



UNDERSTANDING US



NAVIGATING
GENDER &
PUBERTY FOR
ADOLESCENTS



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Ideated by Sudeshna Maiti

Researched by Aakriti Parashar and Akansha Sinha

Curated by Aakriti Parashar

Designed by Ravi Yadav

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Contact

Centre for Civil Society

A-69 Hauz Khas, New Delhi 110 016

Tel: +91-11-26537456


Email: ccs@ccs.in | URL: www.ccs.in



NOTE TO GUARDIANS & TEACHERS

This book is aimed at educating young children just entering or in the early years of adolescence on the basics of gender sensitization and puberty. These topics fall under the ambit of Comprehensive Sexuality Education or CSE, which gives students the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values to make appropriate and healthy choices as they grow.

The content is designed for the children to consume themselves, and does not need adult supervision. The creators of the book have prepared the materials keeping the sensitivity of the topics in mind.



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GENDER SENSITIZATION



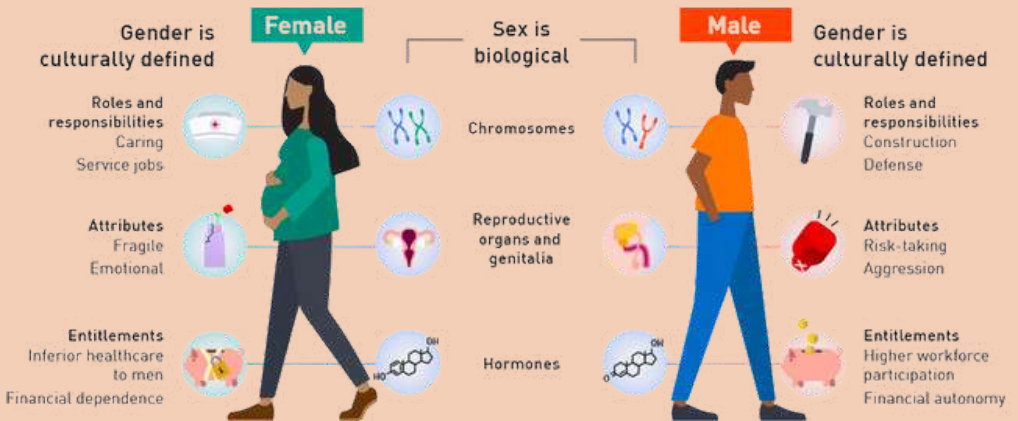
Growing up, we have all used the terms ‘sex’ or ‘gender’ to categorise ourselves as girls or boys – but do ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ mean the same thing?

They don't! And it's important to learn the difference.

Sex refers to your biological features like chromosomes, reproductive organs, and hormones – categorising a person as male, female, or intersex.

Gender refers to the concept of how you identify yourself based on societal and cultural norms. Gender is a spectrum, as you can have masculine, feminine, both, or neither traits.

Sex vs Gender



Gender Roles



are social rules that say what boys and girls are expected to do or be like.

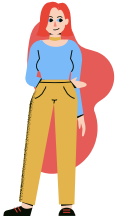
For instance: A man is expected to go work at office while a woman is expected to stay home to look after household chores and children.



Which of these images seems more likely and why?

- a man cooking at home
- a woman at a construction site

Understanding Division of Labour



Use the table below to tick (✓) or write “YES” against the jobs suitable for the respective categories -
Example - if you think a man does the job of a tailor at home, put a check the first box!

Work/ Job	Man (does this at home)	Woman (does this at home)	Man (does this outside)	Woman (does this outside)
Tailor				
Cook				
Cleaner				
Waiter				
Teacher				
Clothes washer				



GENDER LANGUAGE

What difference does a name make?

HERE ARE SOME WORDS AND JOB TITLES. CAN YOU THINK OF WAYS YOU WOULD CHANGE THESE TITLES TO MAKE THEM MORE GENDER FAIR OR NEUTRAL?

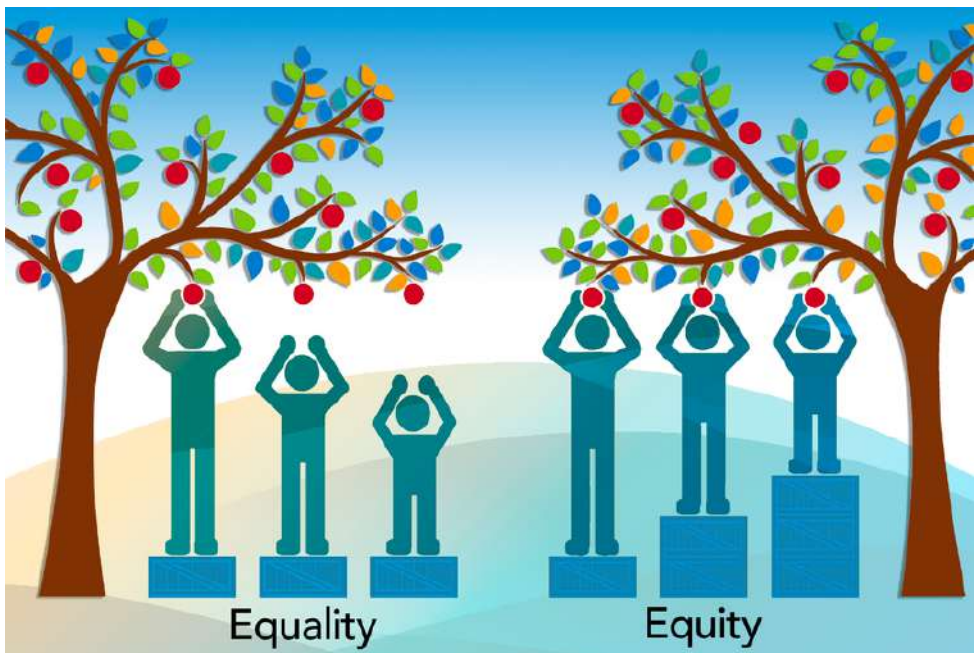


Gendered Word	Gender Neutral Word
foreman	
repairman	
fisherman	
manpower	
housewife	
mailman	
weatherman	
policeman	
milkmaid	
man made	
landlord	
sportsmanship	
cleaning lady	

Gender Equality versus Gender Equity

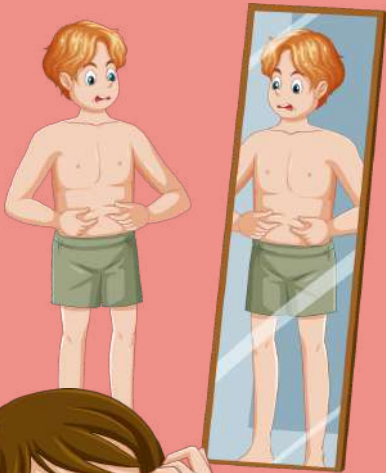
Gender equality means treating boys and girls, men and women, the same and giving them the same opportunities. It's like saying everyone should have the chance to do the things they like, no matter if they are a boy or a girl.

Gender equity means making sure everyone gets a fair chance to do what they love, even if they are boys or girls. Imagine you and your friend both like drawing – here, equity means that both of you should have the same resources to take art classes, use cool art supplies, and share your drawings with others.



PUBERTY

Physical & Emotional Changes in Adolescents



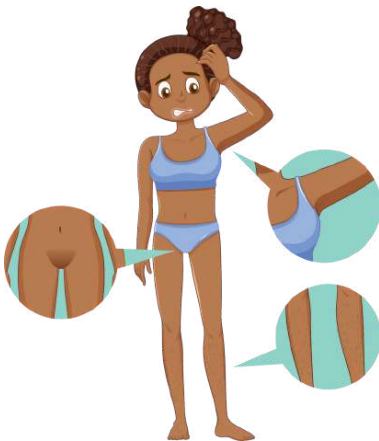
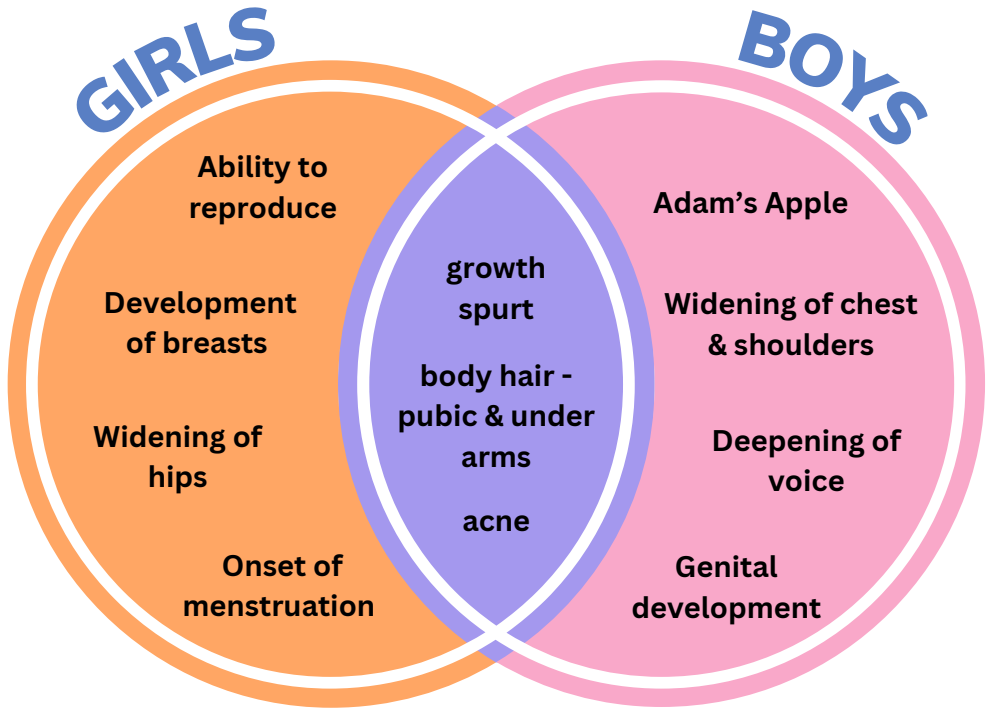


HEY DAD!
WHAT IS PUBERTY?

OH! UM..PUBERTY IS A TIME
WHEN YOUR BODY GOES
THROUGH CHANGES AS YOU GET
OLDER..LIKE YOU GET TALLER!

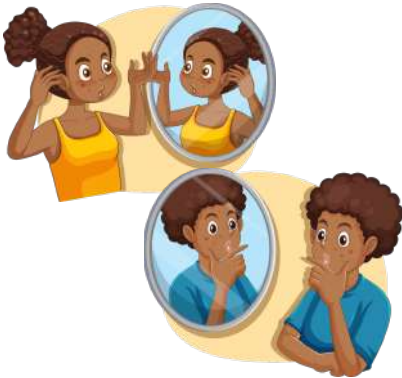
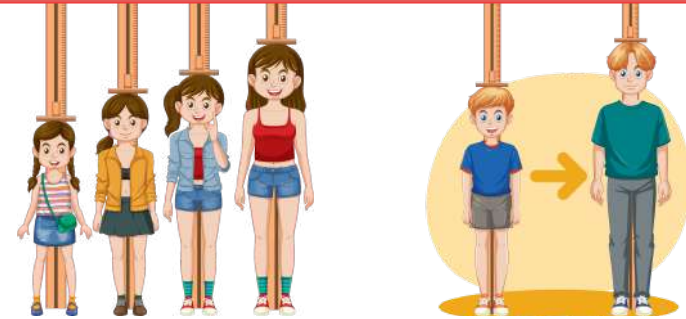
IS GETTING TALLER ALL THERE IS TO PUBERTY?
NOT REALLY! BOTH YOUR BODY AND MIND GOES
THROUGH A LOT OF CHANGES DURING THESE YEARS.
LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT HOW THIS HAPPENS!

Physical Changes during Puberty



SOME COMMON CHANGES

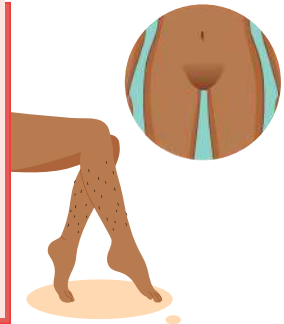
Whether you are a girl or boy, your **body will grow rapidly during puberty**, with an increase in height and weight.



Acne or pimples might appear on your face, but these are normal.

Keep your face clean and maintain hygiene to avoid them from getting bigger (and don't pluck it!)

Both girls & boys start to show hair on arms, legs, around genitals (pubic hair), and under arms. The hair appears differently on everyone and is a common development during puberty.



THE FEMALE BODY GROWS DIFFERENTLY IN SOME WAYS

Your **breasts grow in size** steadily, and it is normal for one breast to be bigger than the other. Breasts come in all sizes, and no size is better or worse than the other!

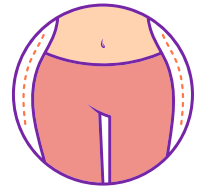


To support your body better, this is the time to start wearing bras.



Your **hips start to widen**, this is not a sign of being unhealthy or eating more!

Body **hair on legs, arms, and underarms** is common, and it's your wish whether you want to remove it or keep it!



You will start **menstruating** or getting your 'period'. We will learn about what it is and why it happens later in this book.

THE MALE BODY ALSO GROWS DIFFERENTLY IN SOME WAYS



Your **chest and shoulders will widen** as you grow up and you will develop muscles in these areas.

Hair in the form of a **beard or moustache** may appear on your face. Having **hair on chest** is also common at this time. Some boys may have more hair than others, and all kinds is healthy!



Your **voice might get hoarse**, and you could notice a **bump in your throat called an Adam's apple**. It happens because your vocal cords are getting bigger and your voice is changing.



When does puberty begin?

While there is no fixed age, for girls it may happen between ages 8 and 13, often starting at 10 or 11; for boys, it starts a bit late between ages 10 to 15, with first changes at 11 or 12.

And why does it happen?

The changes in your body during puberty are caused by hormones.

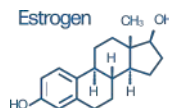
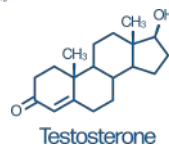
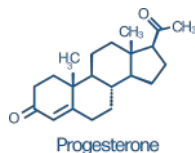


But what are hormones?

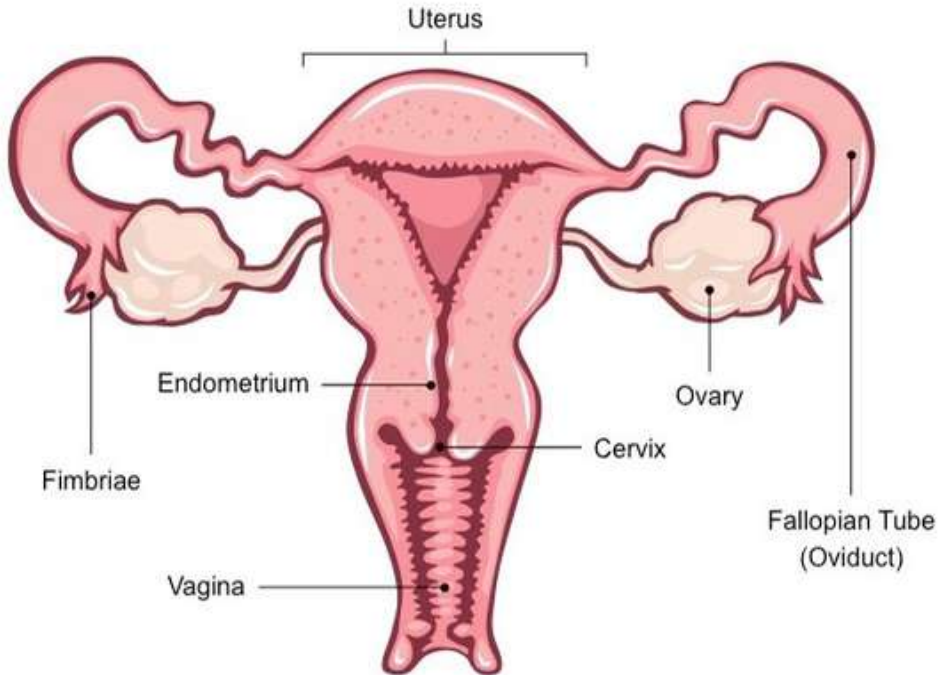
Think of hormones as your body's messengers. They travel through your blood, affecting things like growth, metabolism, and sleep. They work slowly over time, making sure everything in your body develops and functions the way it should.

And where do they come from?

Hormones are released by glands located all over the body. The testicles and the ovaries release hormones such as testosterone, estrogen, and progesterone - these are responsible for reproductive development, and other changes. Let's learn more about these!

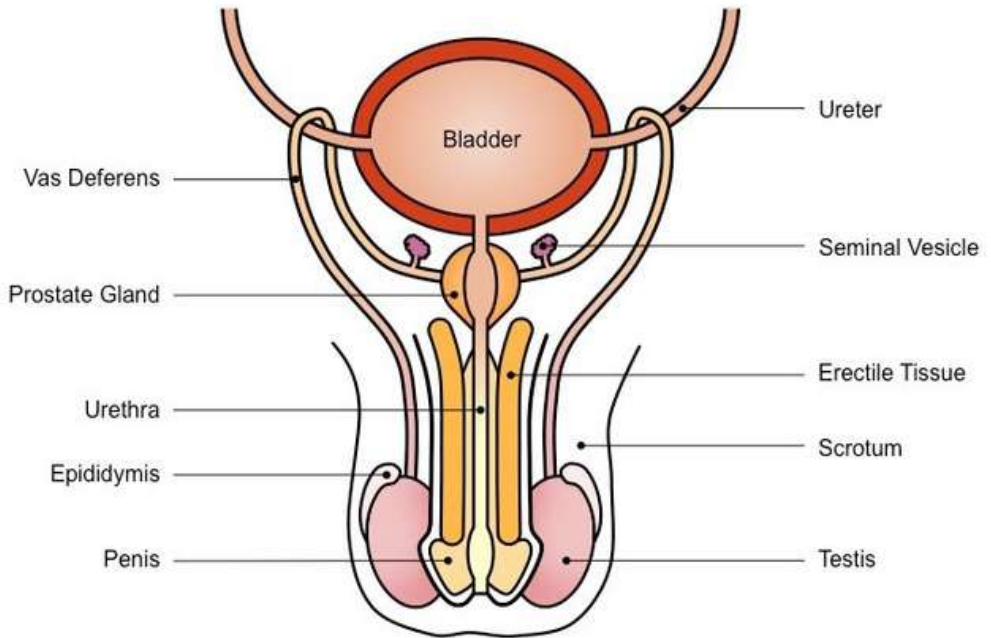


This is what the FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM looks like



During puberty, the female reproductive system reaches maturity, which means that it becomes capable of 'reproducing' or producing a baby. The ovaries are the main producer of the hormone estrogen, which also gives rise to pubic and armpit hair.

This is what the MALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM looks like



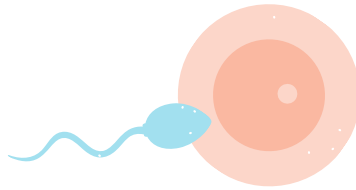
At the same time, the male reproductive system enlarges - hence the above mentioned organs such as penis and testis or testicles grow in size. The testes also produces the hormone testosterone and the seeds called 'sperm' which is required to make a baby.

But how are babies made?

It's all science!

Both male and female reproductive systems are required to make a baby.

TESTICLES
RELEASE
SPERM



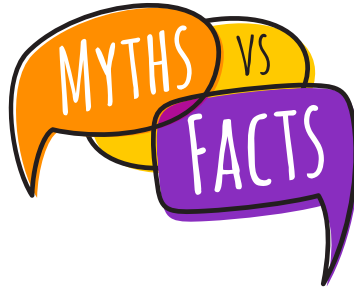
OVARIES
RELEASE
EGGS

The meeting of an egg and a sperm causes fertilization, which leads to the creation of a baby after 9 months – this duration is known as **pregnancy**.

Menstruation is often called having a "**period**." Each month, the female body prepares to create a baby by building a lining in the uterus. If this does not happen, it releases the lining, which includes blood and other fluids through the vagina, which is called a period. These can sometimes be painful.



A healthy period typically **lasts 3-7 days**, and **occurs every 25-35 days**. Irregularities are normal in the beginning but it is important to consult a doctor if your cycle is very irregular or if you are in too much pain.



Girls tend to mature faster than boys

Puberty's timing varies widely, and individuals develop at different rates. Boys can mature earlier than girls in some cases.

Acne is caused due to poor hygiene



Acne is mainly influenced by hormones. While good hygiene helps, it's not the sole cause.

Period blood is impure/dirty

Period blood is a normal part of the female menstrual cycle, containing blood and uterine tissue. It is neither dirty nor impure, and you can go to the kitchen, visit sacred places, and do anything else you would normally do.

Size of hand predicts size of penis




Many studies have shown that this is false and there is no connection between hand size and penis size.

Shaving makes hair grow back thicker



Shaving doesn't change the thickness or color of hair. It may feel coarser when it grows back because the tapered end has been cut.

Emotional Changes during Puberty



Didi, today my classmates made fun of me because I saw a girl and started blushing.

Oh my little brother has a crush! Blushing is a completely normal when you like someone, kid!

When do you feel these emotions?



happy and excited

.....
.....
.....

angry and frustrated



.....
.....
.....



confused and unsure

.....
.....
.....

shy and nervous



.....
.....
.....

All these feelings are linked to puberty and your hormones, and are completely NORMAL!



Growing more sensitive

It is common to feel uncomfortable about all the changes and become overly sensitive about your physical appearance. This might make you feel more easily annoyed, get angry quickly, or even feel extremely sad.

Feelings of uncertainty/confusion

Teenage is a transition between childhood & adulthood, and newer responsibilities, hence puberty can lead to uncertain feelings, especially about your future.



Peer pressure

Entering puberty means more chats with friends and being influenced by media. You might change your style, language, and behaviour to fit in, causing a gap between your parents' and friends' views. It is normal but can feel awkward as you navigate through these changes.





Conflicting thoughts & mood swings

You may feel torn between wanting independence and needing support from your parents. You may also experience sudden changes in your mood – feeling happy and excited one moment, to sad and low the next. These are known as mood swings and they occur due to shifting levels of hormones or other changes taking place during puberty.

Feeling conscious about self

Everyone experiences growth differently, and you start comparing yourselves with your friends. This can make you conscious about the way you are growing up and your body, often arising negative thoughts about yourselves.



Feelings of attraction

Puberty leads to sexual maturity, i.e. is the stage in your life when you can start reproducing. At this time, it is normal for you to be attracted to people and want be more than 'just friends' with them.

How to deal with all these emotions?



Talk it out with a friend or a family member



Use relaxation techniques like yoga or meditation



Take a break

Do something you love



Talk positively to/about yourself



Create an emotional safety plan

We understand that growing up and seeing yourself change can be scary, but it doesn't have to be.

This book is meant to help you get the right information about your body and mind, and sensitize you to these topics. In times of doubt, speak to those you trust – whether it's your parents, peers, or teachers. With time, you will learn to adapt and get to know yourself better.

