



# Puberty



**LET'S LEARN ALL ABOUT IT!**

Written and created by Anais Arroyo,  
Megan Sanfacon, Katie Oliver, Sheby Hughes and  
Tammy Raymond 2021



---

# 1 Introduction: What is Puberty?- pg. 3

- PHYSICAL CHANGES IN BOYS AND GIRLS
  - MANAGING PERSONAL HYGIENE
- 

# 2 Female Reproductive System- pg. 8

- WHAT IS MENSTRATION?
  - STORY-TIME: MORI'S FIRST PERIOD
- 

# 3 Male Reproductive System- pg. 14

- WHAT IS AN ERECTION? WHAT IS EJACULATION?
  - STORY-TIME: EMMANUEL'S FIRST ERECTION
  - CIRCUMCISION
- 

# 4 Sex & Relationships- pg. 19

- PREGNANCY
  - WHAT IS AN STD?
  - HIV: HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF?
  - STORY-TIME: GROWING UP WITH HIV
- 

# 5 Keeping Your Mind Strong & Healthy- pg. 23

- HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS
  - PEER PRESSURE AND PRESSURE FROM ADULTS
  - SEXUAL ABUSE
- 

# 6 Questions & Answers- pg. 27

- FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
- 

# 7 Glossary: Word List- pg. 30

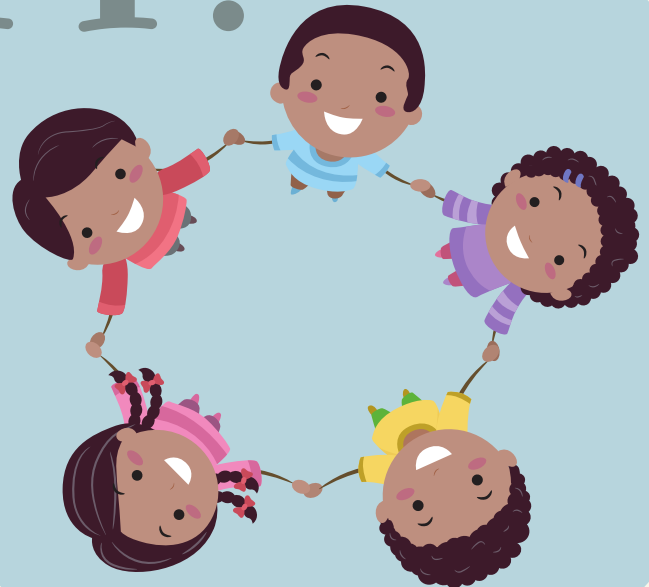
# CONTENTS



# WHAT IS PUBERTY?

During puberty, your body will start to grow and develop. It is the step between being a child and being an adult.

Your body will change over several years. These changes allow you to have children in the future if you'd like to start a family. Girls begin to produce eggs and boys begin to produce sperm. But, this does NOT mean that you are ready to be a mother or father now!



- Our bodies change because of changes in our hormone levels. Hormones are important 'chemical messengers' inside us. They control how our organs communicate with each other and they influence how we feel.
- Boys and girls also experience emotional changes. You might feel happy one minute and sad or angry the next - it is all part of the process! Puberty is a time to learn more about yourself and your boundaries. Learning how to manage different relationships with family, friends, and strangers is also an important part of growing up.
- Puberty is both exciting and confusing as our bodies and minds are going through a lot! This booklet will hopefully guide and help you through these changes.
- There are sections on both boys and girls. It is important for boys to know the kind of changes girls face, and for girls to know the kind of changes boys face. Having this information means you can support each other along the way! Although boys' and girls' bodies are made differently, it does not mean that they should be treated differently.
- There is a lot of new information to take in. Keep this guide in a safe place and come back to it when you need to. If you have any more questions, ask a parent or trusted adult.
- Remember, you are not alone - teenagers all over the world will experience puberty at some point! You'll start puberty at a time that is right for you and your body. It is important to surround yourself with people you trust and to be kind to yourself and those around you.

**\*\*You can find the underlined words in the back of the book in the Glossary**

# PHYSICAL CHANGES

## in everyone

It is helpful to know what to expect during puberty. Both boys and girls will experience some similar changes between the ages of 11-18 years old.



These changes may include:

- Growing taller.
- Developing pubic hair.
- Developing acne.
- Sweating more.
- Changes in mood, which are caused by changing hormones.



Girls generally start puberty just before boys. For example, some girls might be taller than some boys for a while. This isn't always the case though. There is no "one size fits all." Your body will go through these changes when it is ready. Some start puberty as young as 8 and others not until they are 18!



# PHYSICAL CHANGES IN GIRLS

Girls will experience other physical changes in their bodies. These may include:



- Growing breasts and tenderness in breasts.
  - Breasts and nipples will grow larger over time. Breasts may feel sore when you touch them.
- Hair growth around the body and genitals.
  - Pubic hair develops and hair around the body darkens. Underarm hair begins to grow.
- Widening of hips.
  - To support pregnancy in the future.
- Vagina becomes bigger and produces discharge.
  - The vagina starts to clean itself during puberty. Girls may notice a clear, white discharge in their underwear or when using the toilet. This is normal.
- Periods (also known as menstruation).
  - Part of a monthly cycle where the lining of the uterus thickens as the body prepares for pregnancy. Once a month, the lining is shed over the course of 3-7 days, if a woman has not become pregnant.

It is important to remember that any one of these changes can take place at any time. You and your friends may experience these stages at different points. This is completely normal and the best thing to do is to support each other along the way!



# PHYSICAL CHANGES in BOYS



Boys will experience other physical changes in their bodies. These may include:

- Hair growth around the body, face & genitals.
  - Pubic hair develops around the scrotum. Underarm & facial hair begins to grow.
- Change in size of testes (balls) & penis.
  - Testes (balls) & penis grow bigger over time.
- Darkening of the scrotum.
  - The sack or scrotum that contains the testes (balls) becomes darker in colour.
- Deepening of voice.
  - Voice will 'break' and become deeper. It might sound higher beforehand!
- Erections.
  - Penis stands upright and becomes hard.



It is important to remember that any one of these changes can take place at any time. You and your friends may experience these stages at different points. This is completely normal and the best thing to do is to support each other along the way.

# MANAGING PERSONAL HYGIENE

Another important part of puberty is learning how to keep good personal hygiene. Keeping clean is an important part of staying healthy. For example, simply washing your hands and eating a balanced diet keeps your body and mind healthy, and you are less likely to become sick.

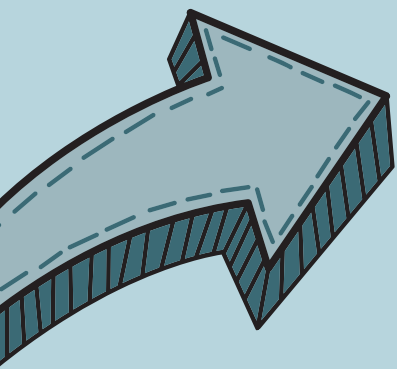
During puberty, changes in hormones mean you'll start to sweat more in the armpits and genital area. It is important to wash your body every day to stay clean and to prevent body odour.

Body odour is not bad, it is a natural chemical released from the body when you sweat. In fact, it is very normal! There is nothing wrong with sweating, it is all part of the process. Remember, to wash regularly!

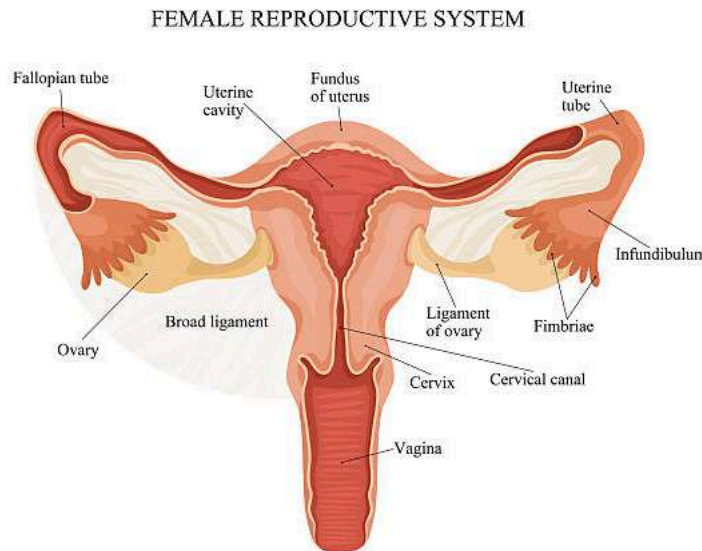
Good mouth hygiene is also very important. Brushing your teeth twice a day, every day, is vital if you want to avoid bad breath, gum problems, and tooth decay.

It is important to practice good personal hygiene. This will help you stay healthy and prevent sickness as your body changes.

Never use harsh chemicals on your body, only use soap and water. You might hurt yourself and do more harm than good.



# FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM



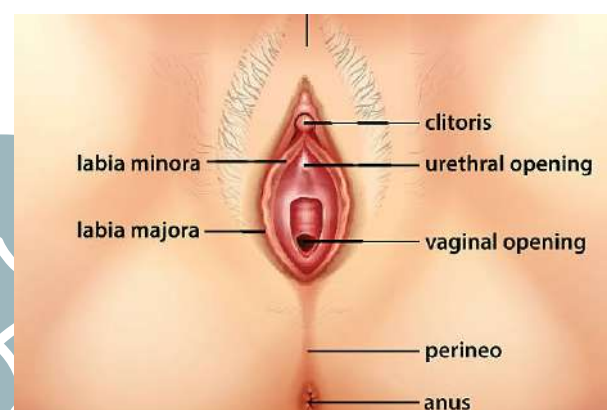
THERE ARE DIFFERENT PARTS TO THE FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM.

The ovaries produce eggs that become a baby when combined with a man's sperm. The fallopian tubes connect the ovaries to the uterus (or womb). The uterus is where a baby grows over nine months. The vagina connects the uterus to the outside world.

The vagina has two roles - for sperm to enter and for the baby to come out when ready.

Urine (wee) does not come from the vagina but from the urethra - a small opening/hole by the vagina.

It is important to keep your private parts clean. If you don't, bacteria can build up and lead to harmful infections. These infections can cause irritation and can be quite painful so keep the area clean.







# MENSTRUATION

Menstruation is another word for having a period. It is bleeding from the uterus (or womb) through the vagina once every month. This happens to make sure that your body is ready to carry a baby when/if the time comes as an adult.



Girls will have their first period as they go through puberty, usually between the ages of 11-16 years old. However, it is important to remember that everyone develops at different rates and at a time that is right for their body. It is perfectly normal for some girls to develop earlier or later than this! Some may start their period as young as 9 years old and others at 18.

Once girls start puberty, their ovaries begin to release an egg each month. This is called ovulation. If the egg is not fertilised by a sperm, the lining of the uterus is no longer needed. This lining flows out through the vagina, along with the egg as part of the menstrual cycle. The bleeding lasts between 3-5 days and happens once a month. You shouldn't feel scared of this type of blood loss.

The menstrual cycle lasts from 21 to 40 days, although it is not unusual for a girl's period to be irregular during puberty. You may get your period after 24 days one month and after 42 days the next. Irregular periods are very common, especially in the first few years of having your period. It is a good idea for girls to make a note of when their period starts and ends, so, that they can prepare themselves for the next one.

Having a period is a sign of health and fertility. This means that girls can become pregnant and have children in the future, if and when they choose to do so. Starting your period does NOT mean that you are ready or old enough for sex yet. A regular period is also healthy for your bones and heart.

A pregnant woman is not likely to have a period until after she has given birth. Older women, usually around the age of 50, will no longer have a monthly period once they go through menopause. A girl's period can be affected by stress on the body and/or significant weight loss over a short period of time.

# WHAT DOES A PERIOD FEEL LIKE?

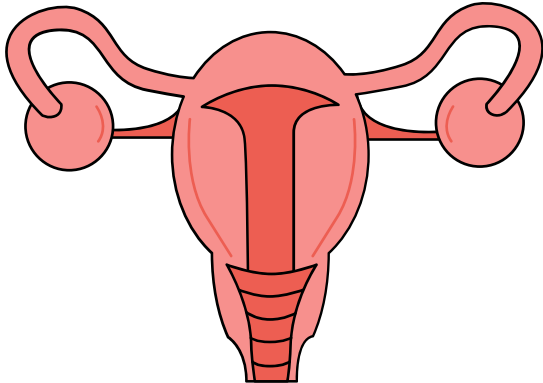
Girls will most likely experience both physical and emotional changes during their period.

Common symptoms of periods are:

- stomach or lower back pain
- changes in mood
- tiredness
- sore breasts
- acne or skin breakouts
- headaches.



You may start to feel some pain before or once you start your monthly period. A warm compress held to the lower stomach or pain medication may help. Always ask for an adult's permission before taking any pain medication.



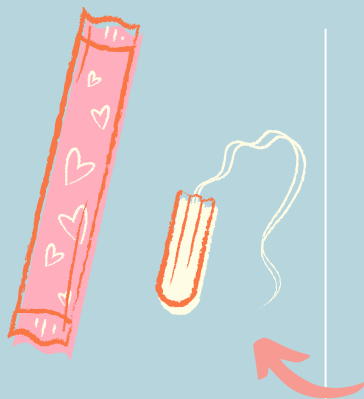
You might feel happy one minute and anxious, angry or upset the next minute! Changes in mood are a result of changes inside the body, caused by hormones. Hormones are important 'chemical messengers' that send messages to our organs. They essentially control and influence how we feel, both physically and emotionally.

It is important to take it easy on your body during this time and to be kind to yourself! These changes can sometimes be a little scary at first. Don't worry, as your cycle becomes more regular, you'll learn to understand the way your body works.

If you are worried, talk to someone you feel comfortable with, whether that is your mother, aunt, grandmother, teacher, or friend. A trusted female figure will understand what it feels like and they can offer you guidance. Girls should not be afraid or embarrassed about starting their period for the first time. Menstruation is never something to be ashamed about. It is a healthy and natural part of growing up!



# HOW CAN I PREPARE MYSELF FOR MY PERIOD?

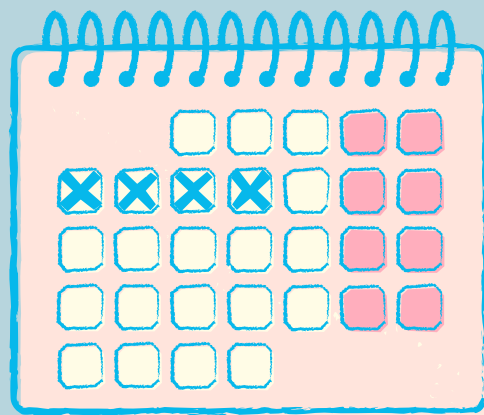


It is normal to feel all sorts of feelings when you first start your period: fear, excitement, confusion! Where and when you start your period is largely out of your control, but knowing how to prepare yourself can be comforting.

It is very important to stay clean during your period. When you first start bleeding, place a pad or a piece of material, such as a clean cloth/chitenge, on the inside of your underwear. Some girls also use tampons\*. This will absorb the blood and stop it from showing through your clothes. What you use will depend on what is available to you, what you feel most comfortable with, and the flow of your period. Remember to dispose of these period materials in a safe and clean way.

You will need to change your pad, or clean cloth/chitenge every 3-4 hours depending on the lightness or heaviness of your period. If you use a pad or tampon, make sure you wrap it and then throw it in a bin. If you are using a cloth, wash it after every use.

You might get your period when you're least expecting it - at school, the market, or with friends! Sometimes the blood will show through your clothes. Don't panic if this happens. You can cover it up easily by tying a jumper or jacket around your waist. When you return home, wash your clothes and place a pad or clean piece of cloth in your underwear.



**TOP TIP: ALWAYS KEEP A SPARE PAD, TAMPON, OR CLEAN PIECE OF CLOTH IN YOUR SCHOOLBAG.**



a tampon\* is a cotton tube inserted into the lower part of the vagina that absorbs blood



# PERIODS: MYTH OR FACT?

In some parts of the world, there is shame around menstruation. Periods are sometimes seen in a negative way. Some girls might be afraid of starting their period because of stories and myths they have heard. Myths are stories not always based on facts. They are passed from generation to generation, from grandparents to grandchildren.



- UNLESS YOU ARE IN PAIN, TRY YOUR BEST TO NOT MISS OUT ON SCHOOL DURING YOUR PERIOD. GO ABOUT YOUR DAILY LIFE AS NORMAL AS POSSIBLE. YOU CAN STILL COOK, PLAY, LEARN AND STUDY!



- YOUR PERIOD DOES NOT MEAN YOU ARE 'DIRTY' OR 'UNCLEAN' - YOUR MONTHLY CYCLE IS A SIGN OF HEALTH! DON'T WASH YOURSELF WITH HARSH CHEMICALS OR CLEANING SUBSTANCES. WASH YOURSELF AS NORMAL, OTHERWISE, YOU COULD HARM YOURSELF.



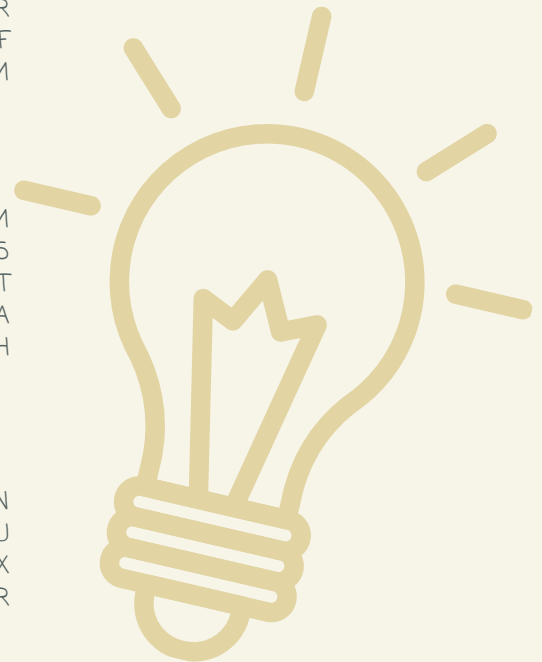
- TRY NOT TO ISOLATE YOURSELF FROM FRIENDS & FAMILY. AGAIN, THERE IS NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED ABOUT MENSTRUATION. INSTEAD, CREATE A SUPPORT BUBBLE AROUND YOU WITH PEOPLE YOU TRUST!



- GOING NEAR A BOY(S) WHEN YOU ARE ON YOUR PERIOD WILL NOT MAKE YOU PREGNANT. HAVING UNPROTECTED SEX MIGHT THOUGH, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER YOU ARE ON YOUR PERIOD OR NOT.



- STARTING YOUR PERIOD DOES NOT MEAN YOU ARE READY OR OLD ENOUGH TO HAVE SEX YET.



Try to see periods as a natural part of growing up. Start conversations in your community, at home, and at school! Talk about how you feel and always share any concerns with people you trust.



# Story TIME:

## MEMORY'S FIRST PERIOD

"My name is Memory and I live in a compound in Livingstone, Zambia. When I was 14, I started my period. I was at the market with my grandmother when suddenly it felt like I had peed myself. My pants became wet and when I looked down, I saw blood on my pants. I felt embarrassed and afraid. My grandmother gave me a jumper to hide the stain and a piece of material to put in my underwear to prevent the blood from showing through my clothes. When we got home I wasn't allowed to go outside and I didn't understand. Growing up, I was told that playing with boys would have an impact on puberty. I wasn't sure how though. I felt confused and alone.

After a few days, the bleeding stopped and my period ended. I washed my clothes before anyone woke up. I wasn't allowed to let anyone see what I was doing. My grandmother finally taught me how to look after myself during my period. She told me to stay away from boys because she said that I could get pregnant if one came too close.

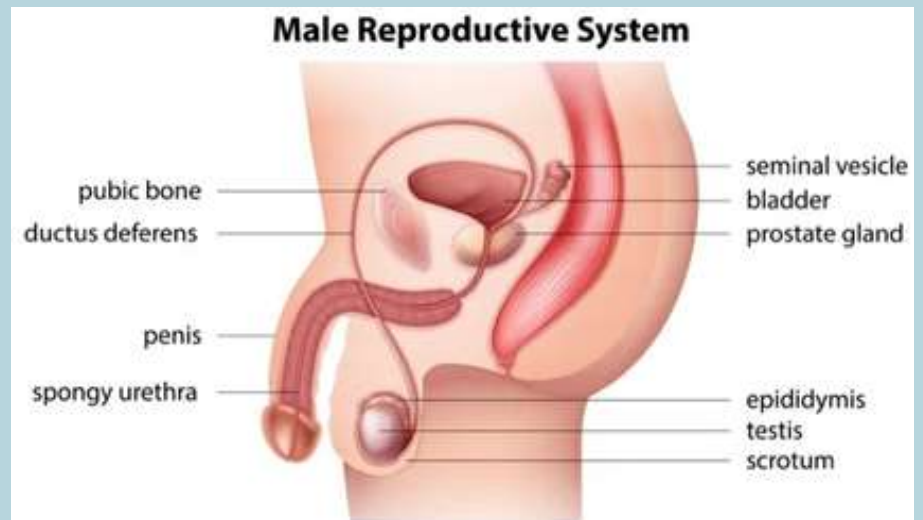
This experience taught me how important it is to learn about periods and to have others to talk to. Over the years, I've learned that it is actually okay to interact with boys on my period, and playing or talking with them will have no impact on how my body functions and develops. "





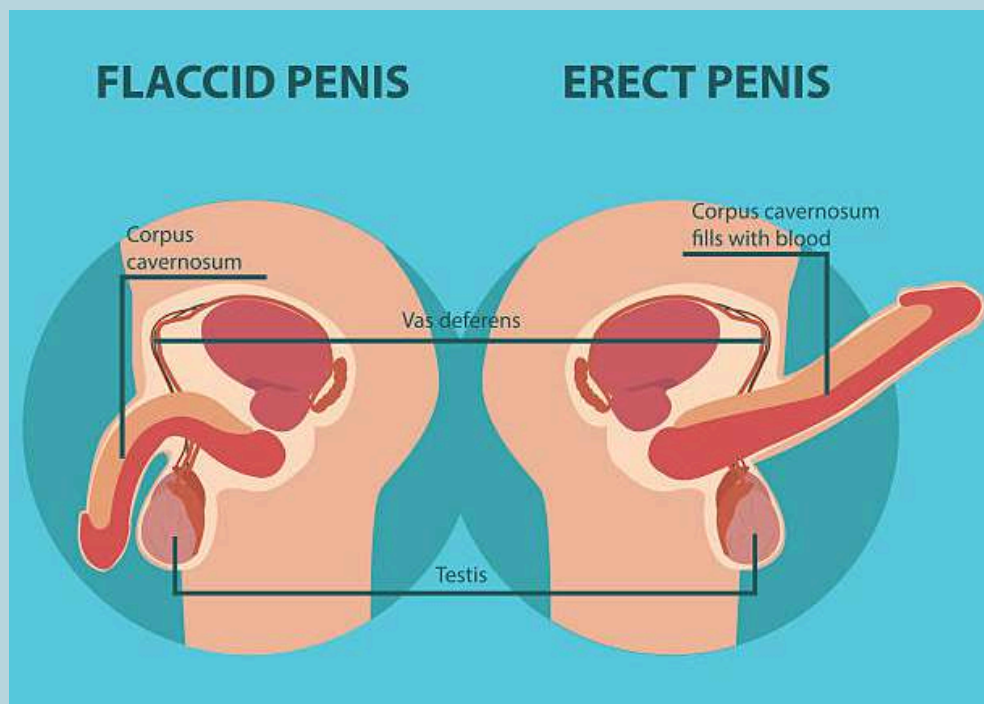
# MALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

▶ The male reproductive system has two main parts. The testes and the penis.



▶ The testes (balls) contained in the scrotum (sack) produce semen or sperm - combined with a woman's egg the sperm makes a baby. The sperm and the egg bring together the different aspects of a man and a woman to make a whole new unique person.

▶ Sperm travel from the testes through the penis to the outside world. There is a small hole at the end of the penis called the urethra where urine (wee) comes out.



# WHAT IS AN ERECTION?

## WHAT DOES EJACULATION MEAN?

Just like girls start their periods during puberty, boys start to have erections and ejaculate. However, periods and erections are different in many ways.

The penis naturally becomes hard from time to time - it is practicing for when a boy becomes an adult! This is called an erection. There is increased blood flow to the penis which causes the muscles to stiffen. It becomes hard and stands upright. It will return to normal and become softer after a little while. Erections don't hurt, but they may feel strange at first.

All boys will experience erections at some point during puberty and even as an adult. You can't stop them from happening! It can feel embarrassing if you have an erection in public but remember it is a sign that you are healthy and growing up. Don't panic if this happens and take three deep breaths.





It is common for boys to find that they have discharged semen during the night as they mature. This is called ejaculation. Don't worry if you find some clear or white discharge in your bed. Some people call this a 'wet dream'. It is caused by changes in hormones. Remember, hormones are important 'chemical messengers' inside us. They control how our organs communicate with each other and they influence how we feel.

Erections and ejaculation are signs that boys are fertile. Fertile means that they are healthy and they can have children, if they'd like a family in the future. Having your first erection does NOT mean that you are ready or old enough for sex yet.

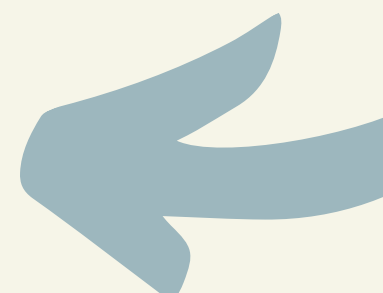
Some boys struggle with erections. Their penis might not stiffen and stand upright. If this is you, talk to someone you feel comfortable with. Always talk to a trusted adult, doctor or health worker if you have any pain in your testes (balls).

# how can i manage an erection?




During puberty, erections can happen at any time and any place. You could be sitting in class, walking home, or sitting on the side of the road. Erections aren't something you should feel embarrassed about as they are very common. But they can make you feel shy!

There are several ways you can manage an erection. Here are some suggestions:

- Try to stay seated.
  - Drink cold water.
  - Put your hands in your pockets to hide it.
  - Shift a book or cushion to cover it.
  - Focus on something else until it goes away.
- 



**BOYS OFTEN WORRY ABOUT THE SIZE AND SHAPE OF THEIR PENIS. YOU MIGHT FEEL EMBARRASSED OR AFRAID THAT YOUR PENIS IS 'TOO LONG' OR 'TOO SHORT'. HOWEVER, WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT AND WE ALL GROW AT DIFFERENT TIMES AND SPEEDS. THERE IS NO 'RIGHT' SIZE, ONLY A SIZE THAT IS SUITED TO YOUR BODY. TRY NOT TO COMPARE YOUR BODY TO THOSE AROUND YOU.**



# Story TIME:

## EMMANUEL'S FIRST ERECTION

"My name is Emmanuel and I am 15 years old. I was at school one day when I suddenly felt a strange feeling in my penis. My pants became tight because my penis was standing up. I felt scared because I thought something was wrong. I didn't want to tell anyone.

To hide it, I put my jumper across my legs. When I calmed down, my penis became softer and it went back to normal. At lunchtime, I told a friend what had happened. He is two years older than me and he said that it is very normal. He explained what an erection is and what to do next time it happens. I don't feel so alone now that I know that all boys go through the same changes.

When my little brother is older, I am going to explain 'erections' to him so that he feels prepared. I hope he won't feel scared like I did. I want to make sure he understands that he can always talk to a friend or health worker if he needs to share any worries."





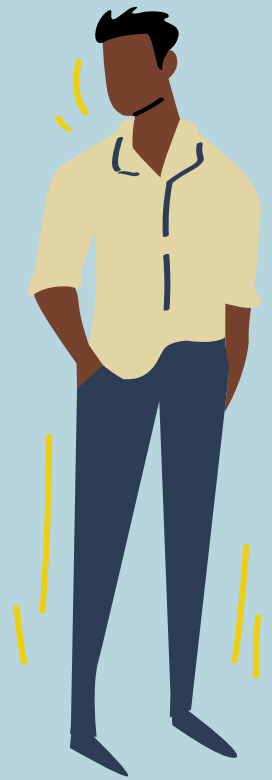
# CIRCUMCISION

Every boy is born with a foreskin. The foreskin is the flap of skin at the end of the penis. Many boys/men will have their foreskin removed during their life for medical, religious, traditional, or personal reasons. This process is called circumcision.

There is no difference between a person who is circumcised and those who are not. We must not treat each other differently.

However, men who are circumcised are less likely to become infected with HIV and other STI/STDs because bacteria and infections can build up between the penis and the foreskin. They should still practice safe sex by using a condom as they can still contract the disease. It is easier to clean and to put a condom on a circumcised penis. Just because someone has been circumcised does not mean they are ready for sex.

If you are worried or have any questions about circumcision, speak to a doctor or health worker.



## MYTHS AND FACTS

In some parts of the world, there are myths about circumcision. Myths are stories not always based on facts. They are passed from generation to generation, from grandparents to grandchildren. Some people see circumcision in a negative way. Others think all boys and men must be circumcised. There is no 'right or wrong' answer - it is a personal choice!

Here is some advice that may help you:

- Boys who are circumcised shouldn't be afraid to mix with those who aren't. And those who aren't circumcised shouldn't be afraid to mix with those who are! You can still go to school, eat and play together...
- Circumcision is a personal choice. Some cultures and religions, like Judaism and Islam, often practice circumcision.
- Boys who are circumcised can still mix with girls. Boys who aren't circumcised can also mix with girls!
- Men who are circumcised can still have sex in the future - it does not change the way it feels.
- Being circumcised doesn't mean you are fully protected from HIV and other STIs (sexually transmitted infections). You should still practice safe sex by using a contraceptive, like a condom, in the future.

Whether you are circumcised or not, you should not feel ashamed or embarrassed. Start conversations in your community, at home and at school! Talk about how you feel and always share any concerns with people you trust.



# SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS

Although you are not ready to have sex yet, it is important to understand what sex is for the future. Sex is when a woman willingly allows a man to put his penis inside her vagina. Adults have sex because they would like to have a child. They also have sex because it is one way of showing your love for another person.

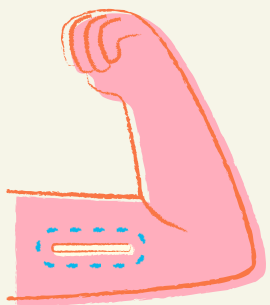
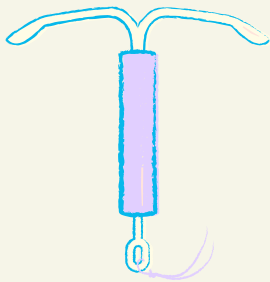
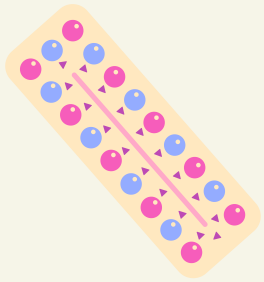
During sex, a man's sperm travels to a woman's egg. If the egg is fertilised, a baby begins to grow. A woman is pregnant for 9 months, or 40 weeks. When a woman is pregnant, her period will likely stop until she gives birth.

Some people choose to have sex, but they aren't ready for children yet. If this is the case, there are ways to prevent a pregnancy. This is called contraception. Some people use condoms, implants or special tablets given by a doctor. What you use will depend on what is available to you and what is culturally or religiously acceptable to you.

People also use contraceptives to protect themselves against STIs (sexually transmitted infections). STIs are passed from person to person during sex. Some can be very serious if left untreated. For more about STIs, read the section 'What is an STI'.

Although using contraceptives will reduce your chances of pregnancy and contracting some STIs, they will not give you 100% protection. It is still possible to get pregnant whether you are on your period or not. There are no such thing as "safe days" where unprotected sex can't result in pregnancy. In the future, it is important to talk to your partner about your options and to have sex safely and responsibly.

The age of consent in Zambia is 16 years old. This means that you cannot legally agree to have sex before that age. If someone forces you to have sex without your permission (without you saying 'yes'), they are breaking the law. You shouldn't feel uncomfortable, unsafe or scared when having sex. For more information, read the sections on 'Pressure from Adults' and 'Sexual Abuse'.



# What is an STI AND STD?

STI stands for 'sexually transmitted infection'. An STI is an infection that is spread from person to person through sex or very close bodily contact with someone who has an STI. Some STIs will go away by themselves others you will need to see a doctor to get medication. If left untreated these infections will become severe diseases.

STD stands for 'sexually transmitted disease'. These diseases can badly affect your body and health for a long time. Few STDs can be cured, while many others can only be treated by a doctor.

Here are some common  
TYPES OF STI's:

- Herpes
- Pubic lice
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

Here are some common  
TYPES OF STD's:

- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhoea
- Syphilis



Look out for these symptoms:

- Unusual discharge from vagina or penis.
- Pain when peeing.
- A new rash around the genitals.
- Blisters or sores around the genitals.

If you develop any one of these following sex, you may have an STI or STD. Seek help from a doctor or health worker as soon as possible. The sooner you seek help the better.



# WHAT IS HIV?

## How can I protect myself?



THE MOST SERIOUS STD IS HIV. HIV IS A VIRUS THAT DAMAGES IMPORTANT CELLS IN YOUR BODY. THIS DAMAGE MEANS YOUR BODY CAN NO LONGER PROTECT ITSELF FROM OTHER ILLNESSES AS EFFECTIVELY. LEARNING ABOUT HIV IS IMPORTANT SO YOU CAN PROTECT YOURSELF IN THE FUTURE.

HIV is passed from person to person through sex or through contact with bodily fluids, like blood, breast milk, or semen. It cannot be passed from person to person by sharing your things, shaking hands, or hugging. If you know someone who has HIV, treat them like you would treat your other friends. You shouldn't be afraid of them.

HIV can be treated by a doctor but it cannot be cured. There are treatments that can help people with HIV live longer. If left untreated though, HIV can develop over time into a more serious condition called AIDS. AIDS cannot be treated by a doctor. It is life-threatening and, sadly, people die from it. Look out for these symptoms of HIV:

- Fever
- Muscle pain
- Rash
- Tiredness



If you have recently had sex with someone who has HIV, seek help from a doctor or health worker as soon as possible. The sooner you seek help the better.

People can have HIV without knowing it. This is why it is important to use protection when having sex. Couples can use a contraceptive, like a condom, to prevent them from catching some STDs during sex. No form of contraceptive will offer you 100% protection though. In the future, it is important to talk to your partner about your options and to have sex safely and responsibly.

# Story TIME:

## GROWING UP WITH HIV

"My name is John and I am 12 years old. Before I was born, my mother became sick. The doctor tested her for HIV and the result was positive. My father had passed it onto her without knowing. I also have HIV because my mother gave it to me when she was pregnant.

We are healthy because we see a health worker regularly. We take special medicine so we don't get sick. My life is very normal – I can run, play and study. I am no different from any other 12 year old in my village because I can still go to school and help out at home.

Other children don't understand what HIV is though. They think that they can 'catch it' by coming too close to me. Some people are even afraid to touch me. Mother tells me this is because of stories they've heard. She says they are only unkind because they don't understand. I'd like my friends to know that HIV can't be passed from me to you just by playing together."

When I am older, I want to go from compound to compound sharing my experience with others. Hopefully those who have HIV will know that they are not alone."



# What is MENTAL HEALTH?



## WHY IS MENTAL HEALTH IMPORTANT?

During puberty, bodies are changing a lot. Did you know your brain and mind are growing too? Mental health is just as important as physical health. It means taking care of our minds and emotions. This is important because our thoughts have a big impact on how we feel and act.

## HOW CAN I TAKE CARE OF MY MENTAL HEALTH?

It is normal to have shifts in mood, especially for girls during their periods. Do your best to be aware of your different emotions and create a plan with ways to express your emotions in a safe way.

For example, a girl or boy could write: 'When I feel \_\_\_\_\_, I will \_\_\_\_\_ to help me express myself and to feel better.'

Here are some examples:

- When I feel angry, I will take 5 deep breaths to help me feel better.
- When I feel sad, I will write in a notebook or diary to help me understand my feelings.
- When I feel happy, I will dance to help express myself.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO FIND HEALTHY WAYS TO LET GO OF STRONG EMOTIONS LIKE ANGER, FRUSTRATION, AND FEAR. AS WE TAKE GOOD CARE OF OUR MINDS, WE STAY MENTALLY ACTIVE. THIS NURTURES OUR BRAINS.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOUR MIND AS YOU GROW AND DEVELOP.





# HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



Building healthy relationships is an important part of growing up. It is important to seek out friends and partners who make you feel good about yourself. In healthy relationships, people like this will listen to one another, respect one another and make an effort to understand each other.

Establishing healthy relationships will help you and others to stay on the right track and to make good decisions. You should strive to be a good friend, too. All healthy relationships are built on good communication, respect and trust.

In all friendships, including relationships with girls/boys, you should look for:

- Someone who respects you and listens to you.
- Someone who doesn't force or pressure you to do anything you don't want to do.
- Someone who makes you feel safe and appreciated.

Do not develop or continue relationships with people who don't respect you or who make you feel unsafe.

It is important to remember that violence is never okay in any relationship. Communicating what you need and how you wish to be treated is part of being a respectful partner.

As you get older and start to form romantic relationships, it is important to respect your partner's boundaries. Before entering someone's personal space by touching or kissing, be sure to ask permission, just as they must ask your permission. If they say no, you must respect how they feel.

You would not want someone touching you if you did not like it. You must respect other people's boundaries. Respect for one another is important in any relationship.

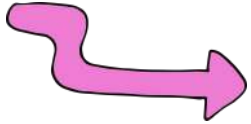
## UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships that are violent or contain threats of any kind are not healthy. These relationships are used as a way to hurt or control someone else. Remember, violence of any kind is never okay in any relationship.

If anyone tries to hurt your body or your feelings, talk to your parents or another adult you trust as soon as possible.



# PEER PRESSURE



'Peer' means friend or someone else you know, usually around the same age as you. 'Peer pressure' is when a friend or someone you know pressures you to do something, sometimes something you don't want to do or something you feel isn't right.

Friends, boyfriends, or girlfriends that pressure you in this way are not building a healthy relationship with you. You may feel embarrassed or scared. Stick with what you know is right. Stick with what you feel comfortable with. Talking to a parent or trusted adult can help. They may know what to look out for and how to handle different 'peer pressure' situations.

People can pressure you in different ways, so, it is important to understand what this pressure can look and feel like. Threats, bullying, teasing, offering gifts, and expecting something from you in return, are all ways that someone can pressure you. Again, stick with what you feel and know is right.



You should also try your best to be a good friend. Don't force or pressure anyone to do something that they don't want to do. Respect the decisions of others.



# Pressure from Adults



Pressure from adults can come in many different forms. Some forms of pressure are good. For example, teachers and parents may pressure you to perform well in exams because they want the best for you and your future.

However, during puberty, you may be exposed to other, more serious forms of pressure. Girls, especially, may feel pressured sexually, by boys or older men. As girls develop breasts and start to menstruate, boys or older men might try to take advantage of them. They might say that puberty is a sign you are ready for sex, but this is not true.

The age of consent in Zambia is 16 years old. This means that you cannot legally agree to have sex until you are at least 16. Being 16 or over does not mean you are ready for sex though. Only you can make that choice. It is your body and you get to decide when you are ready. It is against the law for someone to touch you without your permission (without you saying 'yes').

Some people may use money or "gifts" to pressure you. Never accept a "gift" if you think it might lead to someone abusing their power, sexually or not, and forcing you to do something that you are not comfortable with.



## Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is very serious. Anyone who touches you without your consent or forces you to engage with them in a sexual way is breaking the law. Sexual abuse can include:

- Feeling a girl/woman's breasts
- Touching a girl/woman's or boy/man's genitals
- Pressuring someone to have sex
- Forcing a person to touch themselves or someone else sexually.



Sexual abuse can happen once or lots of times, by a stranger or someone close to you. Both children and adults can be victims of sexual abuse. It is never okay for someone to touch you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable, even if that person is a friend or relative.

Remember even after the age of 16, though it is legal to have sex this does not mean you are ready. Both people should feel ready and give their permission. People don't just have sex to make babies. People also have sex for pleasure. It can be a way to show your love to your partner. It is a natural part of life. You should NEVER feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or scared during sex.

**IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS BEING SEXUALLY ABUSED, SPEAK TO AND CONFIDE IN AN ADULT YOU TRUST. SEXUAL ABUSE CAN BE A DISTRESSING AND TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE, SO, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU SEEK HELP. IF YOU ARE SCARED FOR YOUR SAFETY OR IF YOU ARE HURT, FIND A SAFE PLACE AND TELL A TRUSTED ADULT IMMEDIATELY. THEY COULD THEN TAKE YOU TO THE POLICE AND HOSPITAL. REMEMBER, YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

---

## Is it normal to have sex?

Sex is a natural part of life for those old enough to give consent. It is a way to make babies and it is one way of showing your love for your partner. It isn't something you should feel ashamed about!

However, you must NOT have sex with someone without their permission (without them saying 'yes'). It is NOT normal for an older person to have sex with anyone under the age of 16 - it is against the law. If you feel unsafe, always speak to a trusted adult.

## Why am I not growing as quickly as my friends?

We all grow at different speeds and at a time that is right for our bodies. There is no 'right' time to start puberty - only a time that is suited to you and your body.

We also all grow in different ways. Some people are shorter and more muscular, others are taller and thinner. Your height and size are influenced by your genetics, your environment, your diet, and how much you exercise.

No two people are the same - that is what makes you special! Look after yourself, and be kind to those around you.

## Why don't boys have periods?

Boys' and girls' bodies work in different ways. This means we have different types of sex organs. Boys produce sperm and girls produce eggs. Boys have erections and girls have periods.

Even though our bodies function differently, we should still treat each other with equal respect. Just because we are different, it does not mean we should treat each other any differently!

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

---

What happens if I see someone naked?

Don't worry, nothing will happen if you accidentally see a family member or friend without clothes on. Always talk to them or a trusted adult if you feel uncomfortable though.

Why do I feel happy one minute and sad the next?

During puberty, our bodies go through lots of changes. Hormones - the 'chemical messengers' inside us - are working even harder when you are a teenager. These changes put stress on our minds, making us feel happy and excited, then angry and sad! This is all a part of growing up.

Do you have any advice for someone just starting puberty?

Puberty is a strange and exciting time both for our bodies and our minds! Remember, you are not alone. Teenagers all over the world will experience puberty. After all, your parents and grandparents experienced it at one point, too.

Wherever you live in the world, whatever your religion or culture, it is important that you are happy and healthy. Even though boys' and girls' bodies are made differently, they should still be treated equally.

Surround yourself with friends who will support you through these changes. Always talk to a trusted adult if you are afraid or have any questions. Finally, be kind to yourself and those around you.





# PUBERTY QUIZ!!

Test how much you can remember with this mini quiz. There is only one right answer for each question. You can find the answers at the end of the glossary - no peeking though until you've finished!

1. At what age will I start puberty?
  - a) 12
  - b) 18
  - c) When the time is right for me.
  
2. The age of consent is 16 in Zambia. What does this mean?
  - a) The age you can start drinking alcohol legally.
  - b) The age you are allowed to have sex legally.
  - c) The age you can get married legally.
  
3. What are hormones?
  - a) 'Chemical messengers' inside us that play a big part in puberty. They influence how we feel.
  - b) A type of sexually transmitted infection.
  
4. How is HIV passed from one person to another?
  - a) By shaking hands with someone who is infected with HIV.
  - b) By hugging someone who is infected with HIV.
  - c) Through contact with bodily fluids like blood, breast milk or semen.
  
5. How can I protect myself from STDs (sexually transmitted diseases)?
  - a) By using a contraceptive like a condom.
  - b) By washing my hands.
  - c) By wearing a mask.
  
6. How often do girls need to change their pad or tampon during their period?
  - a) Once every day.
  - b) Once every three or four hours.
  - c) Every 20 minutes.
  
7. Why are some boys circumcised?
  - a) For religious and traditional reasons.
  - b) For medical reasons.
  - c) All of the above.
  
8. What should I do if someone asks me to do something that I'm not comfortable with?
  - a) Not tell anyone.
  - b) Speak to a trusted adult as soon as possible.

# GLOSSARY

You can find the meaning of any of the words underlined throughout the book using this list. It is in alphabetical order (A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z).

For example, if you'd like to find out what "hormones" means, you would look under the letter 'h'.

Absorb	To soak up.
Acne	When the skin becomes irritated and sore with spots.
Age of Consent	The age at which you can legally agree to have sex.
AIDS	Stands for 'acquired immune deficiency syndrome' - the last stage of HIV.
Bodily Fluids	Fluids that come from the body, e.g. blood, breast milk or semen.
Body odour	The smell of someone who hasn't washed themselves.
Boundries	The limits we set for ourselves in a relationship.
Circumcision	The removal of the foreskin (flap of skin at the end of the penis) for religious, cultural, medical or personal reasons.
Compress	A wet, clean cloth placed on an area that is painful.
Condom	A special, thin piece of rubber that is put on a penis before sex. Used to prevent a pregnancy by stopping the sperm from reaching an egg. Also used to avoid passing on and contracting STDs.
Consent	Giving your permission, saying 'yes'.
Contraception	Methods used to prevent a pregnancy.
Contract	To catch a disease.
Discharge	Fluid released by the vagina or penis.
Egg	The female reproductive (sex) cell. Boys have sperm.
Ejaculation	The release of semen (a white liquid) from the penis.
Erection	The penis stands upright and becomes hard.
Fertility (fertile)	The ability to have children.
Fallopian tubes	The tubes that carry an egg from the ovaries to the uterus in a woman.
Foreskin	The flap of skin at the end of the penis. Some boys have it removed, this is called circumcision.

# GLOSSARY

Genetics	How our bodies are made. They are what makes us different from each other as human beings.
Genitals	Reproductive organs on the outside of the body. Boys have a penis and girls have a vagina.
HIV	An STD (sexually transmitted disease) that stands for 'human immunodeficiency syndrome'.
Hormones	The 'chemical messengers' inside us that play a big part in puberty.
Hygiene	Keeping yourself clean to avoid becoming ill.
Implants	A type of contraceptive used by doctors to prevent a pregnancy.
Menstrual Cycle	The process of having a period.
Menstruation	Bleeding out of the vagina once a month in women.
Menopause	The point in a woman's life when she stops having a monthly period.
Myth	A story that is shared between people that isn't always based on facts.
Nurture	To look after.
Ovaries	The organ that produces eggs in a woman.
Pad	A piece of soft, clean material attached to underwear that soaks up blood during a period.
Partner	A boyfriend or girlfriend; a husband or wife.
Pubic Hair	Hair that grows around the genitals (vagina or penis).
Reproduction	Making a baby through sex.
Scrotum	The sack that contains the testes (balls).
Semen	A fluid, containing sperm, that is released by a man's penis.
Shame	Feelings of embarrassment or disgust around something.
Sperm	The male reproductive (sex) cell. Girls have eggs.
STD	Sexually transmitted disease.
STI	Sexually transmitted infection.
Tampon	A special piece of soft, clean material that is put inside the vagina to soak up blood during a period.
Tenderness	When something feels sore or painful.

# GLOSSARY

---

Testes

The organ that produces sperm in a man.

Urethra

The small opening/whole where urine (wee) comes out.

Urine

The yellowish fluid (wee) that comes out of the urethra when you go to the loo.

Uterus

The place where a woman carries a baby before giving birth. Also known as the 'womb'.

Violence

Hurting someone.

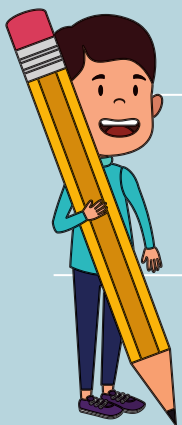
Virus

Something that can attack important cells in our body, making us ill. Eg. HIV or COVID-19.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ: 1. C, 2. B, 3. A, 4. C, 5. A, 6. B, 7. C, 8. B

# NOTES

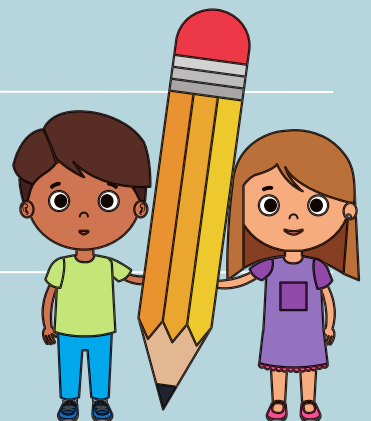
Here is a space just for you! Write down any thoughts or questions you have

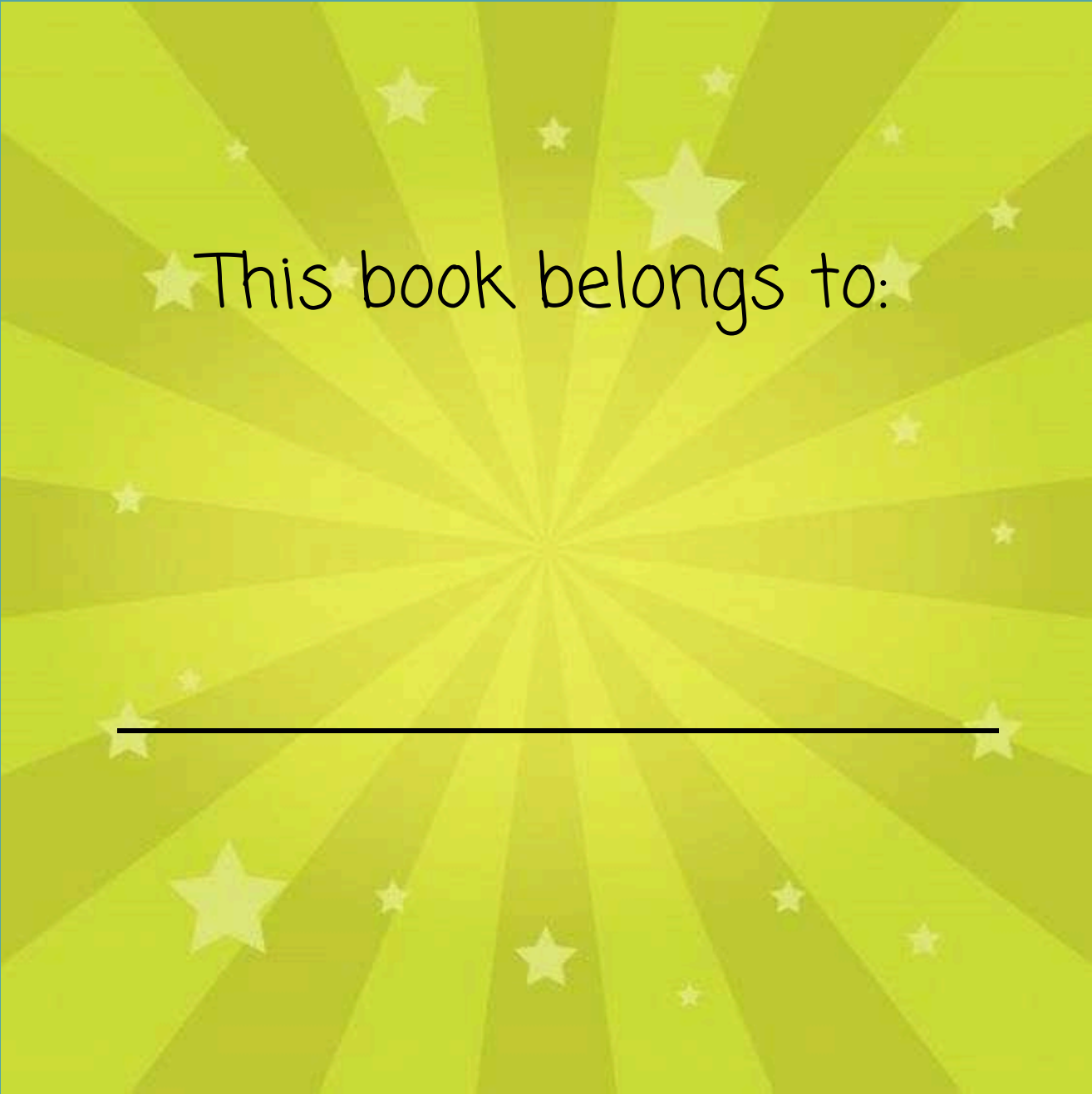




# NOTES

Here is a space just for you! Write down any thoughts or questions you have



A yellow rectangular area with a starburst pattern of radiating lines and scattered stars. A horizontal black line is drawn across the middle of the area, intended for a name.

★ This book belongs to: ★

Thank you for joining us. We know growing up can be hard, but you are not alone. Remember to embrace who you are becoming, support one another, and don't be afraid to reach out.



@BaobuyuLearningCenter



<https://baobuyulearningcenter.org/>

