

# Adolescents (8-12)

Early adolescence, commonly referred to as “puberty,” is one of the most physically and emotionally dynamic of all the phases of human development. This is the time when young people begin the transition from childhood into adulthood, undergoing many significant physical and emotional changes. This can be an exciting, but challenging time for both adolescents and their parents. We have included some tips and resources to help you help your child navigate this formative time of life.

## Changes to Anticipate During Puberty:

- Discomfort and/or pleasure with their new and unpredictable bodies
- More conformity to and emphasis on their peer group
- Becoming more aware of and interested in others sexually
- Increased importance of physical appearance and personal grooming
- Orientation around self

## Supporting Your Child Through the Changes:

- Provide acceptance and lots of self-esteem building. Most children going through puberty want reassurance that they are “normal.” You can expect a lot of questions like, “What age will this happen?” and “What age is that supposed to happen?” Explain that everyone goes through puberty at a different rate that is right for them.
- Provide your child information not only about what is happening to their bodies, but why. Make sure your child gets information about human reproduction and sexuality. The information may not be provided at school, so be sure to share the information yourself or provide your child with books and other sources you trust.
- Provide opportunities for handling responsibility and making independent decisions, but set limits as well.
- Encourage open communication. Read further for tips on how to answer their difficult questions about sexuality.
- Offer moral support and information as they try new things.
- Don’t shut off physical affection, as is sometimes the tendency around the onset of puberty. You may try to find new ways of showing affection that your child is more comfortable with.
- Expect arguing. Your adolescents’ ability to reason abstractly is developing, so they are more capable of understanding and arguing with your reasons. Encourage them to share feelings and opinions in a respectful manner.

- Encourage kids to talk about any self-conscious, embarrassed, or confusing feelings resulting from the physical and emotional changes of adolescence. Sharing your own experiences may be helpful.
- Teach and encourage good hygiene, as hygiene requirements change with puberty.
- Teach your child skills to critically evaluate the information they are receiving from other sources such as their peers and all types of media especially television, movies and the internet.

## **Resources**

### **Books:**

Changing Bodies, Changing Lives, by Ruth Bell.

Dr. Ruth Talks to Kids, by Ruth Westheimer.

Let's Talk About S-E-X: A Read-and-Discuss Guide for People 9-12 and Their Parents, by Gitchel and Foster.

PERIOD., by JoAnne Gardner-Loulan, et al.

What's Happening to Me?, by Peter Mayle.

What's Happening to My Body? Book for Boys and What's Happening to My Body? Book for Girls, by Lynda Madaras.

My Body, My Self, by Lynda and Area Madaras.

My Feelings, My Self, by Lynda and Area Madaras.

It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexual Health, by Robie H. Harris.

Talking About Sex: A Guide for Families, by Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

### **Curricula:**

Can We Talk? Helping Families Talk About Self-Esteem, Sex and Peer Pressure, This program helps parents of children in grades 4 through 8 enhance their role as sexuality educators of their children.

The Spanish version ¿Conversamos? is also available.

1998; \$75; NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 2035, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701; Phone:

800/229-4200; Fax: 301/206-9789; Web site: <http://www.canwetalk.org>

There's No Place Like Home... For Sex Education, by Mary Gossart, MS

No Hay Lugar Como El Hogar... Para La Educación Sexual, Spanish Translation Bojana

Stefanovska, These reproducible parent newsletters in both English and Spanish that can be distributed in a variety of settings. It consists of five newsletters for each grade level pre-school through twelve that are intended to assist families in communicating more openly about sexuality.

1999; \$55; Planned Parenthood Health Services of Southwestern Oregon, 1670 High Street, Eugene, OR 97401; Phone: 541/344-1611 x 13; Fax: 541/342-6088