

changes during Puberty

Emotions

Grades
4th & 5th

Emotional changes

Puberty and adolescence is a complex time when we mature in both mind and body, and become interested in new things. You're sort of caught between being a kid and being a grownup, and sometimes you don't know what to do or think. Hormones are responsible for a lot of these confusing feelings. You may experience fits of crying or anger, feel sad, or have mood swings. Being overly sensitive or losing your temper may happen a lot. But don't worry; it's just those hormones again! If you feel really out of control or depressed, talk to your mom or your doctor.

It's common for girls going through puberty to find that they are not getting along with their parents or siblings like they used to, and worry more about relationships with their friends. School might suddenly seem hard, too. And your parents might start worrying about you more, especially about your safety. You may be influenced by your friends' ideas and feel pressure to do things that you may not agree with, like using drugs or alcohol. It is a time to start sorting out your values and decide what you think is right and wrong. Communication with people in your family can help make things much less stressful!

Also during puberty, you may begin to have romantic attractions. You may feel like you are in love one day and not the next. It is natural to have changing feelings.

Personal identity is also an overwhelming concern among teens. You are trying to figure out your place in the world. It's a time when you may search for who you want to be and how to express that. You become more independent and start doing more things without your parents.

If you are going through these changes and find it difficult, just remember, it's temporary. Talk to your parents about how you are feeling -- they went through puberty and adolescence, too, (believe it or not) -- or talk to a friend. Your friends will probably be dealing with the same problems. They may be able to help you with feelings you might have of being strange or alone.



Mood Swings

Nothing says adolescence like mood swings – they are unpredictable changes in attitudes and behavior. Adolescence is a confusing period of transition and we have to remember that mood swings are a normal part of this process.

You may have begin to feel differently about your interactions with your parents. You may feel as though they embarrass you at times. You may begin confiding more in your friends and demanding space and privacy at home. It's not uncommon for teens to want their bedroom door closed more frequently. You may even be more concerned about your identity, and are likely concerned about school, your appearance and possibly even friendships.

Your behavior may swing daily between child and adolescent. You are happy and outgoing one day, cranky and depressed the next.

Don't freak out when your mood starts to swing in the wrong direction. Your yo-yo behavior is age-appropriate and is due to your changing hormonal levels. All preteens will have these highs and lows. How you cope with your frustrations will vary depending on the situation. You may want to talk to a friend, or cry it out, or go take a walk, or diffuse your mood with a good movie. Finding healthy ways to tackle your bad moods or regain control is important for you and for those around you.

Self-Esteem and Body Image

Your body and mind will grow and mature so much during puberty that you may feel like you don't know who you are at times. You may not be so sure that you like who you are becoming. This is normal. Lots of teens have difficulties in adjusting

to their new, grown up self. You may think you're too fat, too skinny, too tall or still too short. You may feel like you are the only person you know going through so many changes, and having unhappy thoughts. Let me assure you, you are not.

You may think to yourself, if I just had straight hair, longer legs, perkier breasts or a cuter nose, all would be right in the world. You may start to pick on yourself by finding all of the things about yourself you don't like. Most teens do. The thing is, these kinds of thoughts can really bring down your self-esteem.

Why Are Self-Esteem and Body Image Important?

Self-esteem is how you feel about yourself as a whole person, how much you value yourself. Your body image is how you see and/or feel about your physical appearance. For teens, and many women, self-esteem and body image are one and the same. This is due, in part, to the fact that as you mature in both mind and body, you will become more aware of your body as being your own, and that you are responsible for taking good care of it. You are also becoming aware of how other people see you. It may also be hard to remember that the way your body looks to you may not be the way other people see it and most importantly, it doesn't define you. Your appearance, as well as decisions you've made, friends you've had, and things you've done do not determine your overall value.

What Influences a Person's Self-Esteem?

You may start to feel tempted to compare yourself those around you. Or even those not around you, like actors, celebrities or athletes. And although it is totally normal, don't do it!

First of all, during puberty everyone will be growing at different rates. The right pace for you may not be the same as your best friend. You may begin developing breasts at age 9. Your best friend may not get her



period until she is 16. As we learned earlier, it is all normal, just different. The pace and timing of your development is mostly controlled by genetics, or what you inherited from your parents. You have very little control over what will happen. So don't judge yourself by how quickly you develop.

Criticism from others about the way you look or think may influence your self-esteem, too. Especially if it is coming from someone you care about or respect. If a family member makes a comment about how tight your pants are getting or how dumb it was for you to think you could make the basketball team, it can really hurt. It can be hard to remember that they love you and really don't mean to hurt you. But try. You don't want a thoughtless comment to ruin your developing good self-esteem. Take action. A girl with good self-esteem can bounce back. Go for a run, write a poem, or go to the park and stay until you make 50 free throws in a row. Remind yourself that YOU determine your self-worth.

But it might not be your family that you get the criticism from. It could be a classmate, peers at school, or even someone you don't know. Still, negative comments and teasing can sting. Realize that it comes from ignorance. The way you look, your ethnic or religious background, or even the clubs you choose to join at school are your business. And they can be your sense of pride. Don't let people who really don't matter to you affect your self-esteem. THEY are not worth it. YOU are.

Healthy self-esteem

Accepting yourself for who you are is very important. When you like yourself, it is easier to get into the more exciting and fun parts of growing up, like making new friends, challenging yourself both physically and mentally and becoming more independent. And what is really cool, is that if you are able to do all these things, it will only help your self-esteem to grow even more.

Tips for improving your Body Image

Your body is your own business, no matter what shape, size, or color it is. If you become concerned about your weight or size, check with your doctor to verify that things are OK. But it is no one's business but your own (and your parents) to determine what your body should look like — in the end, you need to be happy with yourself.

There may be things about yourself that you want to change in the future. Set goals for you that are attainable. If you want to get into better shape, make a plan to exercise most every day and eat foods that are good for you. Attaining a goal that you set for yourself can really help boost your self-esteem!

Where can I go if I Need Help?

Low self-esteem and body image problems sometimes become too much to handle alone. Some teens become depressed and lose interest in things they always enjoyed or people they used to like. If you ever start to feel this way, talk to a parent, coach, religious leader, guidance counselor, therapist, or an adult friend, or you can send an email to www.toynachin.com.

But if you feel like you don't have anyone to turn to, you can always call a teen crisis hotline.

The most important thing is to talk to someone if you feel really down.

What if you are uncomfortable with your body?

It is common to be embarrassed about all the changes you are going through when they first start happening during puberty. You may feel unhappy



or uncomfortable with the way you are developing. This may be true especially if you have friends who are developing slower or faster than you. Even if you cannot help comparing your body to your friends' bodies, remember that most girls share these same feelings, even if they are not talking about it.

The best way to relieve your stress and stop feeling embarrassed is to learn as much as you can about puberty –doing just what we are doing here in class. You will feel more comfortable with your body and know what to expect over the next several years. All girls go through puberty at their own pace, but everyone will catch up eventually. You and all your friends will have an adult body by the end of puberty.

what if you are unhappy about the changes that are occurring?

For some girls, the experience of starting puberty or getting their period is not a happy one. You may have heard other girls complaining about their periods. If you are unprepared for your period it can be pretty scary. You should be happy about such an important and pivotal development – you now have the gift of the ability to bring another human being into this world. You are becoming a woman, but it does not mean you have to give up your childhood. Getting your period is just one step, of many, which will lead to becoming an adult - which should be a happy occasion. When you have the right support and information there is no need to be frightened or confused. Talk to your parents about how you are feeling. Celebrate this time of your life.

Fitness

It's a great idea to begin taking on the responsibility for a healthy body as you begin puberty. Not only is your body growing and changing, but so is your mind. Part of that will mean that you are interested in making more decisions for and about yourself. This includes how to stay healthy. Eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly is something that every girl

should do. But deciding what you like to eat, and how you exercise is up to you. There are so many fun ways to be active, I'm sure you will find one that you enjoy. You can join a gym and train with weights or spend time on an elliptical machine. You can also choose an outdoor exercise like bike riding, running or swimming. Maybe you are already on a sports team, in which case you are probably already getting a lot of exercise.

Along with exercise it is very important to follow a healthy diet filled with whole grains, fruits and vegetables. And make sure you are getting a good amount of calcium each day. Remember, you are growing, and your bones need calcium to grow strong. Also, try to cut out foods that have a high fat or sugar content.. Not only will this keep you at a healthy weight, but it will also help keep acne at bay.

Often, teens have very busy schedules that won't allow them to easily follow a healthy diet. Unhealthy eating habits can be passed down through families, too. What family members eat and how they exercise has as much effect on your weight as the genes you inherit. If people in your family eat a lot of high-fat foods, snack a lot during the day, or don't get regular exercise, you may end up following that same pattern. The good news is that these habits can be changed. Simple exercise, even walking, can have huge benefits for your health. And don't forget that drinking water during the day to stay hydrated is another way to keep your body running smoothly.

Eating healthy foods every day means you won't have to diet. Diets aren't the best idea for girls or teens. Your body is actively growing and you want to make sure it has all the energy and nutrients it needs to grow as full to maturity as possible. And yes, you do need fat in your diet. How else do you think you are going to get those great curves that every girl dreams about? It is only by increasing body fat that



your hips will get rounder and your breasts will fill out to their maximum capability.

One of the ways doctors determine if you are a healthy weight is through a measurement called Body Mass Index (BMI). The BMI formula uses your weight, height, gender, and age to calculate a number. This number is then plotted on a graph, which tells you whether you are underweight, average weight, at risk of becoming overweight, or overweight.

Figuring out the body mass index is a little more complicated for teens going through puberty because growth hormones are also jump started during puberty - they make the body grow sometimes very quickly. You will gain weight, your arms and legs grow longer and your internal organs get larger as you go through your growth spurt. This is a normal part of puberty and usually lasts two to three years.

BMI charts for teens use percentile lines to help compare BMIs of a very large group of people the same age and gender. If you have concerns about your weight, ask your mom to make an appointment to see your doctor and they can help you figure out if you are on track.

But try not to get yourself tied up in knots about weight issues. It can actually make you gain weight if you tend

to eat when you are nervous or anxious. And skipping meals will only make you want to scarf down more food at the next meal. Most doctors agree that the best way to lose a little weight is to exercise more rather than diet. Remember that as you and your friends are going through puberty, your bodies will be growing at all different rates. You might be the same age and height as your friends, and yet have a totally different shape and weight, and it is totally normal. Look around you. Women come in all shapes and sizes. And you are going to grow into the woman you are meant to be.

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