

Growing up and being responsible

• As a boy goes through puberty, pressure from peers or older boys to have a girlfriend, drink alcohol, try smoking cigarettes or take other substances, and to show how strong and brave he is through fighting. This pressure is called peer pressure and may come from older boys and men, from girls, from the radio, internet or television. A boy might be called names because he has not tried to have sexual relations with girls. Remember, these behaviours are risky and not really 'cool.' Be a STAR instead. See, Think, Act and Remain safe.

• It is hard to say "no" when you feel this pressure, but talking to a trusted adult will help. They can help you to manage peer pressure and guide you through this confusing time.



Why should you avoid early sex?

• You may get a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) including HIV and AIDS that has no cure, or you may make a girl pregnant. You are not ready to be a father yet. It is a big responsibility. You need to use your chance to be educated and be a successful young man.

Is it true that I can only be a 'man' once I have had sex with a girl?

• No, being a man is not about sex. It is about responsibility and respecting girls as well as other people. It is about being confident about yourself, about your future and your decision to stay healthy.



Ministry of Education



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Government of
Azerbaijan

Adapted with appreciation from the Grow and Know series:
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Knowing about Puberty for Boys

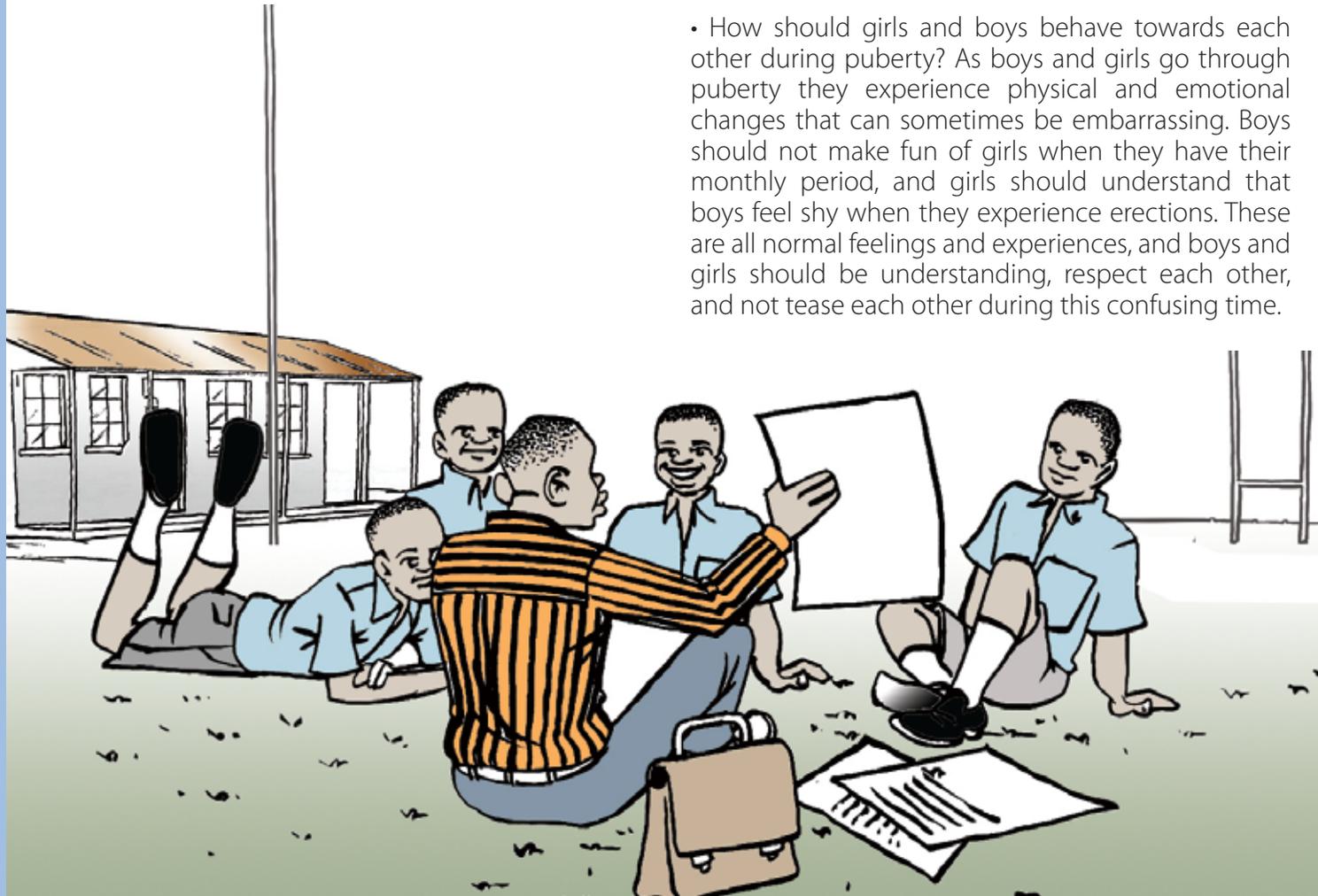
What is puberty?

Puberty is a time when most girls and boys between the ages of 10 and 14 begin to notice changes in their bodies. Some are changes you can see (physical) and some you cannot see (emotional), like your feelings. It is a time when boys begin to produce sperm and girls begin to produce eggs. These changes are due to chemicals called 'hormones' produced by the body, and they take place over a number of years. The changes in boys include the following:

- Grows beards, hair under the arms, chest and pubic area. The nipples get larger and darker in colour. The testicles and the penis grow and develop, the muscles get bigger and stronger, and height and weight increase. The skin gets oily and may get pimples. Sweat glands under the arms become active, and the voice changes. These changes do not all happen at the same time. They happen over a period of time.
- Hormone levels change and can make a boy feel happy one moment, and angry, sad or confused the next moment. Talking to a brother, uncle, father, grandfather or male teachers about these feelings can help.
- A growing boy can experience times when the penis gets hard. This is called an 'erection' and happens when the blood vessels in the penis fill with blood. It can happen when he wakes up in the morning, is nervous, has sexual thoughts, when the penis is touched, or for no reason. It can happen in the classroom or in some other place. He may feel shy and embarrassed because he cannot control it. There is no need to worry. This is normal and part of growing up.

What can I do when that happens to me?

- You can cover the private area with a book, sit down or put your hands in your pockets to hide it.
- Some boys may wake up in the morning and find their underpants wet from white sticky fluid called semen, which contains sperms. This is called a 'wet dream' and can be due to dreams about girls and sexual thoughts, but sometimes it just happens. There is no need to be embarrassed. This is normal and will pass as a boy gets older.



Growing Up and Changing

• What is a sperm?

A sperm is the male cell required to fertilise a female egg to make a baby. It is produced by a boy's testicles and makes it possible for a boy to physically be able to father children one day.

- Are the changes the same for every boy? No, everyone changes at a different pace – it happens earlier in some boys and later in others. Girls often reach puberty earlier than boys and look taller and more mature, but boys soon catch up!
- How should girls and boys behave towards each other during puberty? As boys and girls go through puberty they experience physical and emotional changes that can sometimes be embarrassing. Boys should not make fun of girls when they have their monthly period, and girls should understand that boys feel shy when they experience erections. These are all normal feelings and experiences, and boys and girls should be understanding, respect each other, and not tease each other during this confusing time.