



Puberty

People with disability may have fewer opportunities than other young people to learn about puberty and other sexual matters from school friends, books or magazines. Parents and carers can help young people with a disability to understand what is happening to their body during puberty as well as develop positive feelings about their body and puberty changes.

Learning about puberty can start in early childhood, with information reinforced and expanded on, in the years leading up to puberty. The earlier children learn about their body parts, the easier it will be to talk about body changes during puberty. For most young people, puberty begins between the ages of 9 and 16. No matter what the age, it's never too late or early to talk about puberty and sexuality.

Useful resources to assist in facilitating this topic include the FPQ brochures [Puberty for girls](#) and [Puberty for boys](#) as well as [Puberty – information for parents and carers](#).

The objectives of these activities include:

- identifying the physical, emotional and social changes that occur at puberty
- developing an awareness that puberty happens to everyone
- developing healthy strategies to manage puberty changes
- developing positive feelings about being healthy during puberty.

Most parents, carers and professionals recognise the importance of children and young people having accurate, age-appropriate sexuality education as they grow. Communicating openly and honestly about sexuality issues can have lifelong benefits. It is important that people with a disability receive positive messages about sexuality. It is also important that parents, carers, schools and support services work together to promote healthy attitudes and to give children, young people and adults encouragement that it is ok to discuss sexuality issues with the parents, carers and professionals in their lives.

This workbook has been developed to assist and support parents and carers who play an important role in providing sexuality and self protection education for children, young people and adults. Parents, carers and professionals are encouraged to openly discuss the content in each of the workbooks as well as respond to questions, interests and curiosity about sexuality education topics. The worksheets contained in the workbooks can provide a focus point for these discussions.

This workbook allows for flexible delivery of sexuality education. It is recommended that the workbook be adapted to best suit the learning needs and interests of the individual.

Worksheets may be photocopied.

Activity 1 – Growing up and changing

Resources:

- *Female Bodies* and *Male Bodies* cards.

This activity involves sorting the *Female Bodies* and *Male Bodies* cards into order by age. The purpose of this activity is to identify participant understanding of body changes that occur.

Show the *Female Bodies* and *Male Bodies* cards for both female and male in the order of early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

-  Ask the participant to **sort the cards into order** from the youngest to the oldest (littlest to biggest).

Once the activity is complete ask the participant to **identify the changes** on the male and female cards as they develop and get older. These questions may assist:

“Do they get taller?”


“Where is hair growing?”

“Has the woman’s chest changed?”

Activity 2 - Defining puberty

Resources:


- *Female Body Changes* and *Male Body Changes* worksheets

-  Ask participant to help define what puberty means.

Puberty definition:

“Puberty is the time between being a child and an adult. It includes all of the changes that help us to look and feel like adults. Puberty happens slowly so that we have time to get used to it. We do not just wake up one day as an adult. It will usually happen for girls between the ages of 9 and 16 and for boys, between the ages of 10 and 18.”

Changes worksheet

-  Show the *Female body changes* and *Male body changes* worksheets. Ask the participant to **write or circle the changes** that they see onto the worksheets.

Then ask the participant to **circle the body** that most looks like them now.

It is useful for the participant to complete the same activity for both gender worksheets. This enables a greater understanding of body changes and development.

It is important to not only focus on the physical changes, but to include discussion on the emotional and social changes that occur. Remember that everybody experiences puberty differently.

PUBERTY CHANGES TO INCLUDE:**Physical changes**

Boys and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• grow taller• weigh more• pubic hair grows near the vulva and penis• underarm hair• sweat more• skin becomes oilier• pimples may appear
Boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• chest and shoulders get wider• may get bigger muscles• voice becomes deeper• hair grows on the face and chest• penis and testicles grow bigger and darker in colour• erections happen when the penis gets hard and big• sperm (thousands of very tiny tadpole shaped cells that help to make a baby) are made in the testicles• ejaculation may happen when the semen (white sticky stuff) comes out of the penis• wet dreams may happen when the semen comes out of the penis when the male is asleep
Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• nipples get bigger and darker• breasts grow• hips grow wider• vaginal discharge may happen when whitish wet stuff (not urine or period blood) comes out of the vagina,• vulva gets darker in colour• ovulation begins when the ova (tiny eggs that you cannot see that help to make a baby) start to leave the ovaries• periods happen when blood comes out of the body through the vagina for a few days every month

Social and Emotional Changes

Boys and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• mood swings may happen when strong feelings change from happy to sad to angry in a way that might be hard to understand• feelings about self (self esteem) may change• may take more risks• think about body changes a lot• want to do things without help and try to be independent• want to have privacy and be alone• have strong sexy feelings• may want to have or be with friends more
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Activity 3 – Puberty changes

Resources:

- *Female and Male* body picture

This activity involves drawing puberty changes and then talking about the information. The purpose of this activity is to reinforce information about puberty changes and to practice communicating about puberty.

Draw or photocopy female and male bodies (before pubertal changes occur).



Ask the participant to **draw the puberty changes** on the worksheets.

Suggested puberty changes to include in drawings are included on the table above.

Once the drawings are complete ask the participant to talk about their posters of the male or female changes. Presenting this information helps communicating about puberty.

Activity 4 – Being healthy during puberty

Resources:

- *Healthy puberty* worksheet



Ask participant to **tick either the Healthy or Unhealthy box** for each picture on the worksheet *Healthy puberty*.

Discuss each caption. It is important to include information on appropriate healthy strategies.

Healthy strategies to include:	
1. Wash under your arms – healthy.	Discuss increase of sweat at puberty and need to wash body and clothes as well as use deodorant.
2. Have friendships with boys and girls – healthy	It is important for people going through puberty to understand that it is ok to have friendships with boys and girls. Relationship skills may need to be discussed.
3. Squeeze your pimples – unhealthy	Discuss acne and pimples. Include information on cleaning the face, drinking water, not teasing people and going to see a doctor if the pimples seem severe.
4. Eat fruit and vegetables – healthy	Discuss healthy food, possible weight increase and body changes at puberty, and the importance of feeling good about your body.

5. Feel ok about having a wet dream – healthy	Discuss wet dreams and explain what they are. Emphasise that wet dreams are a normal part of growing up for a male and that they are not something to feel guilty or bad about.
6. Feel ok about having sexy feelings – healthy	Discuss the fact that sexual feelings are natural for both males and females during puberty. Include information on same sex as well as opposite sex attraction. It is good to talk about the tingly feelings that people might get when they think they are attracted to someone. Emphasise that people should not feel guilty or bad about sexy feelings.
7. Feel good about being who you are – healthy	Discuss self esteem issues including body image and peer pressure. Include strategies about how people can feel positive about themselves. These may include joining a club, talking to friends and doing things they enjoy.
8. Scream at everyone to help your bad mood - unhealthy	Discuss mood swings and healthy ways of dealing with emotions. Explain that it is normal to search for some independence during puberty. Discuss positive ways of gaining independence.
9. Tease people about their body – unhealthy	Discuss bullying, peer pressure and the need for support networks.
10. Ask questions if you feel confused – healthy	Discuss support networks and where to seek information regarding puberty. Talk about identifying people to trust and include on a support network.

Reinforce

“Everybody grows up and changes. Sometimes this might feel strange and new. Talking to someone you trust can help. Asking questions if you feel confused is good.”

Ask the participant to finish this sentence: *“The best thing about getting older is”*

Other ideas

- Photos can be used to discuss growing up and changes from being a baby to their present age. Use photos to make a poster about growing up.
- Look at books on puberty or visit a library. Teach how to access information and how to use it in an appropriate way.
- Use a popular television series and discuss how puberty impacts on the characters.

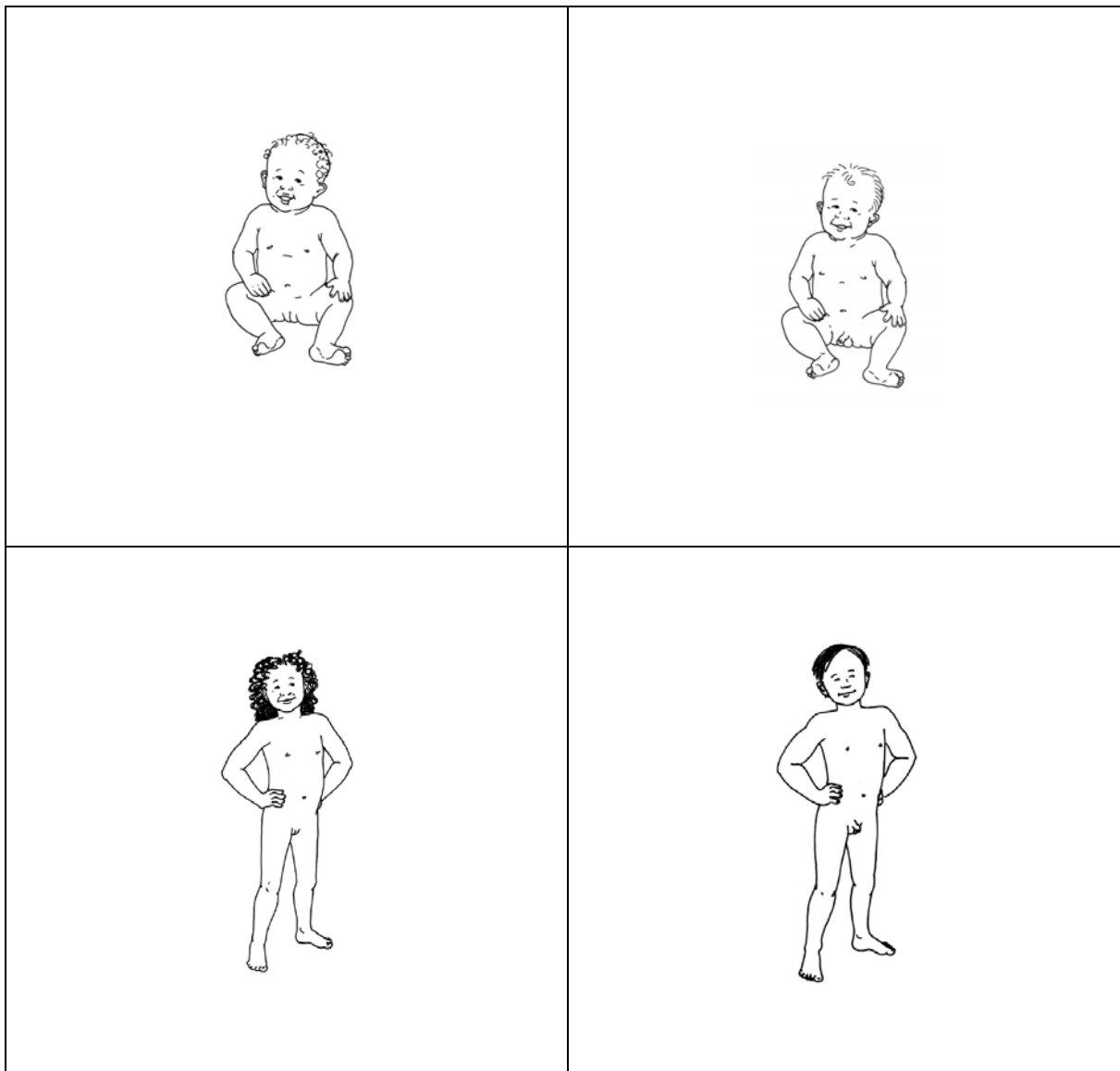
Resources

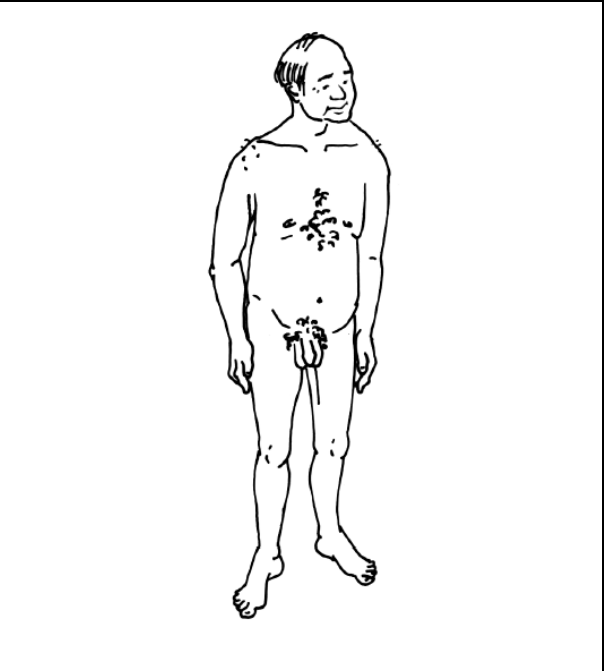
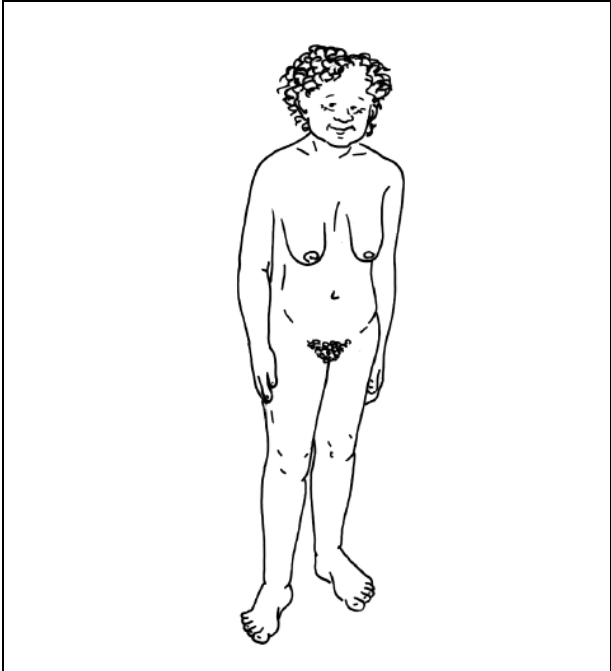
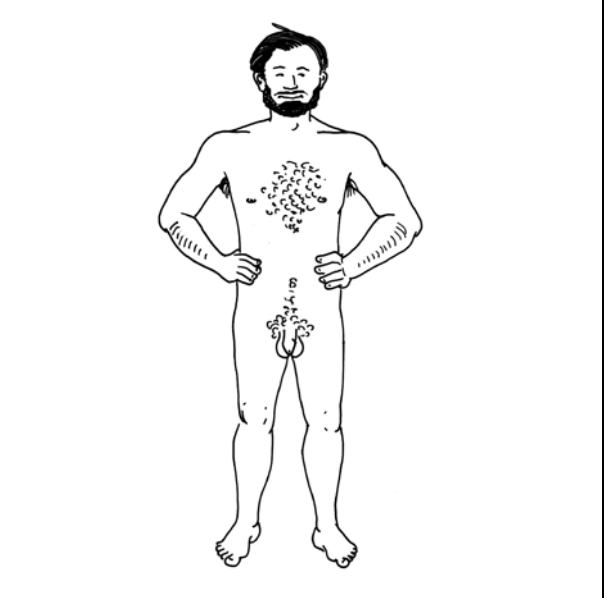
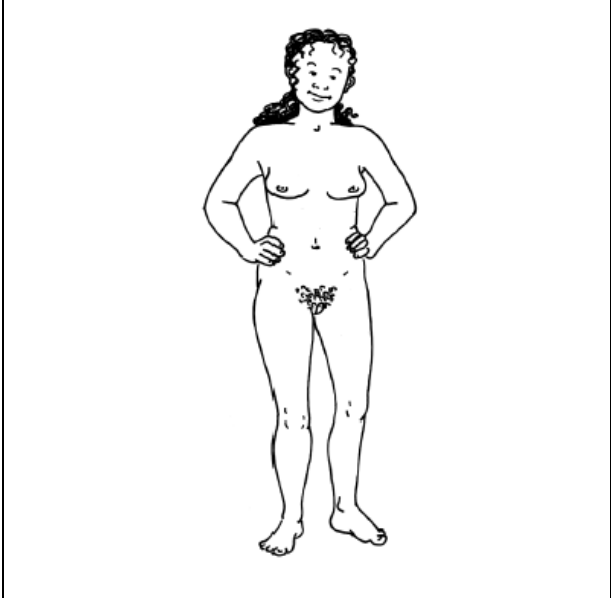
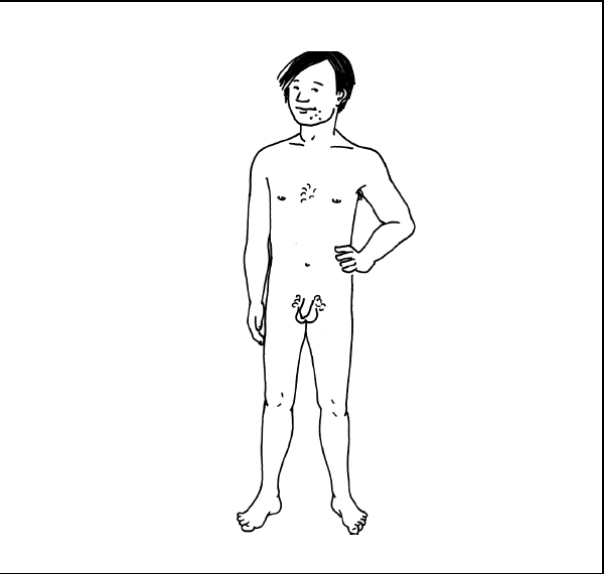
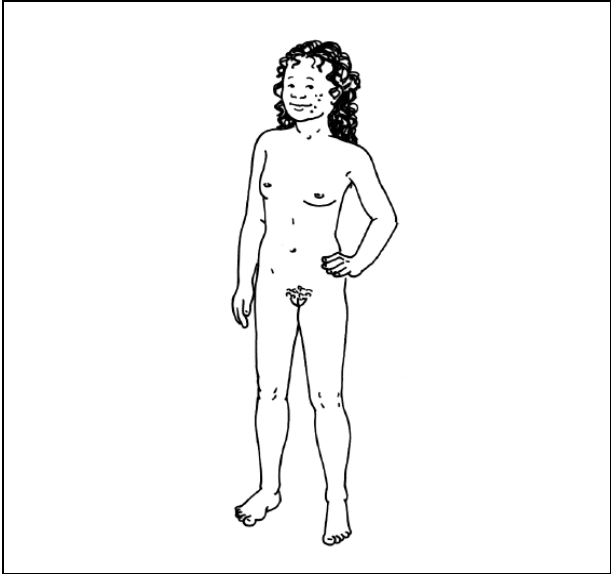
- CD – *Puberty Plus CD package*. This CD presents information, games and interviews about puberty. Not specifically designed for people with learning difficulties.
- FPQ www.fpq.com.au
- Dolls – Anatomically correct dolls can be used for teaching body parts, being private, sexual behaviour, families, reproduction, safer sex and self protection.

- Book – *Special Boys' Business* by Anderson, Angelo & Stewart. This book has been written for boys with special needs. It supports boys, their parents and carers through the changes experienced at puberty. www.secretgb.com
- Book – *Special Girls' Business* by Anderson, Angelo & Stewart. This book has been written especially for girls with special needs. It supports girls, their parents and carers through the changes experienced at puberty, with particular focus on menstrual management. www.secretgb.com
- Interactive website – to engage children in questions and answers about the physical, emotional and social changes associated with puberty. www.thehormonefactory.com

Activity 1 – Growing up and changing activity cards

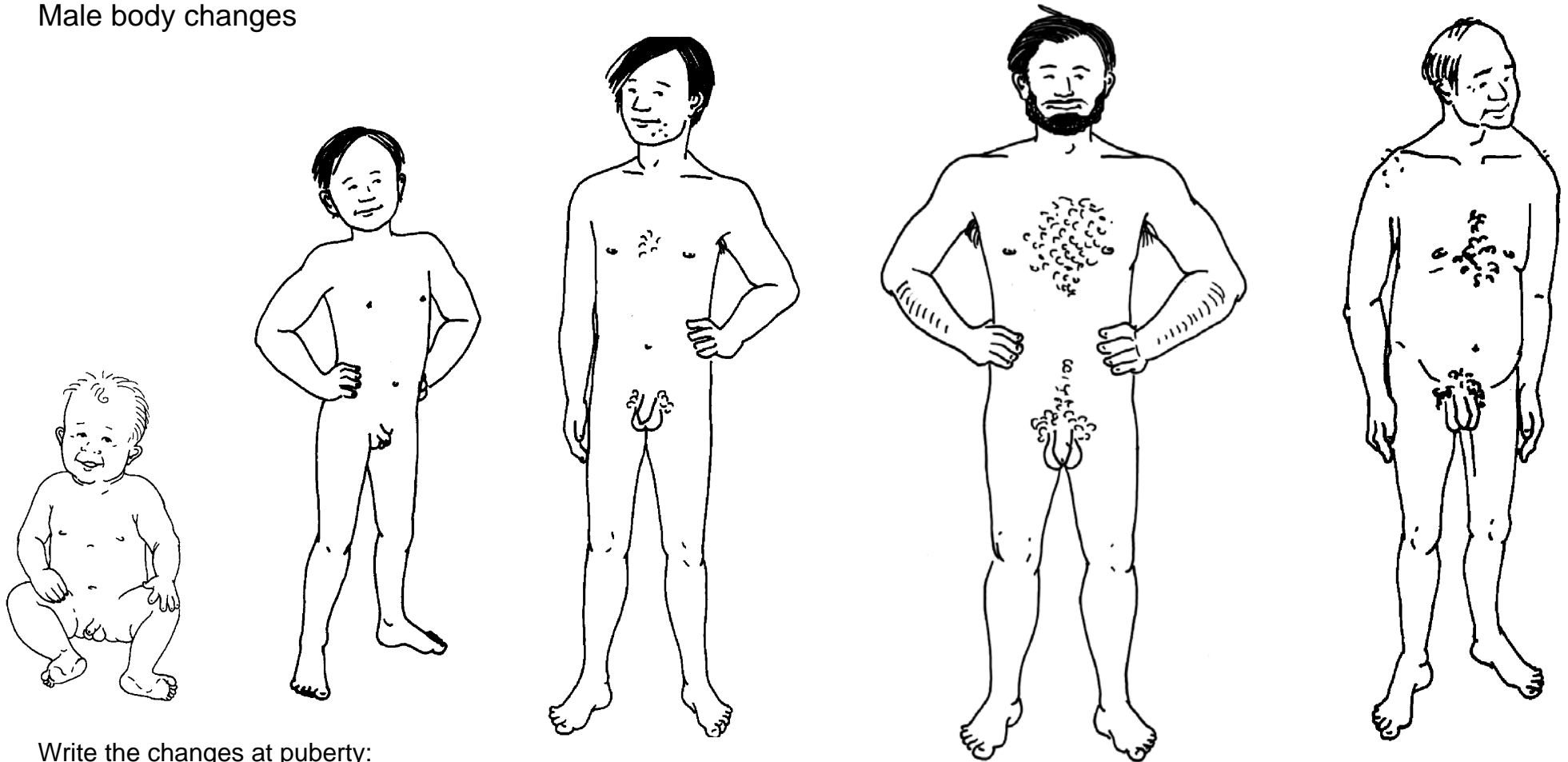
Cut out the *Female Bodies* and *Male Bodies* cards in preparation for this activity





Activity 2 – Defining puberty

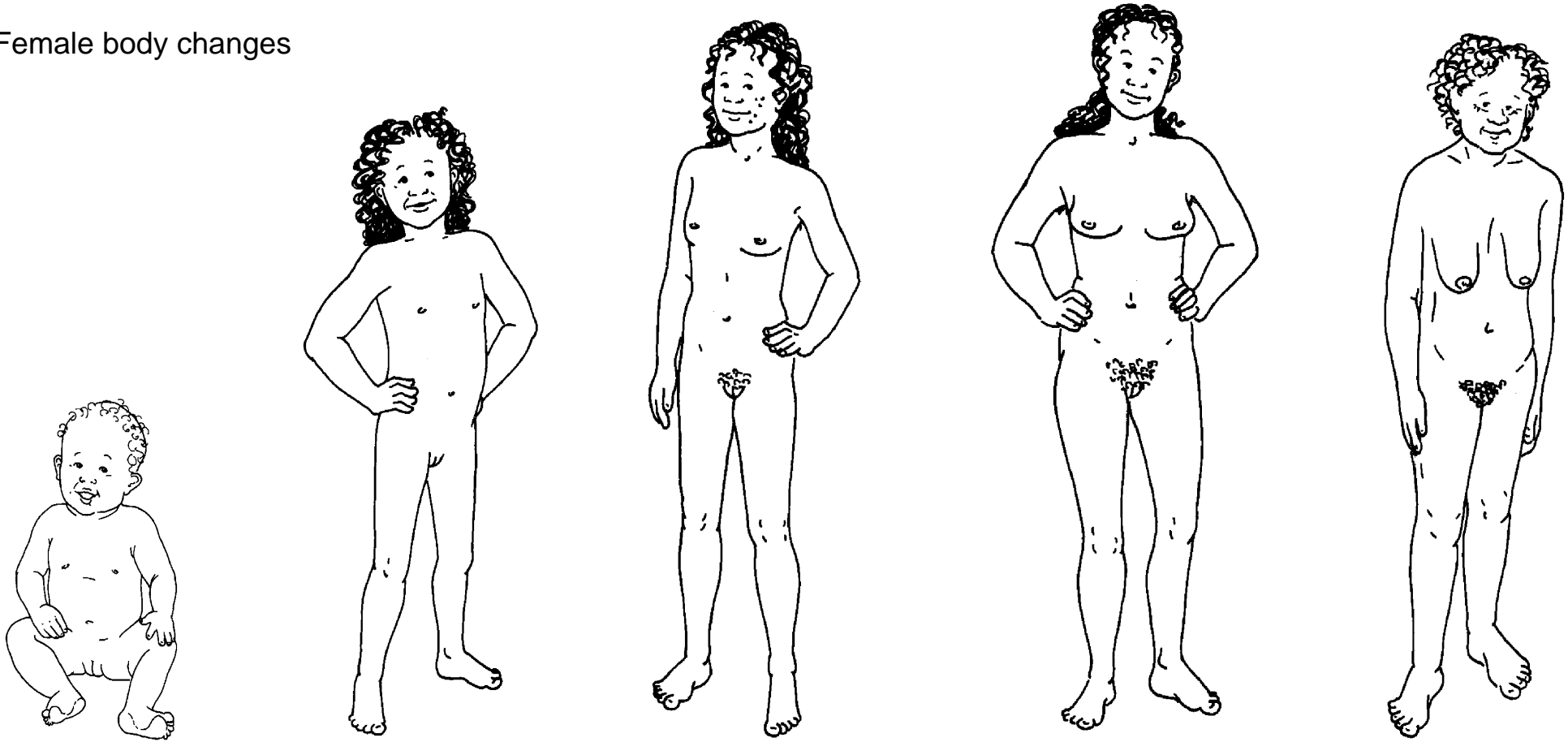
Male body changes



Write the changes at puberty: _____

Activity 2 – Defining puberty

Female body changes



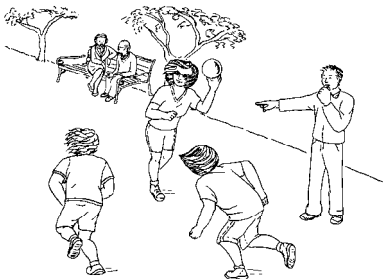
Write the changes at puberty: _____

Activity 4 – Healthy puberty

Tick the right box for each question.

1. Wash under your arms.

- Healthy
 Unhealthy

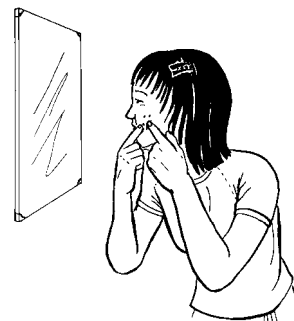


2. Have friendships with boys and girls.

- Healthy
 Unhealthy

3. Squeeze your pimples.

- Healthy
 Unhealthy

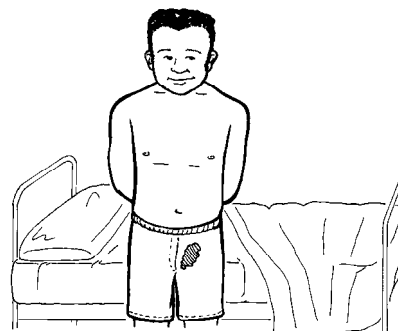


4. Eat fruit and vegetables.

- Healthy
 Unhealthy

5. Feel ok about having a wet dream.

- Healthy
 Unhealthy



6. Feel ok about having sexy feelings.

- Healthy
- Unhealthy



7. Feel good about being who you are.

- Healthy
- Unhealthy

8. Scream at everyone to help your bad mood.

- Healthy
- Unhealthy



9. Tease people about their body.

- Healthy
- Unhealthy

10. Ask questions if you feel confused.

- Healthy
- Unhealthy



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