

Year 4

Coping with change

Lesson 1: What is puberty?

Lesson context and overview

This is the first of three lessons exploring how our bodies start to change as we enter puberty. This lesson introduces pupils to the basic physical and emotional changes they will start to experience.

Note: this lesson can be delivered after lesson 2 (Understanding periods), if preferred.

Curriculum links

Physical health and mental wellbeing: Changing adolescent body

Pupils will learn:

- key facts about puberty, the changing adolescent body and menstrual wellbeing
- the main changes which take place in males and females, and the implications for emotional and physical health.

Resources

Presentation slides

Question box (an old shoe box or tissue box)

Post it notes or scrap paper for questions

Large paper and pens to draw around body outline

Pupil worksheets:

- *Body outline*
- *Boys, girls or both?* cards, one set per small group
- *Puberty true or false?* cards

Key vocabulary

puberty, hormones

Learning objectives

We are learning about:

- the changes that happen to our bodies naturally during puberty
- the different changes that happen to boys and girls during puberty
- where to get help and advice about our bodies and how they change and develop if we need it.

Learning outcomes

We will be able to:

- identify the changes in our bodies since Nursery or Reception class
- discuss the physical changes that happen during puberty
- distinguish between the changes that happen to girls and boys.

Essential teaching guidance

Please ensure you have read the guidelines on creating a safe teaching and learning environment before delivering these lessons. To create a climate of trust for safe and effective learning, ensure that ground rules are established or revisited before delivery. It is especially important that pupils show respect and a non-judgemental attitude towards one another while discussing growing up, puberty and changes, as they will be developing at different times and at different rates.

Starter/baseline activity

Introduce pupils to the objectives and the key vocabulary for the lesson. Discuss with pupils the ways in which their bodies have changed since they began Reception class or nursery school. Examples might include:

- Shoe size getting larger
- Getting taller
- Getting stronger
- Hair growing
- Face shape changing

Highlight that pupils have already experienced many changes to their bodies as they have grown older. Ask if anyone knows what further body changes they might experience as they continue to get older.

Explain that during this lesson we will begin to explore some of the changes that happen to our bodies during puberty.

Note: you may want to introduce a way for pupils to ask anonymous questions here, such as a question box, a post-it wall or an ask-it basket. It is important to give pupils opportunities to ask questions anonymously if they need to.

Core activities

1. Using presentation slide 4, introduce the term puberty and ask if anyone knows what it means. Explain that this is the name for the next stage of growing up that they will start to experience in the next few years. Make sure you highlight:

- It is a time when they will experience changes in their bodies.
- It is something that everyone experiences.
- Some people will start to experience puberty soon, others may not until much later on – it happens at different times for everyone.

Explain the following key facts:

- Puberty usually starts for girls between the ages of seven and 12 and for boys between nine and 14.
- Puberty is caused by chemicals in our bodies called hormones, which start the changes when the brain sends a message to our bodies.
- Puberty is a very slow process that happens gradually.
- Puberty is a normal change that everybody goes through.
- Puberty is the beginning of our bodies changing into adult bodies.

Give each pupil a copy of the *Body outline* worksheet. Ask them to consider how they may continue to grow and change as they get older, and to write (or draw) some changes on the body outline. Pupils should consider how an adult's body may look different to the body of someone of their age (e.g. facial hair, muscles, body shape, taller).

Pupils do not need to focus on all of the changes at this stage; it is important to allow them time for discussion and for them to lead this part of the lesson in terms of how much they already understand about puberty changes.

Ask each group to feed back one of the changes they have written/drawn. Use slide 5 to describe and reiterate the basic changes that occur during puberty.

2. Organise pupils into small groups and give each group a set of *Boys, girls or both?* cards. Ask them to look at each of the changes that happen during puberty and to sort the cards into the correct pile (you could also do this using a Venn diagram, or with hoops to act as the diagram).

Note: the set of cards includes one that mentions periods. If preferred, you can teach lesson 2 about periods before they do this lesson, so that this is covered. Alternatively, you could take the periods card out of the set, or explain that the class will be learning more about periods in the following lesson and that for now they just need to know that this is a change that happens only to girls.

Reassure pupils that this activity is just an introduction to these changes and that they are encouraged to ask for further information at home or at school.

3. Following the card sort completed in activity 2, give groups the *Puberty true or false?* cards and ask them to sort the statements into piles. If they are unsure of any of the statements, ask them to create a 'Don't know yet' pile for discussion.

Ask groups to feed back, and reassure them by explaining the following:

- Sometimes children do feel worried about puberty changes.
- Everybody goes through puberty changes.
- There is always somebody to speak to if they have worries or questions.
- Puberty changes are very gradual and don't happen overnight.
- Puberty changes aren't painful.
- They can speak to someone they trust if they need to.

Extension activity

Ask pupils to use a post-it note or similar to ask one question about puberty and the changes our bodies go through as we grow into adults. You can respond to the questions in an age-appropriate manner at the end of the lesson, or offer a dedicated time for responding if the questions need more consideration. (Treat all questions in a respectful manner. If possible, use phrases such as, "This is a good question", "I am glad someone asked this question" or "A lot of people have questions about this topic" to reassure pupils that their questions are valued.)

Plenary

Discuss with pupils who they could talk to if they wanted to learn more, or if they had more questions about puberty.

Go around the class and ask each pupil for one change, or for one thing they have learned about puberty today.

Assessment

Use outcomes of discussion and completed *Body outline* and *Puberty: true or false?* worksheets to assess pupils' understanding of the learning objectives.