys and girls developing at slightly different times?
- Young people can start to be more aware of their bodies and what other people think during puberty. What could be the impact of this?
- Are there any challenges associated with puberty that would differ depending on someone's sexual orientation or gender identity?

## Core activity 2



### Rise Above independent exploration activity: Can you help....? (10 minutes)

Watch this video as a stimulus:

[Video on the weird and wonderful experiences of growing up](#) (2 minutes 30 seconds)

Students are given or choose one of the four scenarios from the **Puberty Scenario worksheet**. If available, they could use the Rise Above website to gather ideas and then write a reply from the Rise Above response team to the young person to be published in a 'concerns page' for a local teen magazine.

The response must:

- identify the challenges faced by the young person
- promote a healthy body image
- present a range of possible solutions
- advise on where to get support.

## Plenary



### Top Tip (5 minutes)

Students should choose one area that they've covered during the lesson and draft a top tip of no more than 15 words to offer advice, support or guidance in that area.

Review the top tips as a whole class and signpost students to the Brook website <https://www.brook.org.uk/your-life/puberty> for additional support, as well as reminding them to speak to a teacher, head of year, school nurse, trusted adult or friend if they have any concerns about themselves or someone they know.

## Assessment for learning



### How do you feel? (5 minutes)

Students think back to the confidence line that they shared at the start of the session and consider:

- How confident are you about knowing the physical changes that occur during puberty?
- How confident are you about knowing the emotional changes that can occur during puberty?
- How confident are you in knowing how to manage the changes that occur during puberty?
- How confident are you in knowing where to look for guidance and support about puberty?

Ask students to consider if their scores have changed and why, and give an example of something new they have learnt or thought about. This can be discussed in pairs or written on paper.



## Extended learning projects

### Design

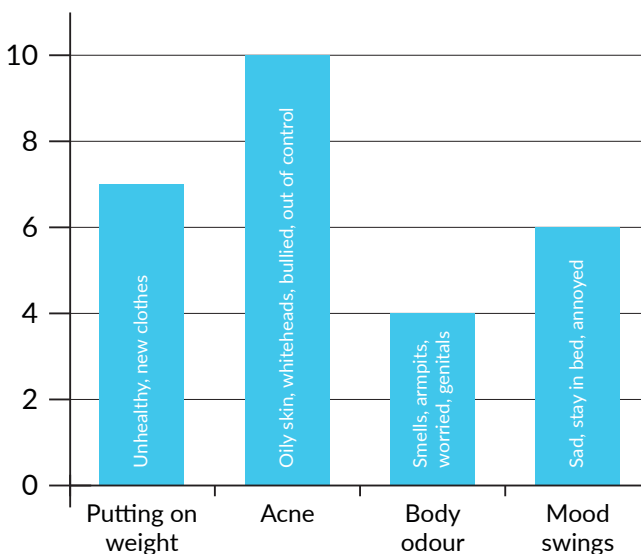
Students create a year 6 booklet on 'changes during puberty' with advice about what to expect, how to manage change and why puberty happens.

### Board game

Students create a board game based around the changes that occur in adolescence. For example, the card game 'pairs', where in a pack there are matching pairs of physical and emotional changes that occur in males and females. Students have to turn cards over in pairs and try and match up pictures and statements.

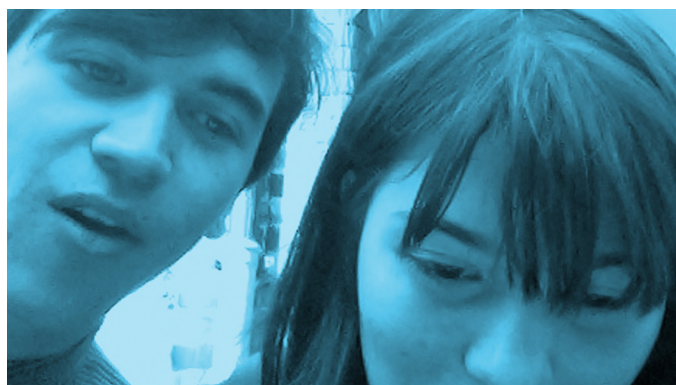
### Impact bar chart

Students use the Rise Above website to write down as many 'headline changes' that occur during puberty. For example, size of breasts, size of penis, mood swings, feelings of insecurity, sexual desire, identity, sexual preference etc. Next they use A3 paper to create a giant 'impact bar chart', see example on the right. For each of their 'headlines' (x axis) they decide on the size of impact on young people (y axis). In each of the columns students can write in words associated with this change (0 = no impact, 10 = huge impact). Students can annotate the graph with physical, social and emotional issues connected with each.



### Class debate

Should puberty be taught to school children in mixed or same sex groups?





## Puberty scenario worksheet

Choose a question from the **Rise Above Advice** column.

My two best friends have both had their periods for the last year and I'm really worried that I haven't started mine yet. Is there something wrong with me?

- *Late bloomer*

Lately I can't stop thinking about the person who sits next to me in maths class. I can hardly talk when I see them. There is a rumour they are going out with some else and the thought makes me feel sick. Can you help?

- *Lovesick*

Over the past few months I keep thinking about sex and two nights ago I think I had a wet dream. Sometimes I get an erection and I'm really worried that it might happen in school. Can you help?

- *Embarrassed in Essex*

I have loads of spots on my face and back and they won't go away. I have tried loads of different makeup but nothing covers it and people in my class keep making jokes. It makes me not want to go out with my friends any more. Can you help?

- *Spotty*

I love being on the football team, but recently I keep losing my temper and getting upset. I can't talk to the team about how I'm feeling - no one talks about that stuff. I don't know what's going on. Can you help?

- *Flying off the handle*