

Explain ejaculation to your son. You can tell him that this is how his sperm comes out of his body. Boys may worry when they have a night-time ejaculation (also called a nocturnal emission or a "wet dream"). This can happen for the first time between the ages of 12 and 15, so it is a good idea to talk to your son now, before this happens. Boys sometimes think they have wet the bed when they find the fluid on the bedclothes or their pyjamas.

Talking to your son about erections and ejaculation could lead naturally to talking about sexual intercourse. You may feel this is the time to discuss this with your son, particularly if he already knows something about this. Or you may want to leave it until another time.

If you do not feel he is ready, it may be enough just to say that the man makes sperm and that they join with a woman's egg to make a new child.

Protecting your son

There are many things in society that make puberty a more difficult time for boys. There is a lot of sex in television programmes, films and computerised games. Very often sex is linked with violence. This can be confusing and harmful to a boy entering puberty.

Even though your son is only in Year 6, you should be careful about what he watches, particularly on the internet. This can easily lead to taking an interest in pornography. There is a strong link between pornography and masturbation. Your son's teenage years will be happier and more fulfilling if you protect him from these things.

Sex and babies

"This is my body" teaches children that life begins at the moment of conception. Every new baby is a gift to the world created by God. Your son is a gift from God. He has given him to you to look after. Sex is also a gift from God to men and women so that they can bring new life into His world.

An important message is that purpose of sex is to have babies. This is why there needs to be love and commitment between a man and a woman before they have a sexual relationship. Love, marriage, sex and babies all go together. This is what the Catholic church teaches because this is what brings happiness to people. People can get hurt and become very unhappy when love, marriage, sex and babies are separated from each other. Please share this message with your son.

Talking points:

- + Ask your son if he has any questions about any of these topics. Don't worry if he doesn't seem to want to say anything. Many boys find it hard to talk about personal things. You can give your son plenty of re-assurance that he can come to you if he does want to say anything in the future.

This is my body

TALKING TO YOUR SON ABOUT PUBERTY

Important note to parents

The most important thing to remember is that parents are the best people to talk to their sons about puberty. Even if you think someone else could do a better job, this is one of the rights God gave to you when your son was born. For that reason you will most probably do it better than anyone else.

Be confident. Many parents worry about talking to their children about sex. They worry about finding the right moment to talk to their child. They also worry that they will be too embarrassed.

The right time could be now. There are lots of openings to talk to your son about puberty while he is working through the "This is my body" programme at school. He is learning about how unborn babies grow in the womb, which gives a natural opening to talk to him about how his body changes so that he can become a father himself.

Don't be embarrassed – it will mean a lot to your son that you have spoken to him about puberty. You don't have to spend a lot of time talking, but your son needs to know what to expect as he enters puberty. This could lead naturally to talking about sexual intercourse, but you may want to leave that for another time.

Please read this leaflet so that you can prepare yourself to talk to your son. It's best if fathers can talk to their sons, but this leaflet will also help mums, another family member or a trusted friend.

Finally, this leaflet is for you. Don't just give it to your son to read. Sit with him and talk together.



Changing from boy to man

Puberty is the time when the body changes from that of a child to an adult. For boys and girls these changes are connected with preparing their bodies to become a father or a mother.

The body goes through three big changes, or growth spurts, in life:

1. In the womb
2. From birth to one year
3. Puberty

Talking points:

- + Talk about the way in which a baby grows so quickly in the womb - from a single cell to a complete baby in 9 months! Your son will be able to tell you a lot about this because of what he has learnt the "This is my body" programme."
- + Ask your son if he can think of all the skills babies learn before their first birthday. These skills include sitting up, crawling, holding things, walking, feeding themselves etc.

A few points about puberty

Puberty can start at any time between 9 and 16 years old. The process of changing from a child to an adult is not complete until a person is in their early twenties.

Girls usually start developing before boys.

Everyone develops at their own rate. Your son is unique.

Puberty starts when the brain sends a signal to the pituitary gland which releases certain hormones into the bloodstream. These hormones are chemical messengers which tell the body to start growing. Puberty is a time of rapid growth and change, both emotional and physical.

Every parent with a teenager knows what a challenging, and sometimes difficult time this can be. But it is also an exciting time. During puberty you and your son start to discover more of the plan God has for him.

Talking points:

- + Ask your son about the ways in which he thinks he has changed since Year 5. What does he like now that he didn't last year?
- + What does he notice about teenage boys whom he knows?

The signs of puberty

Growth spurt

As your son enters puberty he will have a growth spurt. This can happen in Year 6 or it may take place during Years 7 and 8. Boys grow taller and broader. They will also notice that their genitals are getting larger too.

Hair, skin and body odour

Your son's skin and hair also change and become more oily or greasy. Your son may start to get spots and possibly some acne. This is caused by the pores on the skin becoming clogged.

Your son will also start to get underarm hair and pubic hair. And he will start to get some body odour. The big message here for boys is to shower regularly and to start using a deodorant if necessary.

Voice

Another change for boys is that their voices "break". This happens because the male hormone testosterone makes the voice box grow and the vocal cords start to stretch.

Sperm

During puberty boys start to produce sperm and continue to do this throughout adulthood.

You can tell your son that this is the gift that God gives to men so that they can create a new life, at the right time.

Erections and ejaculation

You may feel that now is the right time to talk to your son about erections and ejaculations. But be confident to leave it until another time if you think your son is not ready for this yet.

Your son may already know about these things, but it is still important for you to talk to him. He will value the fact that you are spending this time with him. It is also an opportunity for you to tell your son that you are proud of him and his achievements and that you are looking forward to being able to do more with him as he gets older.

Even before puberty starts boys will have erections, but during puberty they happen more often. Your son may experience erections because he gets excited by something or there could be no reason at all.

Your son may feel embarrassed about having erections. But tell your son that this is a normal part of a boy's development. And feeling embarrassed is not bad; it is a natural way to help us realise that our bodies are private and that we have to take care of them.

This is a good moment to mention masturbation to your son. Boys often tend to experiment with masturbation during puberty. Your son should not think that this is normal too. The Catholic Church teaches that masturbation is wrong because it clashes with the purpose of sex. Masturbation makes boys and men think that sex is only for pleasure and that women can be used for enjoyment.

