

PREPARING FOR PUBERTY

Kids grow up, sometimes faster than we like. Puberty occurs between 9 and 13 years for girls and from 10 to 14 years for boys. Puberty is a time of rapid physical and emotional changes. Your pre-teen may feel excited or embarrassed about their new body, worried about being normal, happy to be growing up, confused about sexual feelings and experiencing mood swings. Here are some things you can do to assist your child to be prepared for puberty:

- ◆ Don't wait until you notice changes in your child's body before you start discussing puberty. Changes will be well underway before you see anything.
- ◆ Children are ready for information on puberty by the time they are 9 or 10 years old. Even though your child may not be in puberty, chances are someone around him/her is.
- ◆ Puberty occurs at different rates for everyone – assure your child that puberty will occur when the time is right for him/her.
- ◆ Explain the changes that are similar for boys and girls and those that are different.
- ◆ Assist your child to cope with puberty. Puberty is hard work and his/her body will require more sleep, good nutrition, good coping patterns and extra attention to hygiene.
- ◆ As many children and adolescents are uncomfortable with their changing bodies, respect the need for privacy and independence.
- ◆ Be a positive role model.

Your local public library and health unit has books, videos and other resources on puberty and sexual health.

For more information contact:

- ◆ Your local Health Unit
- ◆ BC Nurse Line (1-866-215-4700) a free call
- ◆ Prevention Services www.viha.ca/prevention_services/healthy_choices.htm

Health Units:

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| Esquimalt | 360-5600 | Salt Spring Island | 538-4880 |
| Outer Gulf Islands | 539-3099 | Sooke | 642-5464 |
| Peninsula | 544-2400 | Victoria | 388-2200 |
| Saanich | 744-5100 | West Shore | 478-1757 |