Puberty – Myth or Fact?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Answer** |
| **Q1** | Puberty is the same for everyone? | **Myth** - Not everyone develops at the same age or speed and it can take between 2-4 years to complete. Puberty is different for everyone, try not to compare yourself to other people. |
| **Q2** | You shouldn’t wash your genitals with perfumed soap | **Fact -** You’ll need to keep your genitals clean. Avoid strong products. Unscented soap and/or warm water is all you need. Perfumed soaps can disrupt our natural bacterial balance and cause infections such as BV (bacterial vaginosis). If you have foreskin (skin over the head of your penis) wash gently under it to stop it getting smelly, itchy or sore. |
| **Q3** | We should check our bodies regularly for any changes | **Fact -** As we grow up we will take more responsibility for our own health. This will involve noticing when our bodies might change, or something feels a bit different to us. But if something does not feel right, we should talk to our parents/carers. If we have testicles it is important to check them regularly for lumps or swelling in case of cancer, and it is also important that we all check our breasts and learn to recognise if there are any changes. Don’t panic though, these cancers are very rare in young people, but it’s good to get to start knowing your body and asking for help if we are unsure or have any concerns about our health. You’ll learn about this in more detail in later secondary school. |
| **Q4** | You have to shave body hair, it’s unhygienic | **Myth –** one of the body changes of puberty is growing more hair, on our legs, under arms and genitals particularly. There is a myth that for people with vulvas this hair should be removed because somehow it’s unhygienic or ‘unsightly’. Whether you keep your body hair or remove it, this is personal preference – body hair is not unhygienic, it’s natural. Always remember that your body is your own and it’s up to you what you want to do with it, and that includes how much or how little hair you’d like on it. |
| **Q5** | Puberty can impact on our emotions, as well as bodies | **FACT -** Puberty can also affect the way we feel and our emotions can be heightened, especially as we try to cope with the changes to our bodies. Try to be kind to yourself and people around you, without comparing to others. Do things which make you feel positive and support your mental health. Sleeping enough, doing some exercise and eating healthily can also help us feel more positive. Part of puberty might involve starting to have sexual feelings, thinking more about sex and potentially who we might fancy. This might mean you start to think about your sexual orientation (which genders you are attracted to) but don’t worry if you’re not sure yet. In this wild mix of growing, changing and hormones it can take time to work things out. |
| **Q6** | Masturbating is bad for you | **Myth -** You may find you want to explore your body and touch areas (penis/ vulva) for sexual pleasure. This is called masturbation and is a normal part of growing up. Make sure to have clean hands and do it in a private place. There are myths that masturbating is bad for you, means you can’t have children and even that you will go blind! They aren’t true. |
| **Q7** | Wet dreams only happen to boys | **Myth -** Wet dreams are when you ejaculate/ orgasm while you’re asleep. Some people remember having a nice dream but others just wake up to find a wet patch. It’s important to clean up afterwards and change your sheets etc. This can happen to everyone regardless of their genders, however, erections and releasing semen only happens if you have a penis. For girls and people with vulvas they may have sexual feelings and orgasm in their sleep. Sometimes (though not always) this can involve release of vaginal fluid as the body is sexually aroused (turned on). They are natural and nothing to be ashamed of. They happen to some people and not others. |
| **Q8** | Period blood is dirty | **Myth –** Periods are not ‘dirty’ or ‘smelly’ or any of the other negative stereotypes people have for them. Periods are natural and healthy. |