



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**
Public and Aboriginal Health Division

Boys & Puberty

Almost everything boys will ever need to know
about body changes and other stuff!

In this booklet, we've got together a heap of information so that you can be informed about the important stuff. And it will help keep you safe and happy and well.

PS: If you want to know what girls go through, have a look at the *Girls & Puberty* booklet.



Blake aged 13 Jake aged 13



“Puberty is a gradual thing and everyone goes through it.”

Is it just me, or have I arrived on a new planet?

Puberty is the word used to describe all the changes that begin to happen when a child turns into an adult. This growth and development phase is also called adolescence. The changes you go through are preparing your body for reproduction (having children). Your body changes and the way you look at the world will likely change as well.

Puberty is a gradual thing and everyone goes through it. Puberty happens to you even while you are getting your homework done, swimming at the beach, or going to the movies.

Whatever your sex and gender, you will experience the physical and emotional changes of adolescence. For most people, puberty will start between the ages of nine and 13, but don't worry if you haven't noticed your body changing yet; it will change when it's the right time for you – everyone is different.

During puberty, you might compare your body with your friends' bodies. One friend may have a deeper voice. Another might have hair on his chest or under his arms. Everyone develops at different rates. But by the time everyone grows up, there won't be as many differences between you.

Some young people might feel the changes happening to them to be a little weird, but the more you know about it, the easier it is to adjust to things.

Sometimes when you're in the midst of changes at puberty, it might feel as if there is no one to talk to. Want to know something scary? Parents often understand more than you think they do! Remember, they went through puberty too! If you don't want to talk to your parents, you could try talking to a trusted relative or friend. Saying things out loud can be a good way of getting things clear in your mind.

So you know all about the changes that happen to you during puberty? And why it's important to look after yourself? Most of this puberty stuff you have probably already picked up from books, movies, the classroom, the internet, your mates, your parents – but do you know the whole story?

Are there things you have wondered about ... but haven't dared to ask?



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THINGS THAT CHANGE

Your body changes in puberty to become the way it will be when you are an adult. You might gain some weight, just as you have done every year since you were a baby. You will also find changes happening to your body hair, your genitals and your breasts. *All of it is perfectly normal.*

During puberty, your testicles (testes or 'balls') start producing the male hormone testosterone. This hormone triggers the changes in your body. Suddenly you will grow taller and begin to develop muscles. You will also notice changes to your voice, your body hair, your genitals, and possibly even your breasts.

ALEX



RAMON



COOPER



SAM



MORGAN



“As it is breaking, your voice will sometimes go squeaky when you are talking.”

Voice

During puberty your Adam's apple (larynx) gets bigger and your voice begins to 'break'.

Your vocal cords grow quickly. As it is breaking, your voice will sometimes go squeaky when you are talking, but once it has finished breaking, you will have the deeper voice of a man.

Breasts

About one-third of boys will experience some sort of minor breast development during puberty.

This is normal and usually nothing to worry about. You may notice swelling or lumps under your nipples. Your nipples may also feel tender when clothing rubs against them. Wearing a cover such as a bandaid might help with this.

The swelling usually lasts around four to six months, but it may continue for longer. See a doctor if this is worrying you.

Body hair

Hair will start to grow in your armpits and around the pubic area.

This hair will be fine and straight at first, and will become thicker and sometimes curlier as you get older. You may also find more hair growing on your legs and arms. Hair will also appear on your chin and upper lip. Everyone has different amounts of hair, with some men being quite hairy and others less so. The full range is normal.

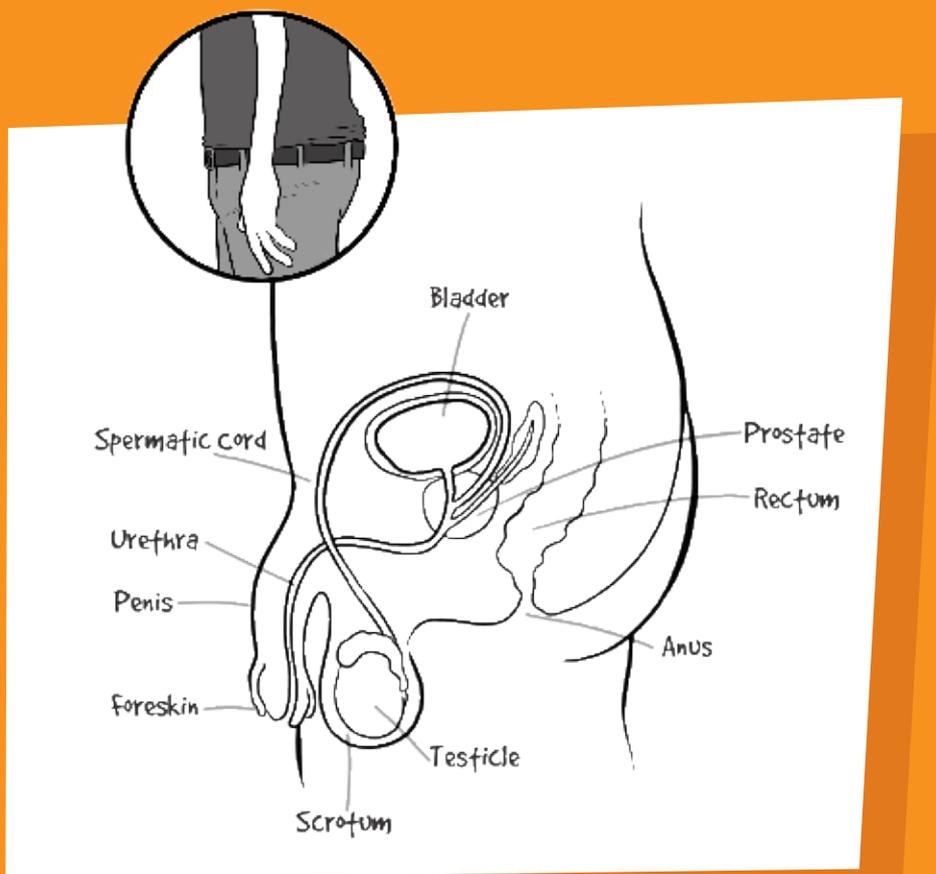
When should I shave?

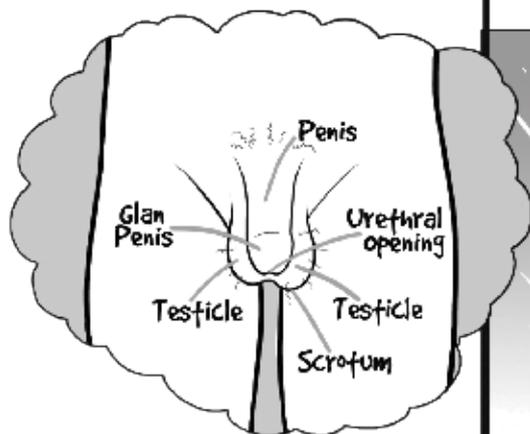
Your facial hair will be fine and downy at first but will become more bristly as you grow older. You will probably not need to shave much at first; this will become more regular in your later teenage years.

When you begin to shave is a matter of choice. You might like to talk your decision over with a parent or a trusted adult before you begin. You may also like some shaving lessons from someone who has done it before! Avoid sharing razors with other people as it can pass on blood-borne viruses.

A tour of the genitals (sex organs)

One area of our bodies that we tend to focus much of our attention on is our genitals. The penis is an important part of your body that will change during puberty. Penises vary in size and appearance, but when an adult penis is erect they are mostly a similar size. So there is no need to worry if you think your penis looks a little smaller than or different to other people's.





“There is no need to worry if you think your penis looks a little smaller than or different to other people’s.”

The penis

How do I look after my foreskin?

Sometimes the foreskin – a fold of skin which covers the tip of the penis (glans) – is removed surgically at birth. This operation is known as circumcision. Doctors rarely recommend circumcision, but for some boys it is performed due to cultural and religious beliefs. In previous generations, circumcision was common, but now only about 10% of boys born in Australia are circumcised each year. Sometimes boys are circumcised for medical reasons, but this is not common. Regardless, the penis works the same way with or without a foreskin.

For those with a foreskin, it is very important to keep the area beneath the foreskin clean. The foreskin should be pushed back daily and the glans gently washed.

“The penis works the same way with or without a foreskin.”

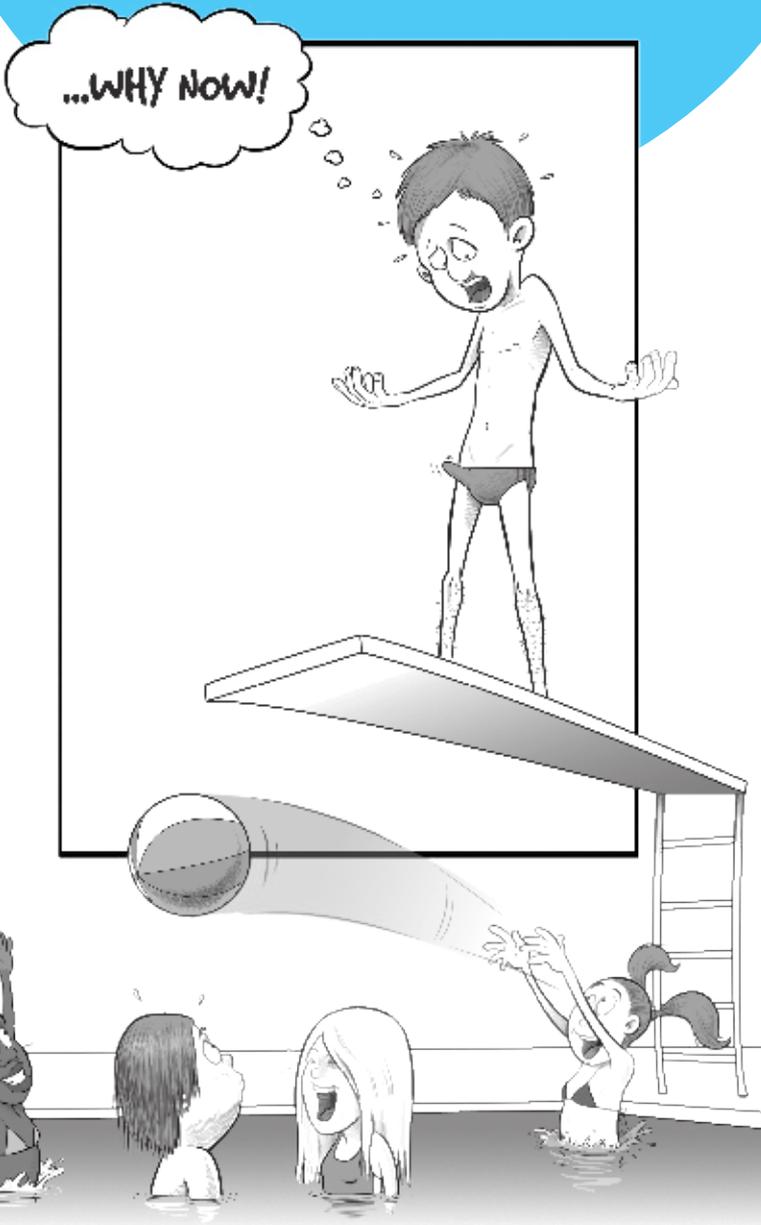
Why does my penis go hard?

One physical sign of sexual feelings for boys is when they get an erection.

When the penis is stimulated, or a boy becomes sexually aroused, it grows from being small, limp and soft to larger, erect and hard. The penis does not contain any bones and is not made of muscle. It becomes erect because the tissue inside it fills with blood under pressure.

Penises vary in size and appearance. There is a large natural variation, but when they are erect, they are mostly a similar size.

A thick whitish fluid is produced by the seminal vesicle and the prostate gland. This mixes with the sperm to form semen. At the peak of sexual excitement – when a male ‘reaches climax’, ‘comes’ or has an orgasm – semen is pumped out of the end of the erect penis. This is called ejaculation. The milky fluid or ejaculate (‘come’, ‘cum’) contains 200 to 500 million sperm. During sexual excitement, but before orgasm or ejaculation, a small amount of clear fluid may be released from the penis. The clear fluid is called ‘pre-cum’ and can also carry live, active sperm.



What happens to my urine when I ejaculate?

Semen passes from the testicles through the spermatic cord before being ejaculated through the urethra – the same tube that urine passes through. It is impossible for urine and semen to become mixed because the flow of urine is automatically stopped when your penis is erect.

What is a wet dream?

During puberty, you can become sexually excited or aroused quite easily. Ejaculations can happen while you are asleep. These are called nocturnal emissions, or 'wet dreams'. Wet dreams are completely normal. They are your body's way of getting rid of a build-up of semen in your body.

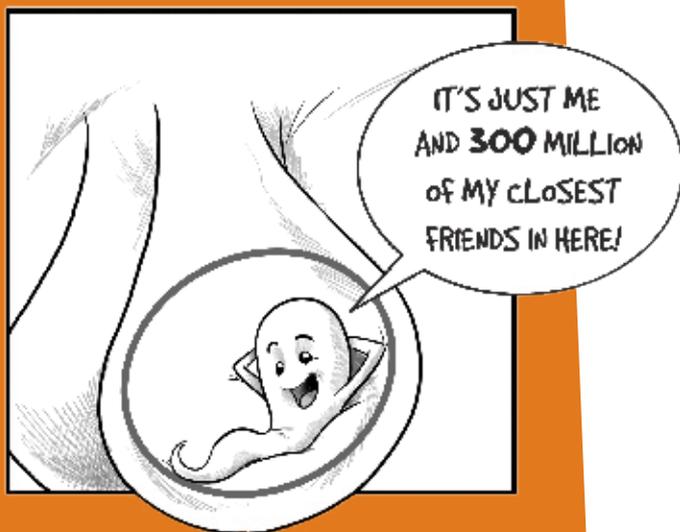
When you wake up after a wet dream, your sheets or pyjamas may feel slightly sticky. Sometimes you may remember the good feeling you had in the night, or you may remember nothing at all.

The testes

During puberty, there is a change in your testicles (testes).

With help from the male hormone testosterone, the testicles begin to produce sperm. Sperm are tadpole-shaped and their 'tails' help them move. This movement of sperm is important for reproduction (see *Why does my penis go hard*, page 10). Sperm are so tiny that they can only be seen under a microscope.

The testicles need to be kept cool for the sperm to develop normally. This is why they hang outside the body in a sac (bag) called the scrotum. It is quite normal for one testicle (testis) to be larger or to hang lower than the other. At birth, some boys may have experienced what is called 'undescended testicles' where one or both testicles fail to move down into the scrotum. This is usually corrected after birth.



However, even testicles that have moved down into the scrotum will sometimes pull back into the body, for instance in cold water, or during sex. This is quite normal. They will eventually move back into place on their own. Any concerns you have about differences in the testicles can be talked over with a doctor.

Why should I check my testicles?

Once you reach puberty, it is a good idea to regularly check the size and shape of your testicles. A good time to do this is in the shower.

The purpose of this check is to get to know the size, shape and texture of your testicles. It is perfectly normal for one of your testicles to be bigger than the other. But if you notice any changes in your testicles, especially an unusual lump, you must see a doctor. One of the most common cancers for men between the ages of 15 and 30 is cancer of the testes.

“ It is quite normal for one testicle to be larger or to hang lower than the other.”

Sexual feelings

As your body changes during the course of adolescence, you may notice changes in how you feel physically and emotionally. These feelings help to prepare us for adult life, relationships, marriage, having sex and making babies.

It is quite normal to suddenly experience strong feelings, or crushes, for certain people, of the same or opposite sex. These feelings may remain private, or you may choose to confide in a friend, or express your feelings to the person directly.

Bear in mind that speaking your feelings aloud can put you in a vulnerable space. If your feelings are not returned by the other person, you may feel exposed and rejected. Or, if they are reciprocated, you may find yourself in an exciting new friendship or relationship.

It's also completely normal to not have these feelings at this stage.

What if someone gets a crush on me?

You may find that someone feels strongly about you but that you don't return these feelings. Try to treat this person with respect and kindness. Be honest and clear about your feelings.



LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Eat right and exercise

With all these monumental changes in your body, it is important to look after yourself well.

If you give your body the fuel it needs to grow, and regular exercise, you will be giving yourself the best chance to feel good.

“Choose something active that you enjoy – that way you’ll keep doing it.”

What’s good?

- A well-balanced diet. Include lots of fresh fruit and vegies and plenty of water.
- Exercise! If you don’t enjoy sport, try hitting the dance floor (or the lounge room) with friends. Ride to school, take your dog for a walk, or get out on your skateboard. Choose something active that you enjoy – that way you’ll keep doing it.

What’s not?

- Fatty foods, fried foods and sugary foods (e.g. pastries, biscuits, chips, lollies).
- Stay away from crash diets. They don’t work.
- Being a couch potato.



Pimples and acne

In puberty your body is a hormone producing machine. The production of new hormones also affects your oil-producing (sebaceous) glands and your sweat glands.

Pimples are caused by over-activity of the oil-producing glands. These glands lie just under the skin. They produce sebum, the natural oil that keeps your skin supple. During puberty, your hormones make the oil-producing glands grow bigger and produce extra sebum. This sebum is often thick and flows slowly, so it tends to clog the pores, causing pimples. When pimples become very inflamed, a more severe condition called acne can develop. Some teenagers are troubled by pimples and/or acne for several years and may need treatment.

How can I look after my skin?

Frequent, gentle washing with warm water and a mild soap or face wash can help. Dirt doesn't cause acne but washing can get rid of excess sebum. You may also find that certain foods such as sugary and fatty foods make your pimples worse. Cut down on these. Eat lots of fresh fruit and vegies and drink plenty of water. Try to avoid touching or squeezing pimples as this can make them worse or cause scars. If your skin is really bothering you, then you should see your doctor, as medical treatments are available to treat severe cases of acne.



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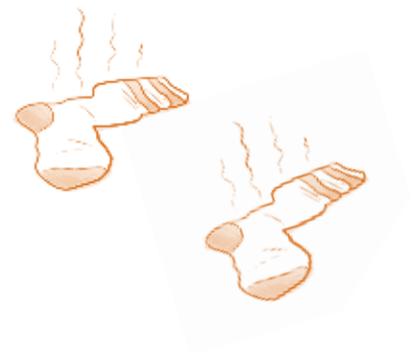


Sweat

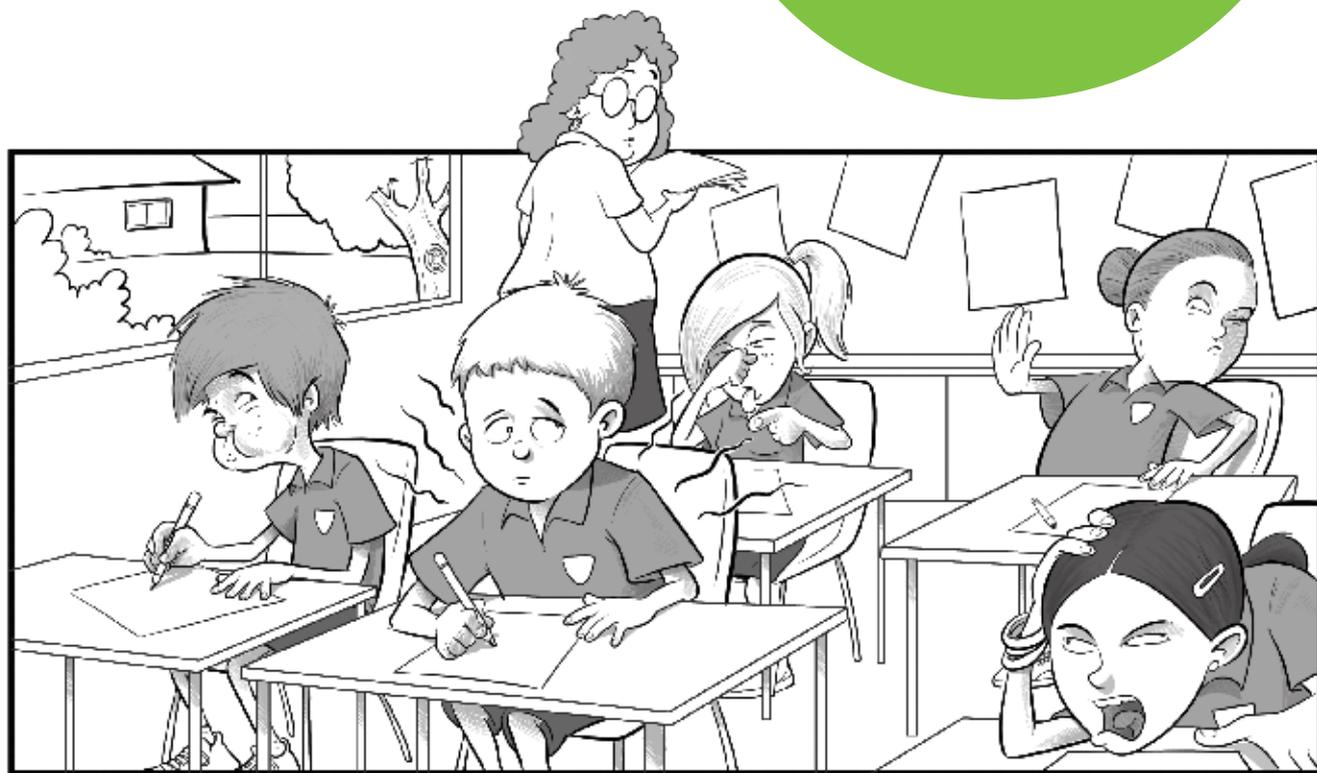
Once you reach puberty, you may also find that you sweat more. Remember that sweating is a normal human function. The healthiest of sportspeople lose buckets of sweat out on the sports field!

By itself, sweat does not have much of a smell but bacteria which live on the skin can create a smell called body odour or BO.

To avoid body odour, wash your body daily, especially the underarm area, using mild soap and warm water. Change and wash your clothes often. It helps to wear loose-fitting clothing, made from natural fibres. An underarm deodorant will be useful, too. Body odour is one of the many things that people get needlessly anxious about. If you bathe and wash your clothes regularly, it is very unlikely you will have a problem.



“Sweat does not have much of a smell but bacteria which live on the skin can create a smell called body odour or BO.”



Body image

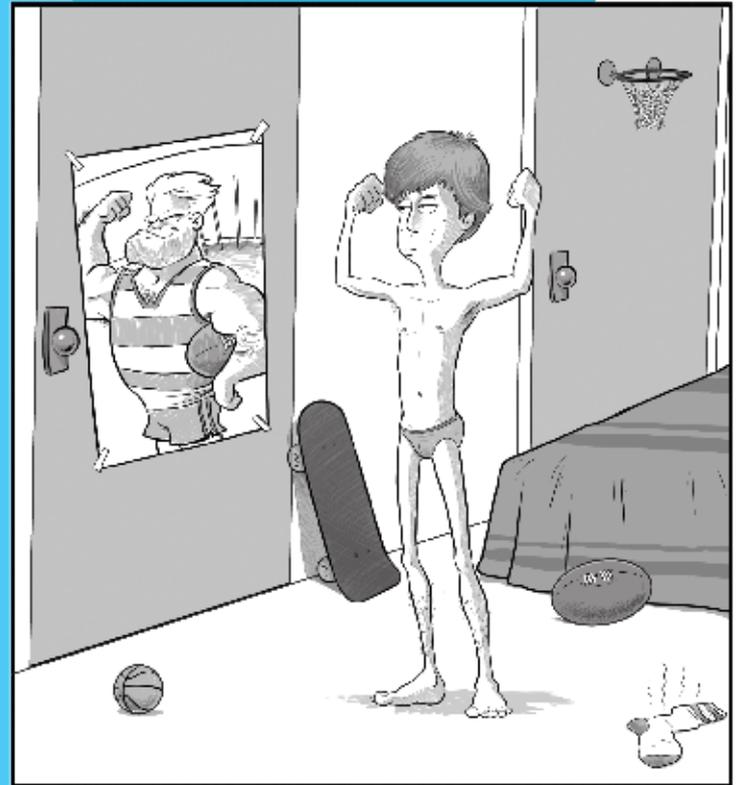
As you get older you may become more aware of your body and the way you look. A usual and common feature of puberty is to worry about the way you look and compare yourself with those around you.

The world around us communicates all kinds of things about what the 'perfect body' is supposed to look like. Of course, there is no perfect body! But we are bombarded by images on TV, movies, advertisements and social media.

Look around at your family, friends and people you see on the street. You will see that in reality, people of all ages and sexes come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Those images you see on social media and on TV have typically been selected, altered and sometimes touched up to create unrealistic, flawless looking people.

It can be a bit confusing to work out who you are and what you want to look like. Have fun finding your own personal style, appreciate qualities in yourself (and others) other than appearance, and celebrate the fact that we are all different and unique!

“People of all ages and sexes come in a variety of shapes and sizes.”



For more information go to:

- Kids Helpline
1800 55 1800
- The Butterfly Foundation
www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au

Mental wellbeing

As well as changes happening to your body on the outside, there are changes happening on the inside, too.

Hormones can make us feel euphoric and excited or a bit moody and emotional; everyone has their ups and downs (even adults – but you already know that!). It is as important to take care of your mental wellbeing as it is your physical health.

The good news is that, like physical changes, the potentially worrying aspects of mental health such as anxiety or depression can be dealt with and managed too. There are plenty of things you can do to help yourself, like eating well, getting enough sleep, exercising, taking time to relax if you are stressed, and being socially active and involved in your community. Sometimes you might not be able to solve a worry on your own. Don't be afraid to ask a trusted adult if you need help. The sooner you get some help, the sooner things can improve.

For more information go to:

- **Headspace**
www.headspace.org.au
- **Youth Beyond Blue**
www.youthbeyondblue.com
- **Kids Helpline**
1800 55 1800



CONCLUSION

Puberty is a time of many changes, both physical and emotional. Some of these changes are exciting, others are daunting. Don't forget that there are adults around you who can help you through the tricky times.

When you emerge at the other end of puberty, you will be well on the way to becoming an adult.

If you want some useful information and advice about relationships, love and sex, look out for the booklet ***Relationships, sex & other stuff***, available from teachers and school nurses.

Flip the booklet over
if you're interested
to read what girls
go through.

