Puberty

I am a girl.

0-13 years

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WARNING:
Contains images of nudity of a sexual nature.

This fact-sheet is not suitable for very young children.

Puberty doesn't start at the same age for all children. That’s why SantéBD recommends using this fact-sheet with a parent or guardian, a teacher or a healthcare professional.

Thanks to the SantéBD app, you can choose not to view images that you might find upsetting.
During adolescence, the thoughts in my head start to change...

...And so does my body.
Inside my head, my behaviour changes.

I feel myself becoming a woman.
I might want to change the way I look.

- I might want to dress differently.

- I might want to wear makeup:
  
  a little,                    or a lot.

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I might want to change my hairstyle.

I might want to get:
(with my parent’s consent until I am 18-years old)

- a tattoo
- or a piercing.

I might also want to be just like everyone else.
I might want to do my own thing.

- Spending time on social networks.
- Gaming.
- Playing music.
- Playing sport.
- Going out and dancing.
I might just want to be alone.

- I might want to stay in my room by myself.
The thoughts inside my head are changing ......
I don’t know what I want
I have a lot of questions to answer.

My body has changed.

- I don’t look the same as before.

- It feels like people don’t look at me the same as they used to.
I might experience:

- Strong feelings for somebody.
- Or somebody might have strong feelings for me.

People have to respect what I choose.

- I can say “Yes” if it feels right.
- I must say “No” if I don’t feel the same way.
I must also accept refusal from others.

I might also want to smoke, or drink alcohol.

- I may be tempted to try to fit in.
- But it’s OK to say “No”.
- It’s bad for my health.
I may come into contact with other young people who smoke cannabis.

- I should stay away: it’s very bad for my health.
- In most countries it’s totally against the law.

I can ask for help if I am unsure what to do.

- My family and friends can help me.
There are also specialist helplines to give me advice.

I can talk to them about any problems I have, for example:

- I act strange when I drink alcohol.
- I smoke too much.
- I'm regularly using drugs.
- I'm getting bullied online.
- I feel really sad all the time.
- People are bullying me.
I want to make new male and female friends.

- I might not want to see my old friends anymore.

- But how do I make new friends?
I want to be part of a group.
I want them to like me.
I want to fit in.

I change the way I behave with my parents.

I love my parents, but sometimes they’re just so annoying!
They feel the same way about me!

I no longer agree with my parents.
We argue a lot.
It feels like they don’t love me anymore...

...but they love me just as much as ever!
My emotions are stronger.

- My mood changes suddenly!

  I’m fine.

  I’m sad.

  I feel like laughing.

  I’m mad.

  I’m embarrassed.

  I feel like crying.

  I’m happy.
I’m starting to ask some major questions about my life.

Who am I?
What do I like?
What don’t I like?
Who do I love?
Who loves me?

Sometimes I might get violent and lose control.

I need help to calm down.
I am an adolescent, my body is changing too.

I can see and feel my body changing.

Child  Adolescent  Adult
I see that:

- My breasts are getting bigger.
- My hips are getting wider.
- Hairs are growing around my pubic area.
- My breasts are continuing to grow for several years.
- A small lump will form inside.
- My breasts become rounder.
- My breasts are fully formed.

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When they start to grow, my breasts are very sensitive.
It can really hurt if I hit them or press on them.

As an adult my breasts may be big or small.

When my breasts start to grow, I can wear a bra.
My sexual organs also change shape.

- I might want to look at my pubic area in the mirror.

Every woman’s sexual organs are different. It can be big or small, light or dark, with larger or smaller labia.
Sometimes I might have a few hairs:

- on my face,
- on my breasts.
I might get acne: these are spots on my skin

- On my face,
- and sometimes on my back.

My hair might become greasy.

The smell of my body changes and gets stronger.
My underwear may become dirtier than before.

- I might see white or yellow marks. These discharges are perfectly normal.

At some point, my period will start.

- It’s blood that comes from my vagina. It’s perfectly normal. This is my menstrual cycle: it happens every month and lasts 4 to 6 days.
To avoid blood stains, I use protection.
Tampons, a sanitary towel or napkin, or a menstrual cup.

When I get my period, I always carry protection in my handbag.

During my period I might get headaches, backache or stomach ache.
I can ask for a medication to help with the pain.

Sometimes it doesn’t hurt at all.

During my period I might notice changes in my mood.
I can talk about all these changes.

- With someone I know and trust:
  My parents, my brother, my sister, a male or female friend, a teacher...

- I can also ask to speak to a healthcare professional - my doctor, a nurse or a psychologist.

  I can ask to speak to a woman if I prefer.
There are also specialists I can talk to: a gynecologist or a midwife. These are healthcare professionals who specialise in questions about sex, periods, and pregnancy.

See the fact-sheet “The gynecologist appointment”

There are also counselling and health testing centres available. I can go there by myself or with a male or female friend. I don’t need to tell my parents. It’s free.
I absolutely must speak to a healthcare professional:

- I feel depressed,
- If I’m drinking or smoking too much, or taking drugs.
- If my periods are very painful,
- Or if my acne is very bad,
- If I can feel a lump in my breast,
- If I have an unpleasant feeling or smell from my pubic area.
If I have questions I want to ask before I have sex with someone:
- Questions on contraception.
- Questions on diseases I can catch - these are STIs.
My body is changing... 
I need to take care of it.

I take care of my personal hygiene.

- I wash every day.
I don't use too much soap.

If I have a lot of acne spots, the doctor can give me a treatment.

- I wash my face with special soap.
- Sometimes, the doctor will give me a cream to put on my acne spots.
- My doctor may give me medication to take.
- I must not squeeze my acne spots.

I can put deodorant under my arms after I shower.

I may want to remove the hairs that have grown.

- I can shave my legs and under my arms.

I use a razor.
I can remove hair from my legs and under my arms:

- With a special cream,
- With an electric razor,
- With wax.

There are special ways to remove facial hair.
I must not use cream or a razor: the hairs will grow back too quickly and even thicker than before.
I can bleach them if there are only a few.
I use a special product.

I can remove them.
I use wax.

The doctor recommends not removing the hairs around my pubic area.
My pubic hair helps to protect against bacteria.
If I have lots of hairs around my pubic area, I can wax or shave them.
I can also get hair removed at a beauty salon. The technician can give me advice. They explain how to remove the hairs from different areas of my body.

I might want to keep my hairs. It’s perfectly natural.
It’s normal to be interested in all these changes.

Sometimes I’ll look at myself when I’m alone.
I look at myself in the mirror.
I might want to touch my pubic area.

I might want to stroke my pubic area.

- On the outside I can stroke my labia and my clitoris.
- On the inside I can stroke my vagina.
This can be pleasurable: it’s intense and I may enjoy it. This is called masturbation. I do it gently so I don’t hurt myself.

It’s OK to masturbate if I don’t do it in front of other people.
I wash my hands before meeting up with the others.

These new sensations may be surprising.

I can find out what I like more, and what I like less.
During adolescence, girls might have strong feelings for a girl or a boy.

- I imagine holding someone in my arms.

- I think about kissing someone.
I think about the day I will have sex for the first time.

- How? Who with?
- I wonder if I will like it.
- I wonder if I will know what to do.
I wonder if it is normal to feel all these things.

- Does everybody ask the same questions?

Yes!
Everybody experiences these changes and asks questions.
I am becoming an adult.
APPENDIX
What happens inside my body?

My body slowly changes on the inside.

- My sexual organs are formed.
  These are the parts I need to have a baby and to have sex.

- The clitoris is a very important organ for sexual pleasure.
Just like boys, I have an anus and a bladder.
Girls have a vagina.

**Periods**

Normally my periods will arrive around once a month.
They last 4 to 6 days.
But at the beginning they are not very regular.
I don’t need to worry.

My periods are called my “menstrual cycle”.
It means my body is getting ready to have a baby if I want it to.

The day my period starts is the first day of my menstrual cycle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1 to 6</th>
<th>Day 7 to 14</th>
<th>Day 15 to 28</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I get my period</td>
<td>Ovulation</td>
<td>Implantation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood comes from my vagina.</td>
<td>An egg comes out of my ovary and heads to my uterus.</td>
<td>The uterus produces mucus to hold the baby if I have sex and my egg is fertilised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="blood" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="egg" /></td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="mucus" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use protection.</td>
<td>I can get pregnant if I have sex.</td>
<td>If I am not pregnant the mucus breaks down and I start to bleed.</td>
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If I am pregnant, I stop getting my period.
I must take a pregnancy test or see my gynecologist.
This fact-sheet was made with help from

The fact-sheet was supervised by Sheila WAREMBOURG
A Public Health and Sexual Health specialist

The fact-sheet also benefited from the expertise of François CROCHON
Psycho-motor therapist and Sexual Health clinician, Director of CeRHeS®
SantéBD is free:

- By downloading the application
- On the internet www.santebd.org
- On the SantéBD

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SantéBD’s communications tools are developed by the CoActis Santé foundation which brings together a wide range of actors from the worlds of charities, hospitals and healthcare.

They work together to build these tools to make sure they are accessible to all.

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