

# A Boy's Guide to Growing Up!



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# A Boy's Guide to Growing Up!

Aahung is a non-profit organization that has been working to improve the sexual and reproductive health and rights of the people of Pakistan since 1995. Aahung's programs for youth and children focus on developing skills that enable the children to better protect and care for themselves, build self esteem and confidence, challenge gender stereotypes, enhance body image, and improve communication skills and assertive behaviour.

# A Boy's Guide to Growing Up!

Growing up and becoming a young adult can be both exciting and scary at the same time. Your body and emotions are going to change at an amazing pace and sometimes the changes can be intimidating or confusing. When these changes start to happen, it may be hard for you to understand and adjust to them. What makes it harder is that nobody talks about the changes very much.

"A Boy's Guide to Growing Up!" can be very helpful to you because it's going to give you all the information you need to understand what is going to happen to your body as you make the transition into becoming a young adult. Because growing up can be challenging and complicated, the guide might not be able to solve all your problems or answer all your questions, but when you know more about what is happening to you, you will be a lot more confident about your changing body and mind and better prepared to take care of yourself. If you still have unanswered questions after you are done reading, talk to adults you can trust - your father, grandfathers, brothers, cousins or older friends are all great sources of information. You'll find that if you're not embarrassed about asking questions, they won't be as embarrassed about giving you the answers.

So let's get started and find out how special you are!

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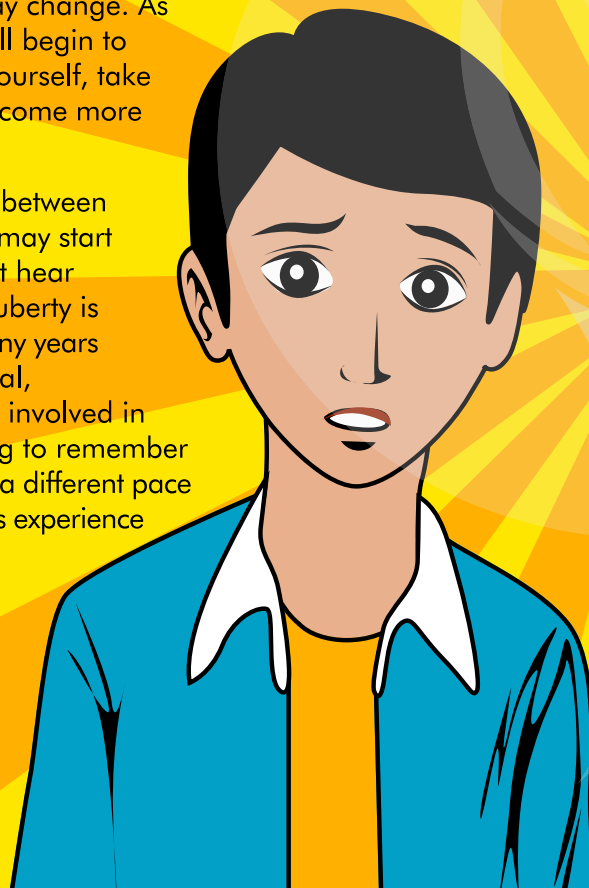
## What is Puberty?

As part of growing up you will go through puberty. Puberty is the time in your life when your body changes from that of a young boy to that of a man. These changes are caused by chemicals in the body called hormones. Because there are so many changes that happen during puberty, you may feel like your body is out of control. In time, your hormones will balance out and you will feel better.

Not only does your body change, but your emotions change too. How you think and feel about yourself and your family and friends may change. As you go through puberty, you will begin to make important decisions for yourself, take on more responsibilities and become more independent.

Although puberty usually starts between the ages of 10 to 14 in boys, it may start earlier or later. While you might hear people say you've grown up, puberty is a gradual process that takes many years to complete as there are physical, emotional and mental changes involved in the process. The important thing to remember about puberty is that it occurs at a different pace in each individual and everyone's experience of puberty is unique.

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## How Will My Body Change?

The following are some of the changes your body will go through during puberty:

### Growth of Testes and Penis

The sequence of changes in puberty usually begins with the enlargement of your testes. This development may start as early as 9 years of age, with the average age being about 12 years. At this time, your scrotal sac (the sac of skin that hangs below the penis) loosens, grows longer and deepens in color. During puberty your penis will also grow longer and wider. This growth may start as early as 10 years of age or as late as age 14. As your penis grows, its skin will deepen in color.

#### Does size really matter?

Many boys worry about the size and shape of their penis. Is it too small? Too big? Too thin? Does it hang straight? Does it curve slightly to one side? It is important to remember that penises come in all shapes and sizes and are all very different. If you haven't yet begun to develop, your penis will, quite naturally, be smaller than that of a friend or classmate who is well into puberty. Also, if you're in one of the early stages of puberty, it is very normal for your scrotum and testicles to grow noticeably some time before your penis begins its growth. Growth in penis size is just one part of puberty and late starters almost always catch up fine.

### Ejaculations

About a year after developmental changes have started occurring in your body, you may start to experience your first ejaculation of fluid from the penis. The whitish fluid is called semen and contains sperm cells, the male reproductive cells which carry half the information required to make a baby. The first ejaculation you experience marks the onset of reproductive capability. Often the first ejaculation a boy has occurs while he is sleeping, and is thus referred to as a nocturnal emission or wet dream.

#### Did you know?

- ♂ The average ejaculate contains between 40 million to 600 million sperm.
- ♂ The average volume of ejaculate is around half a teaspoon.
- ♂ On average, semen is ejaculated at the speed of 67 miles/hr.

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## Nocturnal Emissions/Wet Dreams

Nocturnal emissions are also known as wet dreams and refer to ejaculations that occur in developing boys while they are sleeping. Please remember that nocturnal emissions are not the result of "bad thoughts." They are a natural part of development in boys and are necessary to expel stored up sperm that needs to be released. With time, ejaculation of sperm will become more controlled by you as you start to understand your body functions.

## Erections

Erections occur when the penis hardens because blood has filled into the tubes that run through it. Erections are more commonly experienced after the onset of puberty and there is not much that can be done to control an erection - it will either go away with some time, or after you ejaculate. Although it can be embarrassing to get an erection in public, over time you will be better able to control when you get one. Since each individual is different, there is no way to determine how many erections are "normal" to experience in one day. As long as they are not causing any pain or discomfort, it is usually safe to say that the number of erections you experience is dependent on your own body, and can vary a great deal from day to day.

## Voice Cracking

During puberty you will develop a deeper voice. Once your vocal cords have finished growing, your voice will stop cracking and squeaking and you will have a lower, deeper, adult voice. The hormone, testosterone, causes your larynx/voice box to grow and your vocal cords to get longer and thicker.

Everyone's timetable is different, so some of your friends' voices might start to change earlier and some might start a little later. Some voices might drop gradually, whereas others might drop quickly. If this hasn't happened to you yet, don't worry. And if you're going through this now, try not to stress too much about the funny noises you make. It can help to talk to a parent, an older sibling, or a friend who has already gone through the voice change. Before you know it, your voice will sound clear, strong, and more grown up!

**What is that little bump that is starting to stick out from the front of my throat?**



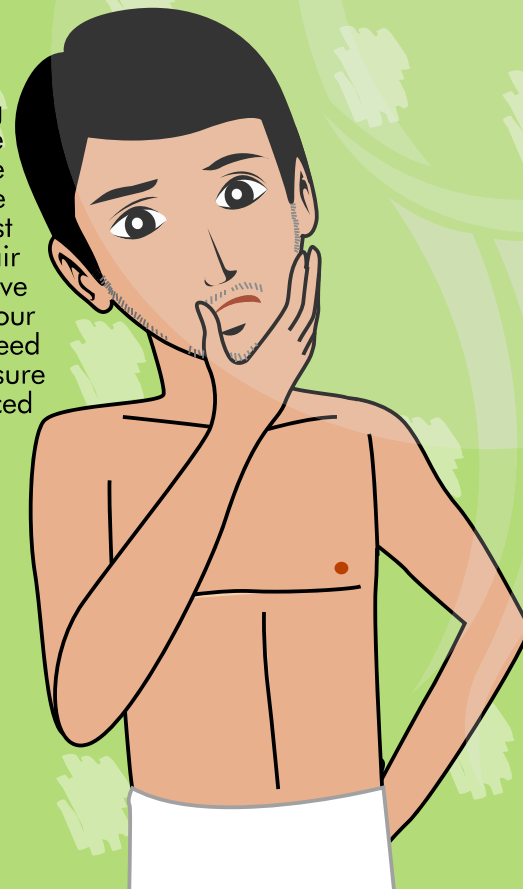
As your voice starts to get deeper, your larynx/voice box starts to grow larger as well. The voice box is the hard, bumpy bit that sticks out from the front of the throat. While everyone's voice box grows during puberty, boys tend to develop voice boxes that stick out a little bit and therefore, show more than girls. This is also the reason that men tend to have deeper voices than women!

## Hair Growth

This is usually one of the first signs of puberty and happens on average between the ages of 10 to 15. Hair grows in the armpits and groin (area around your penis) as well as the chest, back and legs. Facial hair appears on the area above your upper lip and hair grows down the sides of the face and on the chin. Over time body hair may become wiry, darker, thicker and/or curly.

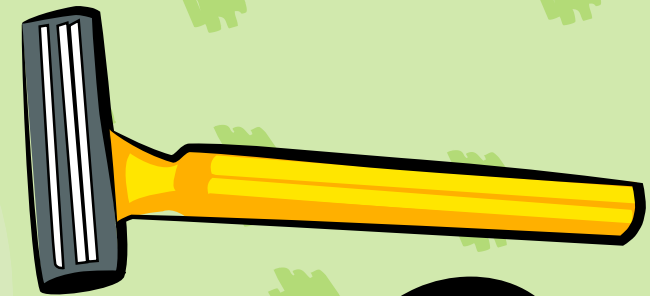
### When can I shave my face?

Shaving seems like such a manly thing to do, so it's no surprise that boys are eager to do it. But most boys won't have enough hair on their faces to shave until they're well into their teens. Most boys don't get a full crop of facial hair until the end of puberty. So you will have already grown bigger and taller, and your voice will have changed, before you need to pick up a razor. Before you do, be sure to ask your father or another experienced shaver for some tips.



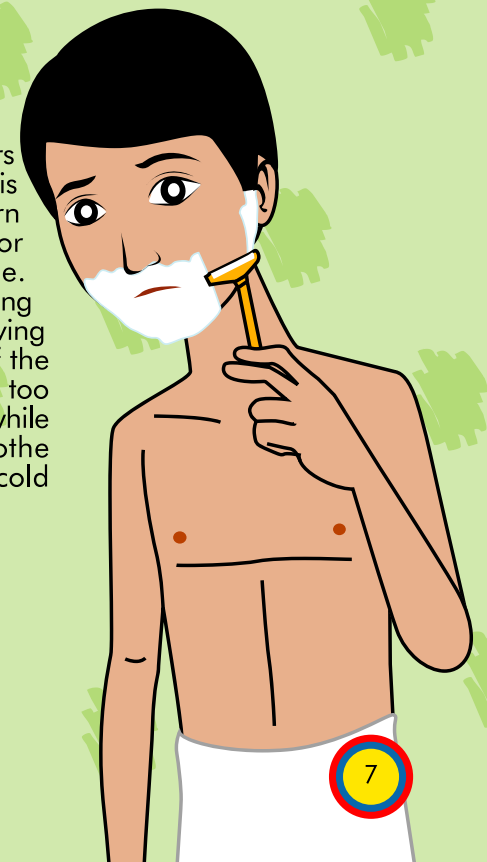
### How does shaving work?

A razor is a sharp blade that cuts the hair off close to the skin. Shaving removes the tip of the hair shaft that pokes out of the skin, but the hair grows back. Your skin might stay smooth for as little as a day or as long as 3 days. When you start shaving make sure you use a clean razor and don't share it with anyone else because it may contain germs and cause infections.



### How can I prevent razor burn?

You may notice a mild rash that appears on your face 2-4 days after shaving. This irritation of the skin is called razor burn and is caused by using a blunt blade or not using a proper shaving technique. Ways to prevent razor burn include keeping the face moist, using a moisturizing shaving gel/cream, shaving in the direction of the hair growth, resisting the urge to shave too closely and applying minimal pressure while shaving. You can help heal and soothe razor burn by applying aloe vera or cold water to your skin.





## Face and Skin Changes

During puberty you may experience oily skin and notice you sweat more. This is because your glands are growing too. You may also develop acne (pimples) on your face, back, chest and neck. The blackheads, whiteheads or red bumps of acne affect nearly every teenager and many young adults. Acne happens because of the hormonal changes that come with puberty. If your parents had acne as teens, it's more likely that you will, too. The good news is that, for most people, acne goes away almost completely by the time they are out of their teens.

### What can I do about acne?

To help prevent the oil buildup that can contribute to acne, wash your face twice a day. Don't scrub your face hard with a cloth - acne can't be scrubbed away, and scrubbing may actually make it worse by irritating the skin and pores. Try cleansing your face as gently as you can.

If you look in the mirror and see a pimple, don't touch it, squeeze it or pick at it. This might be hard to do - it can be pretty tempting to try and get rid of a pimple. Playing around with pimples can cause even more inflammation by opening them up. Picking at pimples can also leave tiny, permanent scars on your face.



Puberty Characteristic	Age of Occurrence
Testes grow in size	10-13 years
Penis grows in size	11-14.5 years
Pubic hair starts to develop	10-15 years
Voice deepens	11-14.5 years
Underarm and facial hair develops	2 years after pubic hair growth begins
Growth in height and width of chest	10.5-16 years
Oil and sweat gland production increases	Begins at the same time as underarm hair growth

## Why Do I Feel Different?

Puberty can bring with it a host of psychological changes that are often very confusing and disorienting. You tend to start becoming more concerned about what others think of you as you develop more independence from the home and rely to a greater extent on peers and friends. With so many changes occurring in your body, it is also common for you to become more self-conscious about how you look in comparison to others and to start to develop insecurities about your body. While it is normal to compare your body to that of your peers, you should try to remember that everyone goes through puberty in their own unique way and that everyone's body looks different. The great thing about being "you" is that you are unique.

As hormone levels change drastically in your body, shifts in mood become very common as well. You may find yourself feeling insecure, overly agitated by your surroundings or easily angered by people and situations. In addition, you may experience new and confusing feelings towards relationships that you have never had to deal with before.

It may be difficult for you to deal with all of these new emotions and feelings and it is normal to be left with a number of questions and confusion about what is happening to your body and mind. Thus, it is important to seek answers to your questions and develop an understanding of the changes going on in the body. Going through puberty is tough and talking about what you are thinking and feeling may make it easier to get through. While some young people feel comfortable talking to family members about their anxieties, others prefer to talk to teachers, counselors, health care professionals or other trusted adults.

## Discovering Who I Am

Adolescence is a time period when you start to develop your own sense of self and often begin to ask questions about who you are and what you would like to become. As you develop more independence from home, it is natural that friends and peers start to play a more important role in your life. The increasing independence you crave, combined with your heightened sensitivity levels, may create some conflict at home.

Yet, you should try to remember that you are not the only one going through drastic changes. Parents and family members are present to witness the sudden changes that occur with the body and mind, and often parents have difficulty dealing with the speed at which such changes are occurring. Just as parents need to continue being a source of guidance without being overly repressive and controlling, you also need to try and remember that parents are used to making decisions for you from the time you were a completely dependent infant. It is the transitional period for parents and adolescents that tends to create conflict and problems. Young people want respect and independence, while parents are used to making decisions for them and cannot easily get used to the idea that they are not in complete control.

## Surviving Puberty

Puberty can be one of the toughest parts of life. With the help and support of relatives and friends, you can sail through it, though. It helps to remember that you are not the only one going through this and that everyone goes through puberty. Puberty is a totally normal and healthy process and is nothing to be ashamed of.

### Additional Tips to Help:

- Ask lots of questions. It is nice to know how and what your body is doing, how it will affect your life and how to keep it all in perspective. If you feel shy, remember that EVERYONE goes through puberty!
- Look for more information about puberty in your library and/or bookstores or directly from a responsible older person you trust.
- Respect your body, eat nutritious foods and get plenty of exercise.
- Accept your body and the changes it is going through. Remember that everyone goes through those changes, but that you are an individual. Try not to compare yourself to anyone else.
- If you feel sad, confused or totally weird, talk to somebody. Believe it or not, you already know someone you can talk to about your personal feelings and the changes you are going through.
- Give your parents a chance. They can really give you a lot of support and information if you let them in.



### Emotional Changes You May Experience During Puberty:

Feeling closer to, and more dependent on peers and friends.

Feeling less close to, and less dependent on family members and elders.

Feelings of anger and frustration.

Frequent mood swings.

Feelings of confusion.

Feelings of attraction to the same or opposite sex.

Feelings of insecurity about one's physical appearance and talents.

Feeling curiosity towards one's body.

Feelings of bitterness towards rules and regulations, especially those that are set forth by family.

Feelings of being an independent adult as well as a dependent child.

Feeling the need for privacy.

Feelings of low self-esteem.



## Hygiene

### Tips to Keep Your Body Clean and Fresh:

- ♂ Bathe or shower everyday, especially after you sweat.
- ♂ Wash your face twice a day, in the morning and evening. This will also help to control oil production, which can result in pimples.
- ♂ Wash your hair at least 2 to 3 times per week, or as often as necessary to keep it clean and oil free.
- ♂ Use antiperspirant or deodorant under your arms to control sweating and odour. Puberty increases the amount of sweat produced by the body and results in the odour of sweat being stronger.
- ♂ Wash your testicles and penis on a daily basis, to prevent infections, especially after having a wet dream.
- ♂ Wash your clothes regularly. The same bacteria from your skin can also live on sweaty clothes and keep the smell alive.
- ♂ Your underwear or pants should not be too tight, and they should allow room for movement and air to help control bacteria growth. If underwear gets wet or soiled, it should be changed.



## Myth or Fact?

### **Ejaculation is unhealthy and makes you weak - Myth**

Ejaculation is a healthy and natural process. As your hormones settle down and you advance through puberty, the frequency of unexpected erections and wet dreams should decrease.

### **Sometimes erections happen for no reason at all - Fact**

It is normal for boys to experience erections - sometimes spontaneous erections may occur which cannot be controlled. Although embarrassing, there is nothing wrong or harmful about them, with no need to feel shame or guilt.

### **The shape and size of the penis is different for all males - Fact**

There's a fairly wide range of normal penis size just as there is for every other body part. Just like other parts of the body, the appearance of the penis varies at different stages of life.

### **Masturbation is harmful - Myth**

Masturbation is defined as stimulating the genital organs for sexual pleasure. There are a number of myths and misconceptions surrounding masturbation which make people think that there is something harmful in the practice. Such myths include masturbation causing insanity, weakness, the development of pimples, exhaustion of the stock of semen and the development of a bent penis. However, no scientific or medical evidence has ever been found to support these myths. Rather, masturbation is a normal practice which can be done throughout life without having any negative effects on the body.

### **It is possible to masturbate too much - Myth**

There is no such thing as masturbating too much, as usually people masturbate according to their physical needs. The only time that it can become a physical problem is if it becomes a compulsive behavior, which is done all day long. In addition, masturbation can be psychologically harmful if it is being practiced with feelings of guilt, shame or anxiety that usually stem from social taboos associated with the act.

### **All healthy boys and girls experience puberty as a normal part of life - Fact**

Puberty is a natural and normal process and is a part of growing up for all boys and girls. Chemicals in the body, known as hormones, cause the body to change from that of a child to that of an adult. Because there are so many changes that happen during puberty, adolescents may feel like their body is out of control. In time, their hormones will balance out and their body will catch up.

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Apart from trusted adults, there are a number of resources that you can turn to if you want information with regards to puberty, your body and sexuality.

#### WEBSITES

[www.goaskalice.columbia.com](http://www.goaskalice.columbia.com)

[www.sxetc.org](http://www.sxetc.org)

[www.puberty101.com](http://www.puberty101.com)

[www.kidshealth.com](http://www.kidshealth.com)

[www.plannedparenthood.org/health](http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health)

Youth Help line

0800 22 444 (Toll-Free Number)

[awaz@mail.comsats.net.pk](mailto:awaz@mail.comsats.net.pk)