

**THIRD & FOURTH Class - Resource Materials for Relationships and Sexuality Education
(Department of Education & Skills)**

Information Lesson: Growing Up - Changing And Growing

Information Lesson: Growing Up (4th Class only)

The information given in this lesson should be simple and appropriate to the children's developmental level. The following may give the teacher some direction. The headings are for teacher guidance also rather than for use with the class. The lesson itself may be taught over a number of sessions. Some of the information is revision of third class materials and it will be repeated in more detail in the senior classes.

Introduction:

You are part of the world of nature. You have seen how things grow and change in the natural world. You have seen how a seed goes through many changes to become a flower. Do you remember the changes that butterfly eggs go through as they grow into butterflies? Do you remember the changes that happen in the nine months it takes a fertilised egg to grow into a baby that is ready to be born?

Once born, compared to most of the world of nature, we grow very slowly. Most other mammals can stand and run within minutes of being born. It took you at least a year. Because of this, you had time to learn and develop safely and healthily. From photos, you can see how you grew since you were born. This didn't happen overnight and we didn't see it happen.

We grow fastest as a baby. In the first year a baby triples in size. If this were to happen every year, by the time baby was three s/he would weigh the same as a fully grown adult.

How tall you grow depends mostly on **chemicals** which move around your body. These are called hormones. **Hormones are like messages from the brain.** The growth hormone reaches every **cell** in your body. This is what makes cells grow, so that your body can grow.

Growing from boy to man and growing from girl to woman

Young people grow in other ways too. They grow up to be men and women. Hormones cause these changes in the body too. At a certain age a special hormone travels around the body. This special hormone starts the changes that turn boys into men and turn girls into women.

Girls usually start to change at an earlier age than boys. Most of the important changes take place in girls between the ages of nine and eighteen, and in boys between the age of eleven and eighteen. Boys usually experience a growth spurt from the age of twelve and by the time they are fourteen they may be taller and weigh more than girls. Have you noticed this? A group of boys and girls may be the same age but they are different heights. We all grow differently. At ten many girls will be taller than boys of the same age. But the boys grow faster as teenagers and many catch up and overtake the girls in height.

Changes in Shape

As well as growing taller, other changes happen too. The body's shape changes for instance. If it didn't it would grow bigger but keep the baby shape it started with. Can you imagine what that would look like? A girl's hips get wider. Can you guess why this might be?

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A girl's hips get wider because she may be a mother when she is grown up and nature is preparing her for this. The hips have to be wider to hold the womb and carry the growing baby inside the woman. A girl's breasts develop. Once again nature is preparing for motherhood. A mother can feed her baby with milk from the breasts.

A boy changes shape. His body becomes more muscular and stronger. His shoulders broaden. A boy's penis grows too. He is changing into a man.

Menstruation

A girl begins to menstruate and this is called 'getting her periods.' This is another way nature prepares for a baby. Every month an egg travels down a tube into the womb. Do you remember we heard about the way the womb prepares a special lining, in case there is a baby? The womb does this every month. When there is no baby, the lining dissolves, mixes with a little blood and leaves the body through the vagina.

Voice Changes

A girl's voice begins to sound more like a woman's. A boy's voice becomes lower. He begins to sound more like a man.

Mood Changes

As boys and girls grow and change they may find that their moods change quickly. One moment they may feel very happy and the next they may feel lonely and sad. The special hormone that is travelling around the body is part of the reason this happens. Feelings and emotions may change too. This is because young people are growing up. It wouldn't do for the body to grow up and the mind and feelings to stay the same as a child's. These changes are exciting but sometimes they can leave people feeling confused.

Increases in Body Hair

Boys of course start to get hair on their face. Eventually they will need to shave unless they want to grow a beard. Boys also grow hair on their chests and legs. In both boys and girls hair grows underarm.

Skin Changes

In boys and girls, skin becomes more oily. They also perspire more. Because the skin will be more oily and the body will perspire more, it is also a time to remember to wash well all over daily. (The teacher may wish to talk about personal hygiene during puberty in more detail. This topic is dealt with more fully in fifth class.) During this important time you will need the right food, exercise and sleep to grow properly. These are some of the changes that happen when you are growing up.