



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhise Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Busy Bodies

A book about puberty for you
and your parents



Funded By

crisispregnancyagency



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To Children

Hi!

This book is for you, if you are in 5th or 6th class in primary school. It is part of the RSE programme that you are doing at school. We have tried to make it as easy as possible for you to read and to understand, and we hope you find it helpful.

To Parents and Teachers

This booklet is meant to complement the '**Busy Bodies**' DVD, which your child will probably have seen at school. The booklet and the DVD are used in 5th and 6th class of primary school, as part of the Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme.

This programme is an integral part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme, which has been part of the school curriculum for a number of years.

At this level, the book and DVD have been designed to provide useful and supportive information about the physical and emotional changes that your child will experience at puberty, and about how they can look after themselves responsibly as they grow up. Basic information about sexual reproduction is also given.

This booklet is meant to be used at school by the teacher, after they have shown the '**Busy Bodies**' DVD to the children. After that, each child can be given a copy of the booklet to take home.

The booklet can also be used as a standalone resource (independently of the DVD) by parents or those in a parenting role, as a support and source of information for themselves and their child during puberty.

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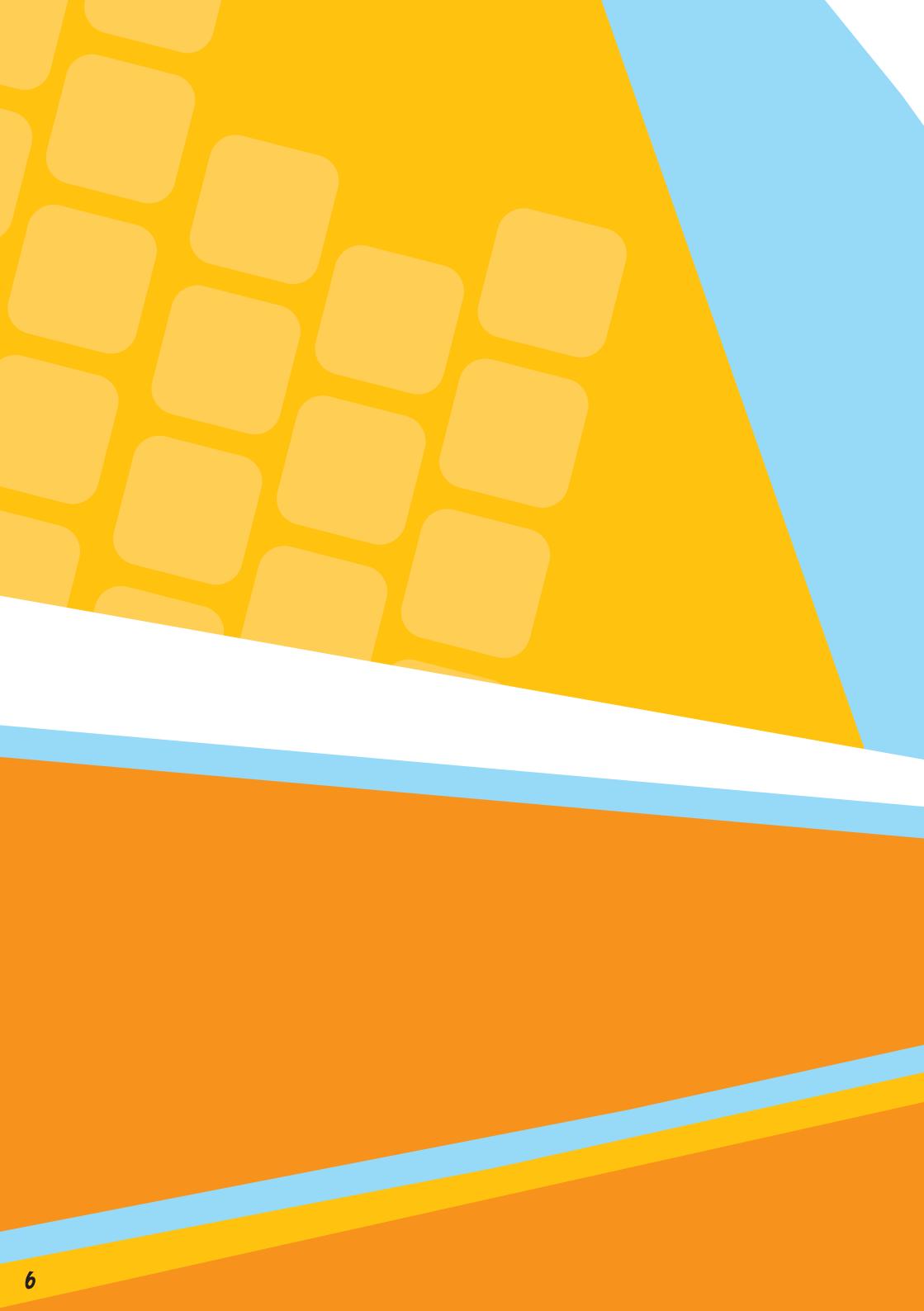
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Introducing Puberty

Introducing Puberty

This is a very exciting time in your life.

You will soon be changing school. You will be meeting lots of new people and learning new things.

You will probably start to lose interest in some of the games and toys that you used to enjoy.

And you will begin to notice that your feelings are changing too.

The main reason for these changes in the way you feel about things is that your body is going through an exciting time too.

*That's why we call it
a Busy Body*



It is (or it soon will be) starting to develop and change in different ways, getting ready to become an adult body.



The time in your life
when all these changes
are happening to your body
is called **puberty**.

PUBERTY
"pyou-ber-tee"

*The time when your body
gradually changes
from a child's body
into the body of
a young man or woman.*

These changes happen slowly, over a number of years.

You will not suddenly become an adult, but your body is getting ready for life as an adult all the same.

Puberty usually starts for girls at around the age of 10 or 12 – though it can be much earlier (even as young as 8) or a good bit later (14 or older).

Boys usually start puberty a little later than girls, but this is not always the case. Changes can happen any time between the ages of 9 and 18.

Our bodies change at their own pace. But everyone goes through puberty in the end.

By the time you are grown up, you will have an adult body, even if it feels as if it is never going to happen while you are young.

Puberty is a very exciting time, but it can be confusing too.

If you are confused or worried about how your body is changing (or about how it is not changing yet), it is a good idea to talk to your mum or dad about it.

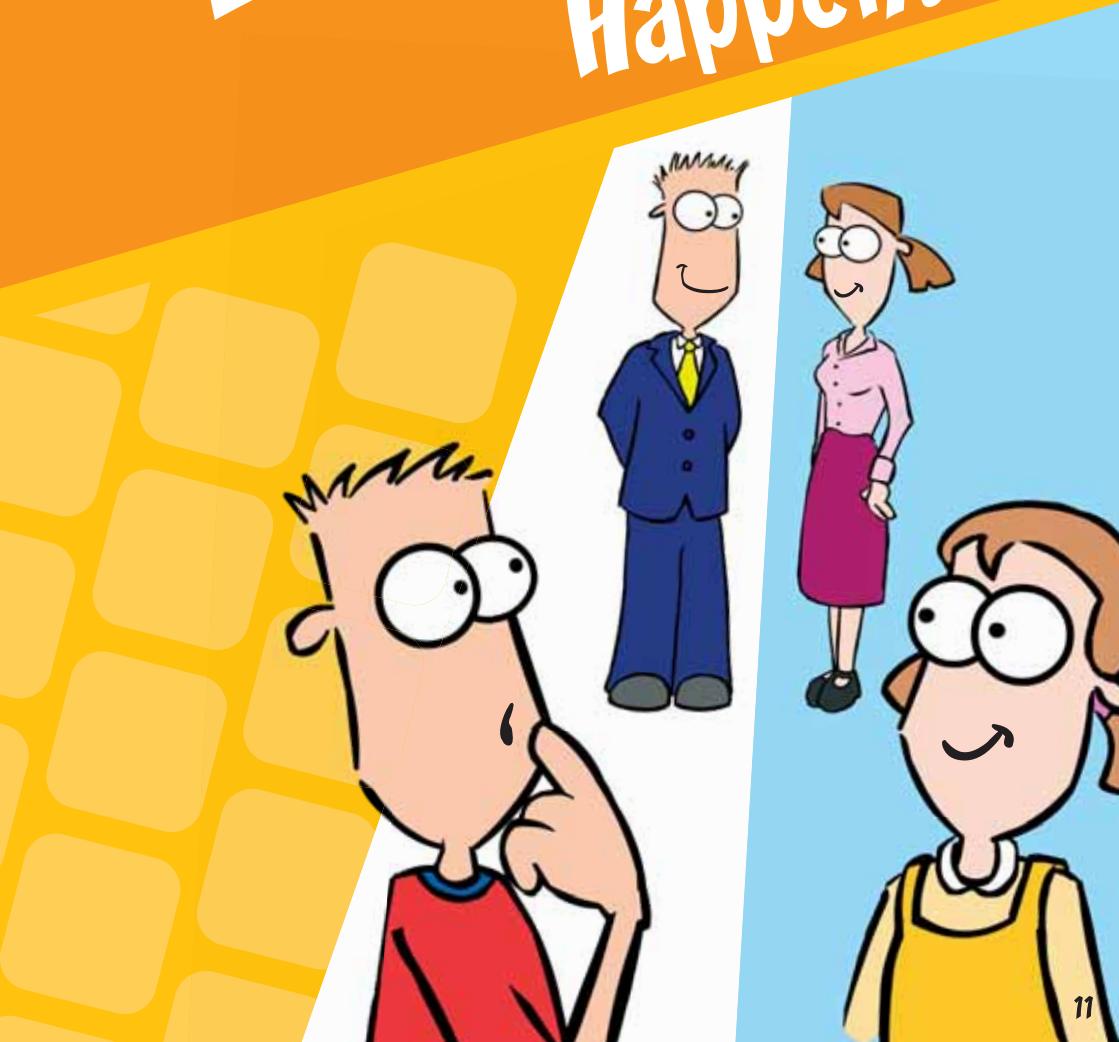
Or you might prefer to talk to another person in your family or to some other adult that you trust.

Your teacher might also be a good person to talk to.



Remember:
*all the adults you know
went through puberty too –
that's how they got to be adults!*

Why Does Puberty Happen?



Why Does Puberty Happen?

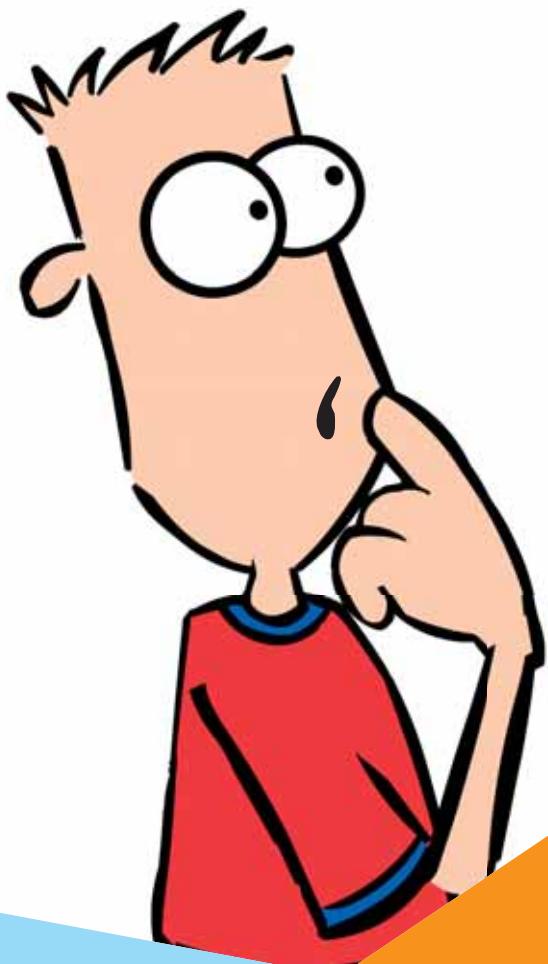
Puberty happens to everyone.

The changes that happen during puberty will eventually turn you from a boy or a girl into an adult male (man) or female (woman).

What makes this happen is that your body produces chemicals called **sex hormones**.

Sex hormones

Chemicals that make your body act like an adult male or an adult female body.



These have been in your body since you were born. And when you reach the age of puberty, these chemicals start to become active.

They give a signal to your body to start developing into a man or a woman.

And that is what makes puberty happen.

If you are a boy, the main sex hormone in your body is called **testosterone**.

The main job of testosterone is to make your body male.

Testosterone

The main male hormone



If you are a girl,
you have two main sex
hormones in your body.

These are **oestrogen**
and **progesterone**.

They work together
to make your body
female.

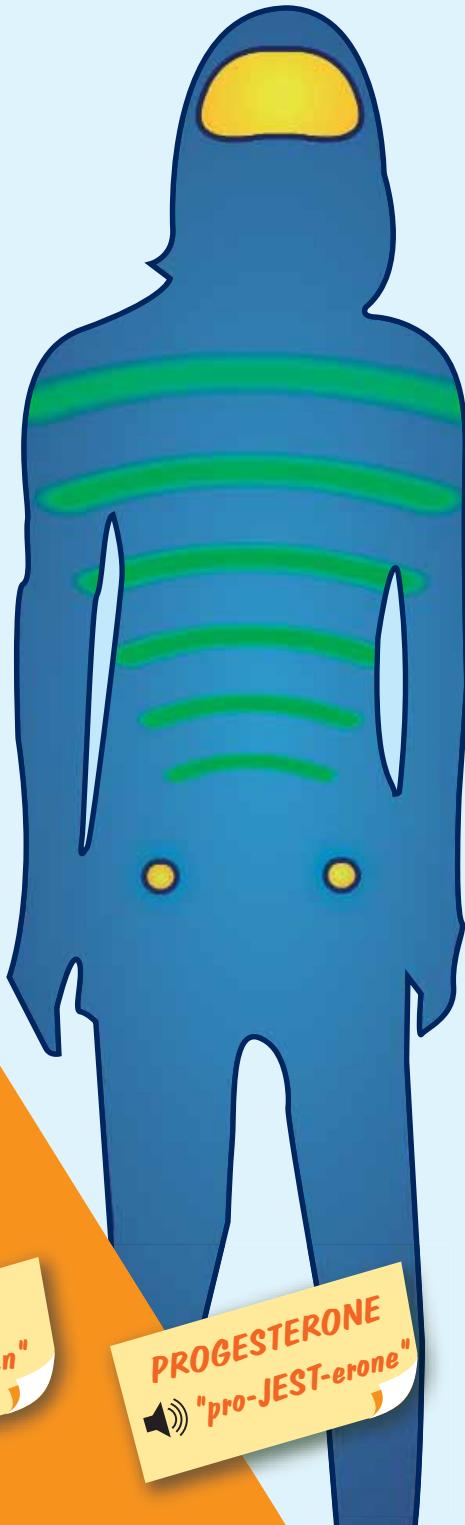


Oestrogen and Progesterone

*The two main female
sex hormones*

OESTROGEN
"EAST-ro-jen"

PROGESTERONE
"pro-JEST-erone"



What Happens to Girls?



What Happens to Girls?

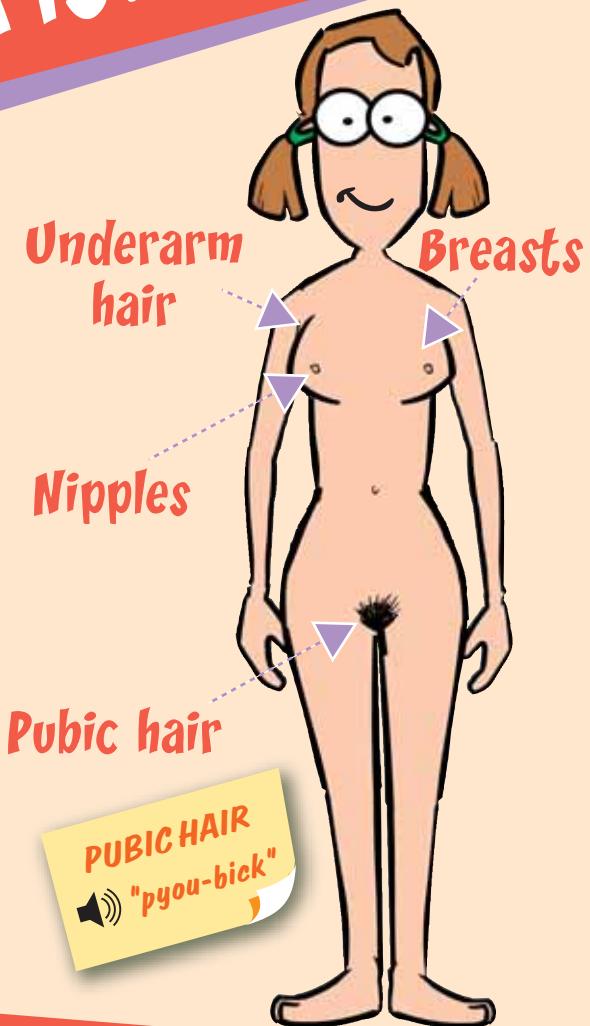
All through your childhood, your body has been growing quite fast.

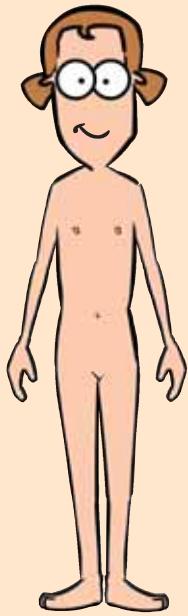
But as you reach puberty, your body starts to develop in a different way.

As you come to the age of puberty, you might notice that you get a bit taller and your shape slowly starts to change.

Over time, your hips will start to get a little curvier and your **breasts** will start to develop.

Some girls worry about the size of their breasts, and that is quite normal. But breasts come in all shapes and sizes – and that is perfectly normal too!





You may put on a little weight at this time.

This is perfectly normal, and it is not a good idea to diet in order to lose weight while you are young and still growing. Eating healthy foods and being active everyday helps you to be a healthy weight.

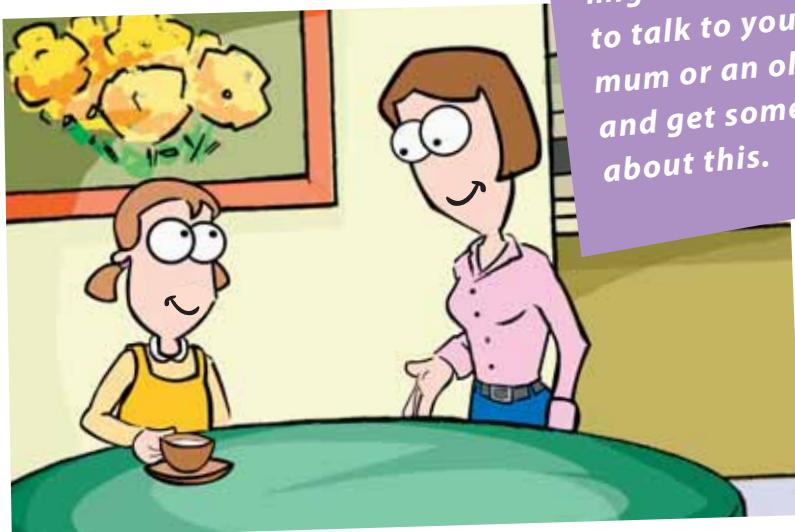
You will start to get hair under your arms and maybe some on your legs too.

You will also get hair at the base of your tummy, and between your legs. This is called **pubic hair**.

Some girls like to get rid of underarm or leg hair by shaving it off (there are special razors for women) or by using creams or waxes.

Other girls don't bother.

It's up to you but it might be a good idea to talk to your mum or an older sister and get some advice about this.



Urethra

Where urine (pee)
comes out of your body

Clitoris

A fleshy bump
near the urethra

URETHRA
"your-EE-thra"

CLITORIS
"CLIT-or-iss"

Labia

Folds of skin
covering the urethra
and the vagina

LABIA
"LAY-bee-ya"

Vagina

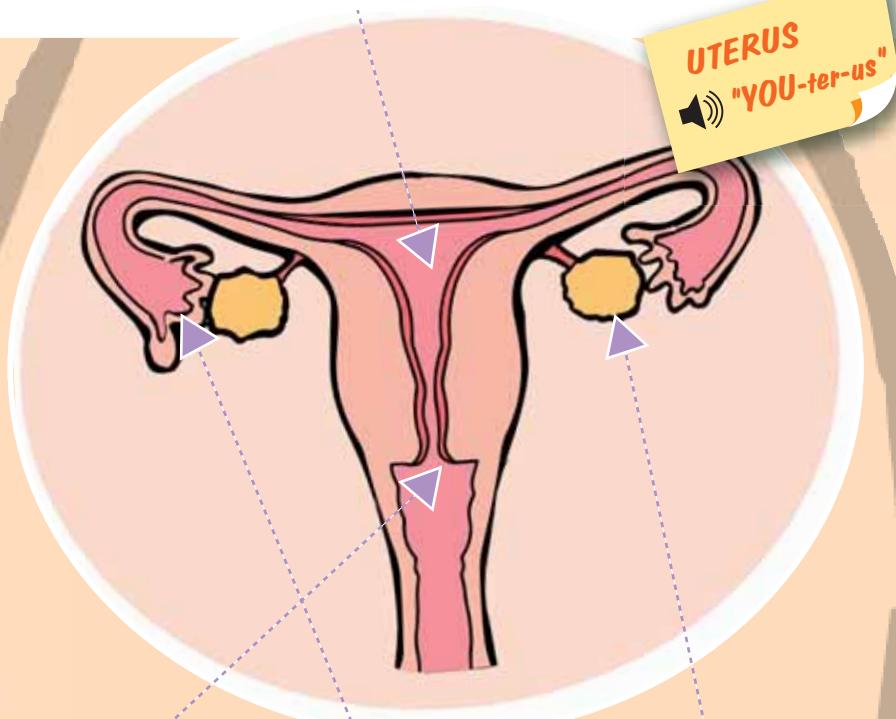
A passage leading from
a woman's womb to an
opening between her legs

When a woman has a baby
the baby comes out of her body
through the vagina.
The uterus has strong muscles
to help to push the baby out.

Uterus

This is a special place in a woman's body where a baby can grow.

Another word for the uterus is the 'womb' (woom).



Cervix

Narrow opening
of the womb

CERVIX
"SIR-vix"

Fallopian tube

Connects the
ovaries to the
uterus

FALLOPIAN
"fah-LOPE-e-yan"

Ovary

(Like the word
'over' with a 'y'
on the end)
You have two
ovaries, each of
which contains
lots of tiny ova
(eggs)

Periods (menstruation)

The biggest change in your body and in your life when you reach puberty is that you will start to have periods.

This means that, for a few days every month, blood comes slowly out of your **vagina**.

In order to understand why you have periods you first need to understand what goes on inside a woman's body.

Every month, a woman's body goes through a whole set of changes.

It begins with a process you usually don't even feel, called **ovulation**.

When you were born, your body already had a whole lot of eggs inside.

These eggs are tiny cells, so small that it would be hard to see one, even if it was outside your body.

MENSTRUATION
"mens-true-AY-shun"

*The correct word for having periods is **menstruation***

Blood is messy stuff, so you will need to use sanitary pads or tampons to soak it up and keep your clothes clean. There is useful advice about this on pages 23-24.

OVULATION
"of-you-LAY-shun"

*The correct word for these eggs is **Ova**. (just like the word 'oval' – egg-shaped!)*

Your body's eggs are in your ovaries, and once a month (after you reach puberty), one of the eggs ripens.

This ripening of the egg is called **ovulation**.

At ovulation, the egg moves out of its ovary, into the **fallopian tube**.

It travels along the fallopian tube. And at the end of its journey, it arrives in the **uterus** (womb).

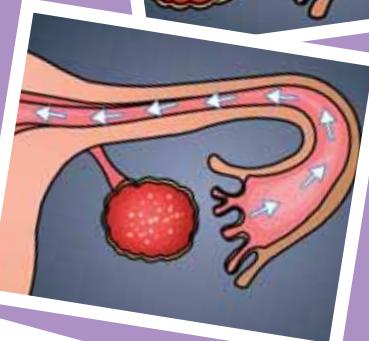
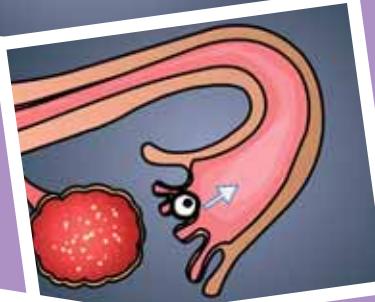
If the egg joins with a sperm (from a man's body) while it is in the fallopian tube, it can move into the uterus and grow into a baby.

Most eggs do not meet a sperm – but all the same, your body expects every egg to grow into a baby, and it starts to get ready for this.

The lining of the uterus gets thick and soft, like a nest, getting ready for the baby that might be starting to grow.

After a while, if there is no baby starting to grow, your body needs to get rid of the egg and of the lining of the uterus.

And so, out it all seeps, in a slow flow of blood, through your vagina.



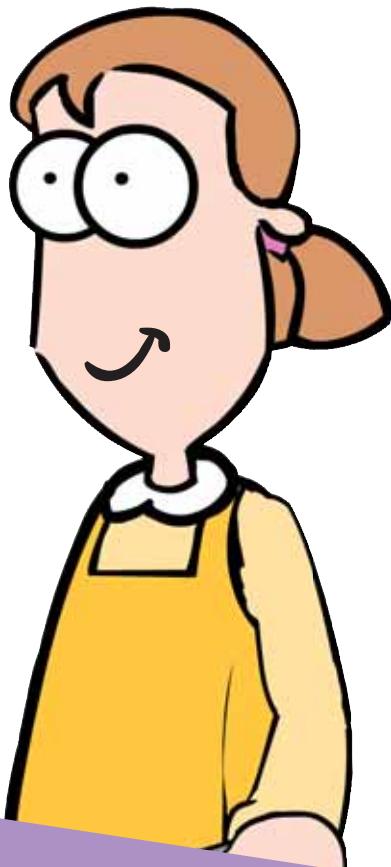
Periods (menstruation)

That is what a period is –
it is your body's way
of getting rid of an egg
from your uterus
that hasn't grown into a baby,
along with the lining of the
uterus that was not needed.

What you see when you have
a period is mostly blood,
but mixed through the blood
is the egg and bits of the
lining of the uterus.

That is why menstrual blood
is thicker and darker
than the blood you would see
if you cut your finger.

The next month, it starts all
over again with another egg.



***It can seem as if there
is a lot of blood, but actually,
if you gathered all the blood
you lose during a period,
it would only be a few spoonfuls.***

Coping with periods

You may be quite excited by the idea of getting your first period, because this is a sign that you are growing up and becoming a woman.

But having periods takes a bit of getting used to.

For a start, you need to make sure that your underwear does not get stained by the blood.

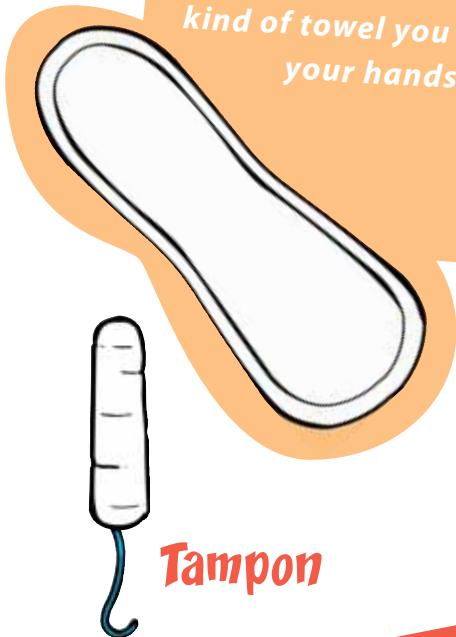
You can use a **sanitary pad** for this, **or a tampon**.

When you first get periods it is probably better to use pads rather than tampons because pads are easier to use.

A sanitary pad is made of soft, absorbent material.

It has a sticky strip on the back. The strip is protected by a piece of plastic, which you pull away and then you can stick the pad to the inside of your underwear.

*A sanitary pad is sometimes called a **sanitary towel**. But it is not like the kind of towel you dry your hands on.*



Tampon

Wrap the used pad in toilet paper, or in the wrapper it came in, and put it in a bin. Don't flush it down the loo, or it might block the pipes and cause a flood in the bathroom!

You need to change this pad every few hours especially on the first day of each period because that is when the flow of blood is at its heaviest.

Coping with periods

You should put on a fresh pad, or larger sized one, before you go to bed.

After a while, when you are used to dealing with periods, you could change to tampons if you like.

Tampons come in a range of sizes. Small ones are best for young girls.

A **tampon** is a tightly packed tube of cotton wool, which goes into your vagina.

When you are putting the tampon into your vagina make sure the loop of thread is uncoiled and is on the outside.

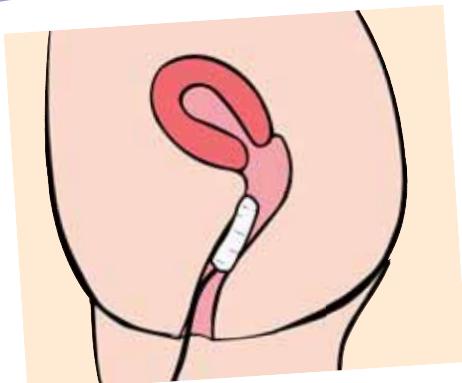
Once the tampon is in place, you can't feel it.

It is particularly important to change your tampon every few hours as it is not good for your body to leave one in for too long.

You tug gently on the loop of thread, and the tampon will slide out.

You should wash your hands carefully before and after changing a pad or tampon.

Having a shower every day, or at least a good wash, is important during your period, and it will help you to feel better.



Remember
not to leave a tampon
inside your body
at the end of your period.

Some tampons are supposed to be flushable, but it is better to wrap up a used tampon and put it in a bin as it could block the piping.

Once you start to have periods, or if you think your body is nearly ready you should keep a sanitary pad handy in your schoolbag in case a period starts while you are at school.

It's a good idea to make a note of when each period starts so that you will know roughly when the next one is due and be ready for it.

But when you first start to get periods they will probably not come regularly every month.

After a while your body will settle into a rhythm and you will find it easier to know when a period is due.

You may feel a bit grumpy a few days before each period begins.

Usually this feeling of being in a bad mood goes away once your period actually starts.

You may get a pain or a kind of dragging feeling down in the lower part of your tummy just before or during your period.

A pain like this is usually at its worst on the first day of your period, and it should ease off after that.

Some girls are lucky and never have any period pains. But most girls have some pain or discomfort with their periods from time to time.

If you have a bad pain, you should talk to your mum or an older sister or a woman you know well (maybe your teacher or an older friend you trust) to give you advice.



**Girls sometimes use
the word 'cramps'
to mean period pains.**

Coping with periods

You could take a pain killer but having a good soak in a warm bath can also be very comforting and so can a hot water bottle on your tummy, especially at night time.

Gentle exercise can also help.

Having your period may make you feel out of sorts. But it should not usually stop you from doing the things you normally enjoy such as playing sports or running around.



Remember:
*everyone is different
and everyone's body
develops at its own
pace and in its own way.*

*Even if puberty seems
to be happening slowly
for you, you WILL start to
have periods eventually.*

*If you want to swim
during your period,
however, you will
need to use a tampon
instead of a pad.*



What Happens to Boys?

What Happens to Boys?

All through your childhood, your body has been growing quite fast.

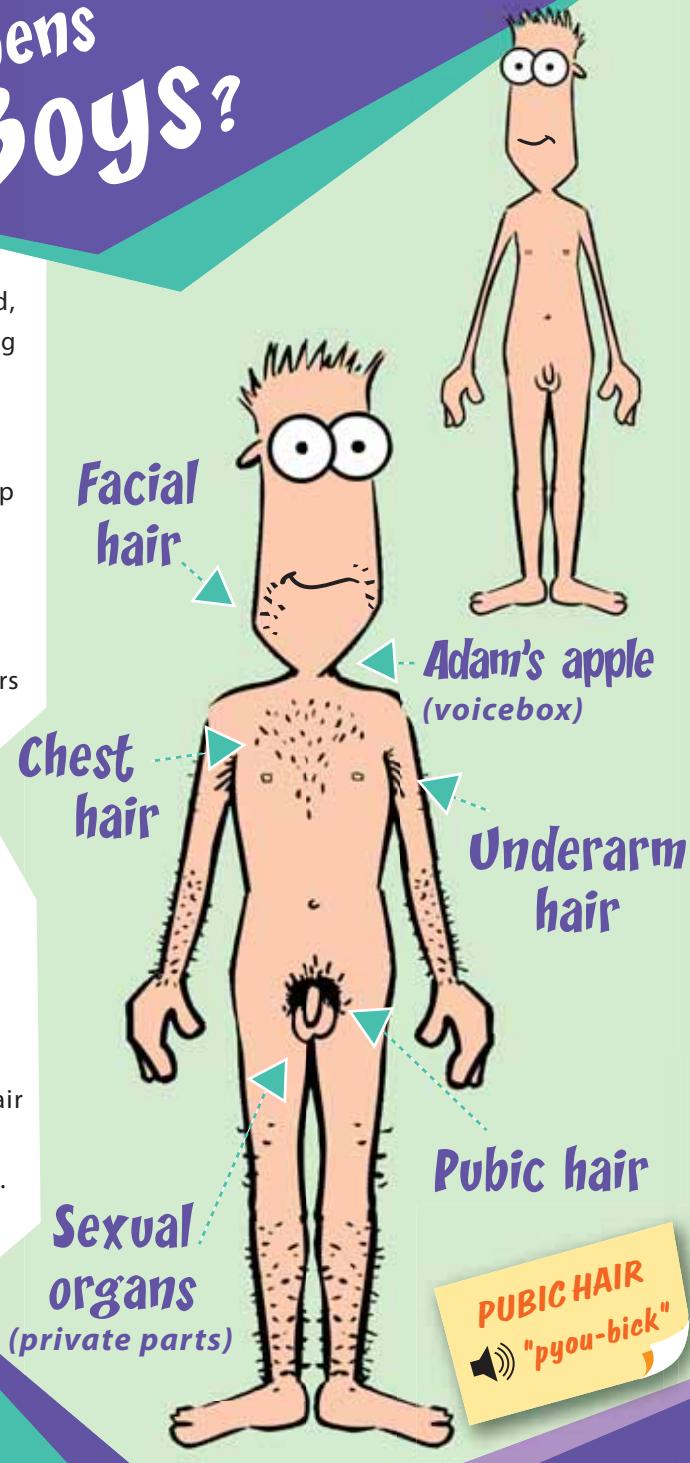
But as you reach puberty, your body starts to develop in a different way.

You might notice that you suddenly get taller and your chest and shoulders gradually start to fill out and get broader.

As puberty kicks in, you will start to grow hair on your body, particularly above your penis (**pubic hair**) and under your arms.

Later you may get some hair on your chest too and on your arms and legs.

Body hair grows quite slowly.
You may be an adult before it has all grown.



You will also start to grow hair on your face, though this might not be for a long time yet.

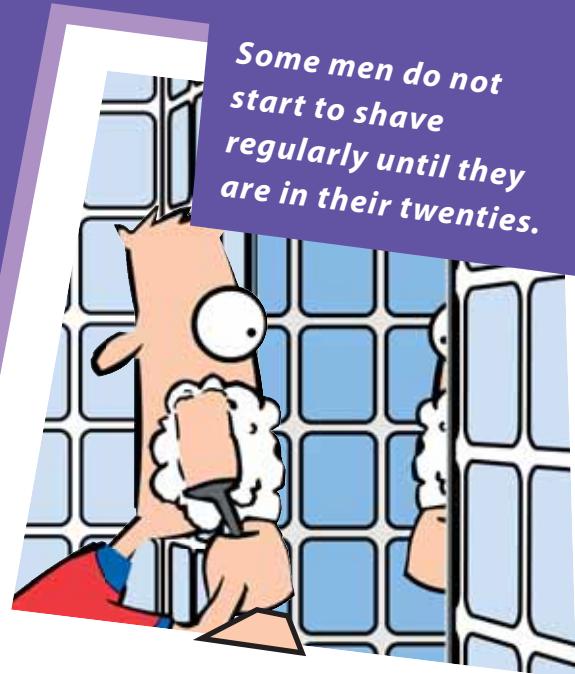
This is called **facial hair**.

At your age, facial hair grows slowly and you will probably not be able to grow an actual beard until you are a good bit older.

When you start to get facial hair, you can begin to shave it off if you like, though you won't need to do this very often until you are older.

Ask your dad or an older brother to give you advice about shaving. Or you could ask another man you know well (maybe a teacher or an older friend you trust).

It's quite tricky to get it right in the beginning, so it's good to have a bit of help.



Some men do not start to shave regularly until they are in their twenties.

And of course there are men who don't shave because they like to grow their beards.

One of the most noticeable things that happens to you at puberty is that your voice changes.

This means that the sound of your voice deepens.

It does not change all at once, and for some time your voice can be in an in-between stage. Sometimes it can be quite deep and then suddenly it might be squeaky.

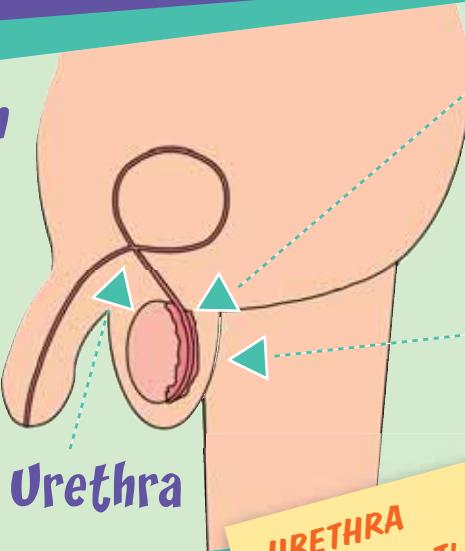
This can sound funny but after a while it will settle down.

You may have heard other words
for these body parts, but on this diagram
you can see the correct ones.

Foreskin

(Fold of
skin at
the tip of
the penis)

Penis



The urethra carries urine
from the bladder down
through the penis.

Your sexual organs – sometimes
called your private parts – will also
grow and develop during puberty.

Your **penis** will get a bit longer
and thicker and it may get darker
in colour.

TESTICLES
"TEST-ickles"

Testicles

(These hang outside
the body, behind
the penis)

Scrotum

(This is a kind of bag
of skin that holds
the testicles)

URETHRA
"your EE-Thra"

PENIS
"PEE-niss"

Circumcision

Some families have their boys
circumcised, usually when
they are babies.

This means that the fold of skin
at the tip of the penis (foreskin)
is cut away.

This is sometimes done for a
medical reason, but it is more
likely to be for religious
reasons.

CIRCUMCISION
"sir-come-SIZZH-un"



Some boys worry about their size and especially about the size of their penis. But there are men of all shapes and sizes – and that is perfectly normal too!

Your **testicles** will also grow during puberty.

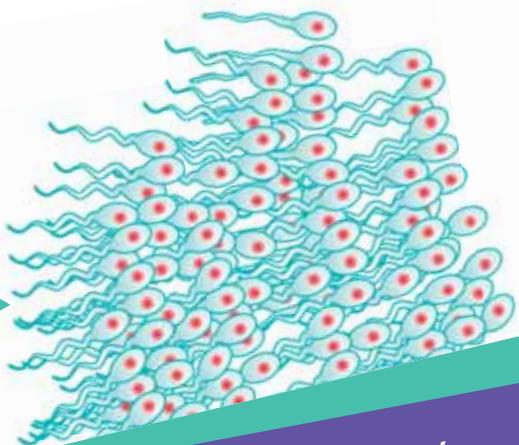
Your testicles make testosterone, and once puberty begins, they will also start to make **semen**.

Semen is a whitish fluid or liquid which carries millions and millions of tiny **sperm** cells.

Sperm
(Tiny tadpole-shaped cells)

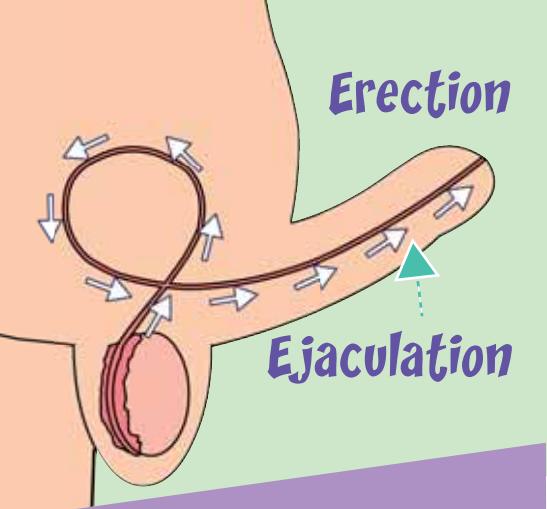
SEMEN
"SEE-min"

Semen
(Liquid that carries sperm)



SPERM
"sp-EERM"

A sperm cell from a man's body is needed to fertilise an egg from a woman's body to make a baby.



As you can see on the diagram, semen comes out of your body from the same place as urine (pee) – but not, of course, at the same time.



Remember:

Everybody is different and everyone grows in different ways and at different rates. It doesn't matter how fast or slowly you grow. You will get to be an adult in the end!

As you get older you will get **erections**.

This means that your penis becomes larger and gets hard for a while and eventually some semen may come spurting out from the tip of it, and then your penis will shrink back to its normal size.

When semen comes out of your penis, this is called **ejaculation**.

You don't always ejaculate when you have an erection. Sometimes your penis just shrinks back by itself.

An erection usually happens when you become sexually excited, but especially around puberty, erections can happen a lot, for no particular reason.

They are really a sign that your body is developing and getting ready for adulthood.

Sometimes you can have an ejaculation in your sleep. This is called having a 'wet dream' and it is very common around puberty.





Making Babies

Making Babies

All this growing up you are doing at puberty is really about your body getting ready for making babies when you are older.

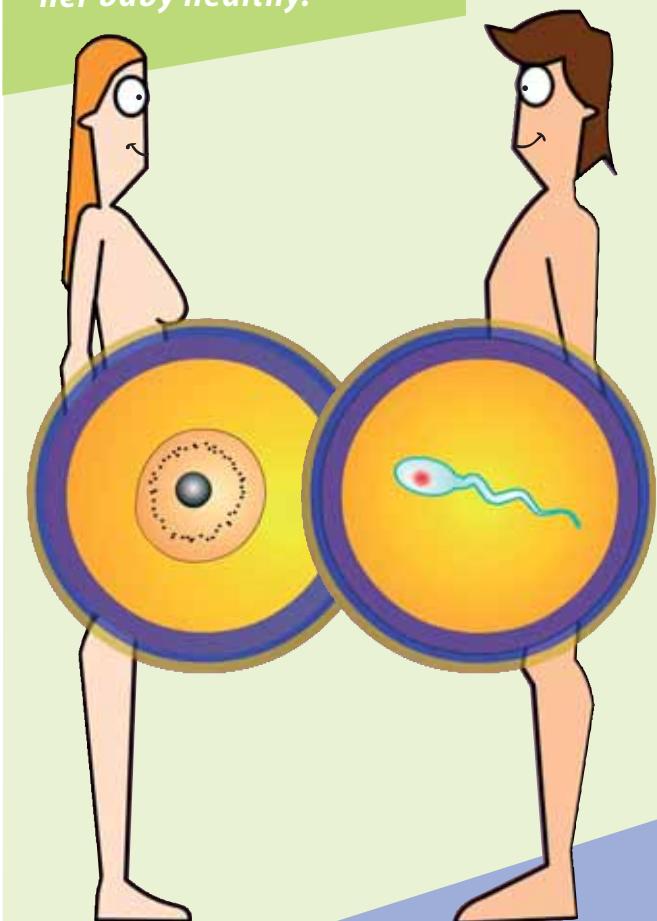
Babies are made when a man and a woman have **sexual intercourse**.

This is sometimes called 'having sex' or 'sleeping with' a person (because people usually have sex in bed – although of course they are not asleep!)

When a man and woman have sexual intercourse the man's penis first becomes erect, and then he puts it into the woman's vagina.

The man has an ejaculation, inside the woman's body, which means that semen comes out of his penis into her vagina.

It is important for any women who may become pregnant to take a vitamin called folic acid to keep her baby healthy.



The semen carries millions of tiny sperm, which immediately start to swim up the vagina, towards the woman's womb (uterus).

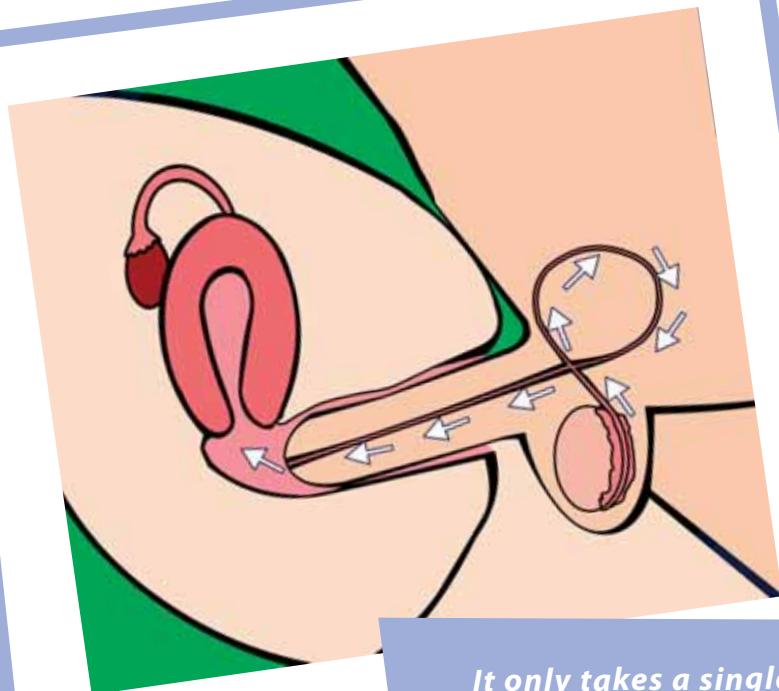
If the woman has ovulated recently, there will be an egg inside her body that is ready to be fertilised.

When one of the millions of sperm reaches the egg, it joins with it and **fertilises** it.

The woman doesn't feel this part, and she can't see it either.

It is all happening on the inside of her body.

Go back to pages 20-21 if you need to remind yourself about ovulation.



It only takes a single sperm to do this. The first sperm to make it into the egg is the one that fertilises it.

This means that the egg will start to develop into a baby.

The fertilised egg settles into the womb, which has a nice thick lining in place, ready for the growing baby.

While her baby is growing and developing inside her, the woman is **pregnant**.

And after about nine months, the baby is ready to be born.

The muscles of the mother's uterus start to work hard to push the baby out of the uterus, down the vagina and out into the world.

If the woman has not ovulated recently, there will be no egg ready for the sperm, and so there will be no baby this time.

While she is pregnant, a woman does not ovulate every month, and so she has no periods.

This is often how a woman notices that she is pregnant – her periods stop.



When a woman has a baby
her breasts make milk to
feed the baby.

The woman holds her baby
close to her body, and the
baby sucks the milk from
her nipples.

This is called
breastfeeding.

When you reach puberty,
your body is getting ready
for making babies.

But it will be a long time yet
before you are ready to
have sex or make babies.

You still have a lot of
changing and growing to
do and lots of new things
to learn.

Breastfeeding
*is best for babies.
If a mother decides
not to breastfeed,
she may feed her
baby from
a bottle.*



It is not a good thing for people to have sex before they are grown up and ready for it.

And for this reason, the law protects you from feeling any pressure about this, by making it illegal for anyone to have sex with a young person under 17.

This means that you are not legally old enough to agree to (or consent to) having sex until you are at least 17.

But even at 17 you are still very young - though it might seem old to you now.

Many young people decide not to have sexual intercourse until they are fully grown up and have an important and steady relationship or are married.

Having sex is a very special thing to do with a person you really love and trust.

If an older person tries to tell you that they really love you and you should trust them to have sex they are wrong.

You are not ready, and this is not real love.

Another way of saying this is that 17 is the age of consent in Ireland.

If an older person wants to have sexual intercourse with you or to touch you sexually or to get you to touch them in this way, they are breaking the law.

This is not a good kind of secret, so if this happens to you, you should tell an adult you trust.

It is not your fault, even if you agree to it. It is the adult who is breaking the law, not you.

So for now, it's best to concentrate on enjoying being a young person, and to wait until you are much older before you have sex.

Enjoying Growing Up



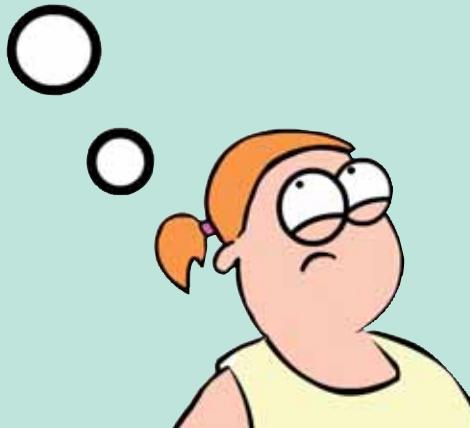
Enjoying Growing Up

It's not just your body that changes during puberty. Your feelings and interests change too.

Your hormones are very active at this time and hormones can really affect your moods and feelings.

You may find that you lose your temper more easily and you can sometimes have rows with your family or friends for no real reason.

It's all normal, but it can feel awful at the time.



Having a boyfriend or girlfriend is a normal part of growing up too but this happens for everyone at a different time.

You may find that you 'fall in love' or become extremely interested in a particular person and long for them to love you too.

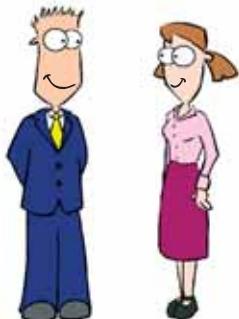
It is great if they love you back, but you can feel very unhappy if they do not like you as much as you like them.

One of the hardest things about puberty is thinking that everyone else is happy and you are the only unhappy one.

But actually, everyone else feels like this too.
It's all part of growing up.

If you feel low, it's good to talk to someone – your parents, maybe, or your brother or sister or your friends.

They might not be able to cheer you up, but just talking helps.



Another way to cope
with all the confusing feelings
is to concentrate on
looking after your body.

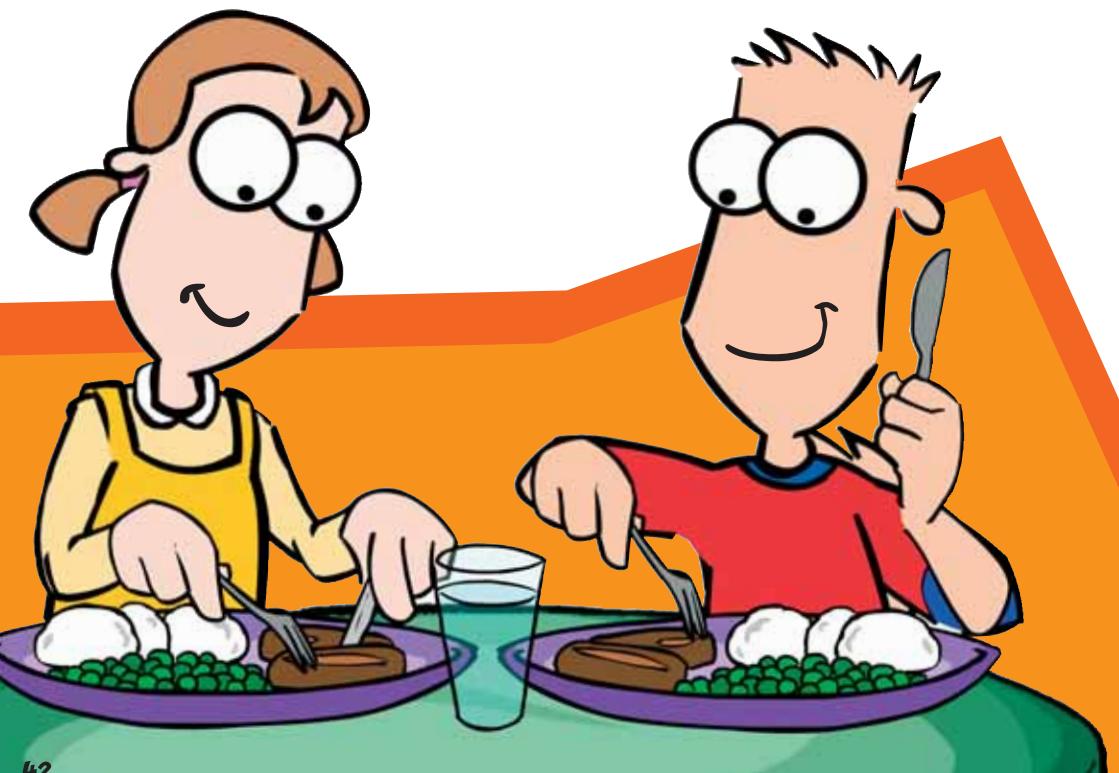
Eating well is one way
you can have more energy.
It also makes your muscles and
bones strong and healthy
and gives you healthy-looking
hair and nails.
And you'll feel your best too.

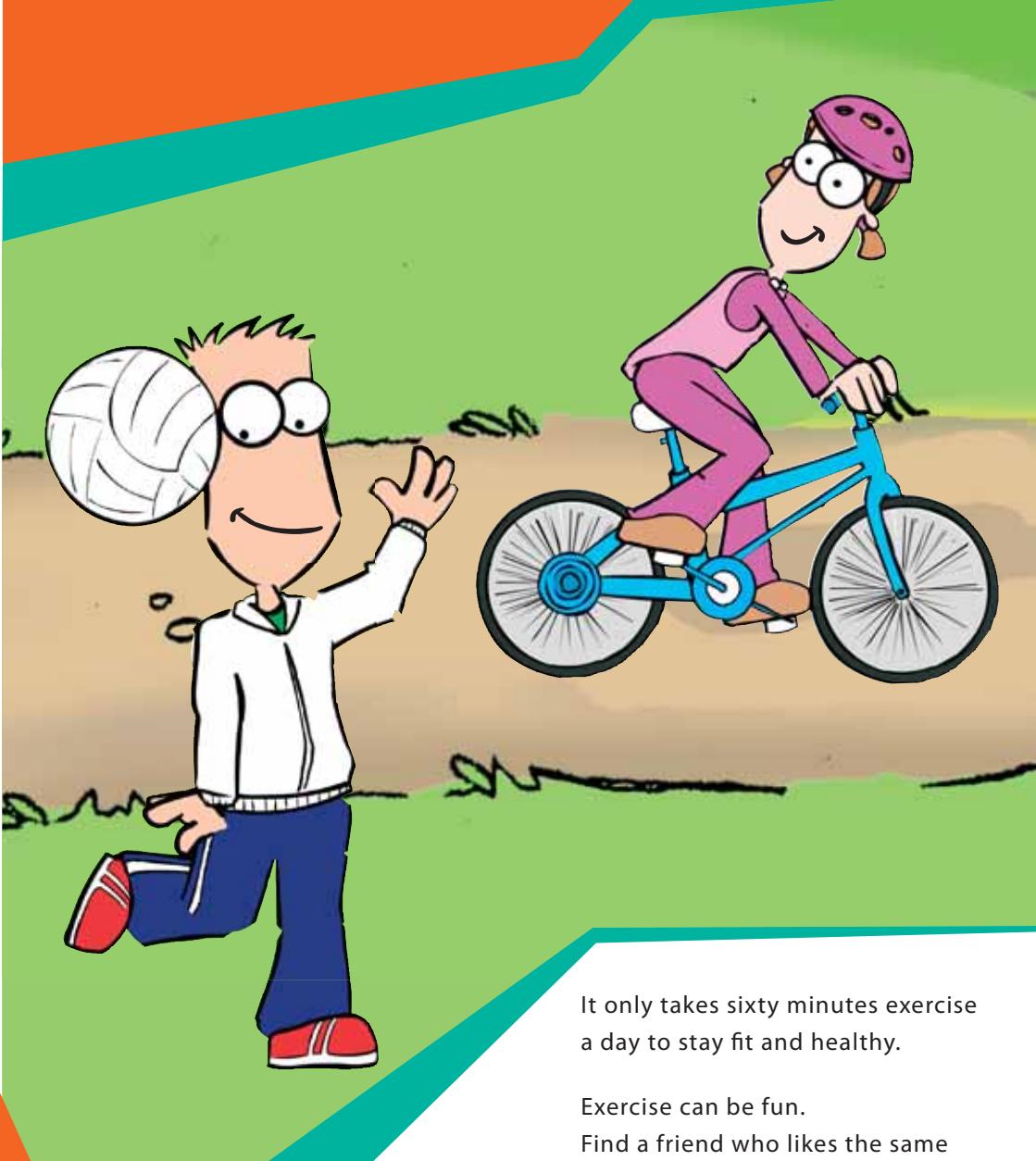
You can build strong bones
at your age by taking
foods rich in calcium e.g. milk,
yogurt and cheese.

Remember, taking regular meals
(breakfast, lunch and dinner)
gives your body the energy you
need to grow, work and play.

Try to choose healthy snacks
between meals and save sweets,
chocolate and crisps
for occasional treats.

And remember to drink enough
water. Your body needs about
eight to ten cups of fluid each day.





It only takes sixty minutes exercise a day to stay fit and healthy.

Exercise can be fun.

Find a friend who likes the same kinds of exercise as you do – running or cycling or even dancing – or take up a sport.

If you do something you really enjoy you'll want to do even more of it.



During puberty your body sweats more, especially when you exercise.

Having a shower or a good wash every day, especially after you have been playing games or running around, will help you to keep fresh.

You will feel better – and your friends will appreciate it too!

You can use a deodorant under your arms after you have washed – but do wash first!

And remember to change your socks and underwear every day.

Your skin makes oil all the time to keep it soft.

During puberty it can tend to make a bit more oil than it needs.

The oil clogs up your pores, and you can get spots on your face and body.

Wash thoroughly with a mild soap and don't pick your spots – it only makes them worse.

As you get older your skin will settle down and the spots will go away.

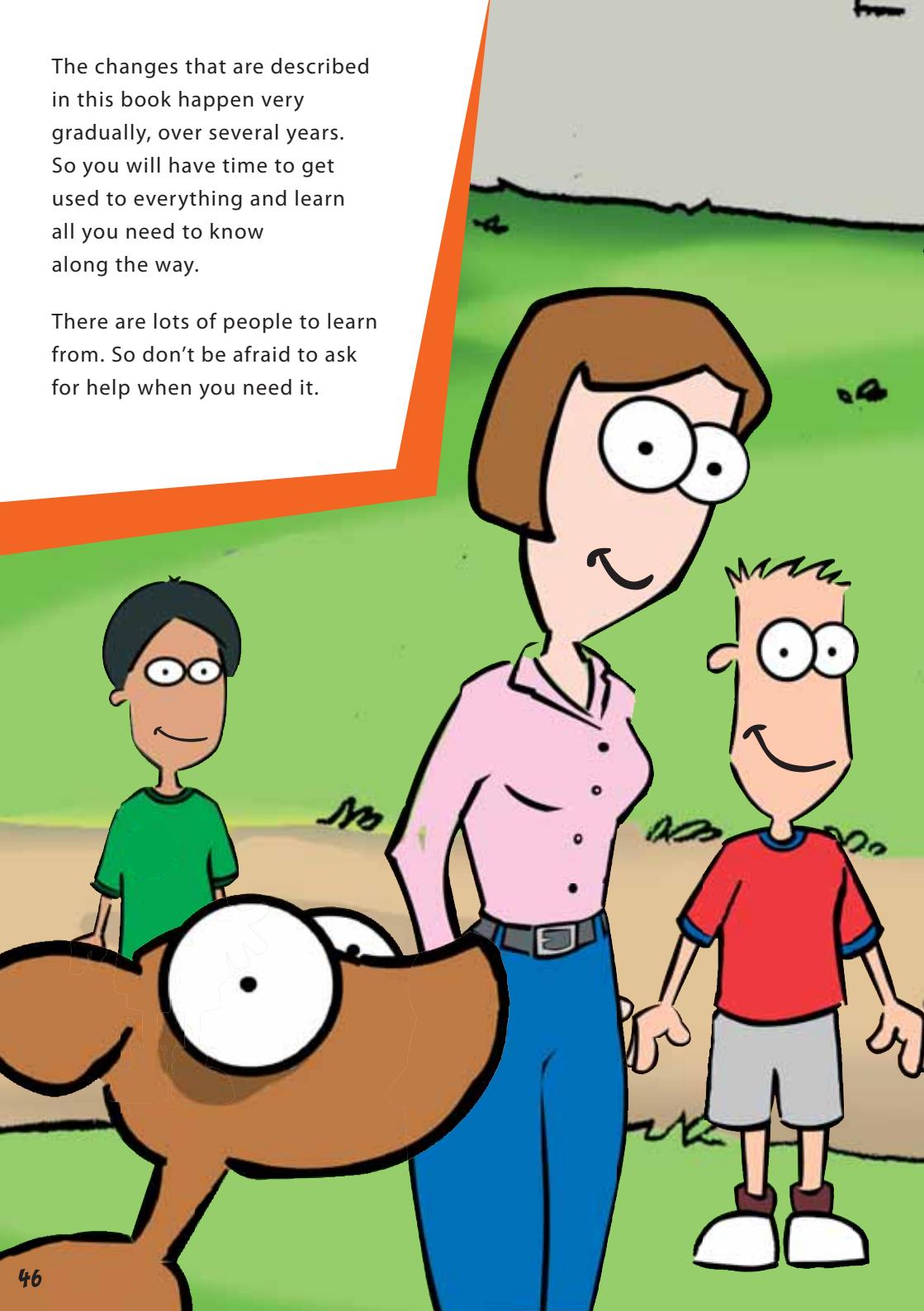
If you have a lot of spots and it worries you, talk to your doctor.



He or she may be able to prescribe a special wash or cream that will help.

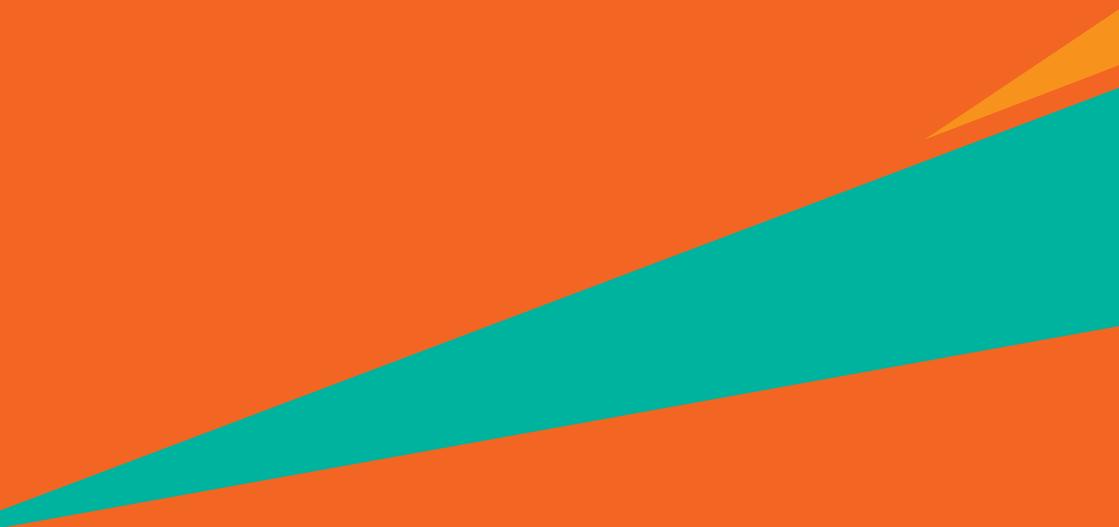
The changes that are described in this book happen very gradually, over several years. So you will have time to get used to everything and learn all you need to know along the way.

There are lots of people to learn from. So don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.





And Enjoy
Growing Up!



Busy Bodies

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