

interests; at the same time, childhood friendships may begin to break apart. There is no need to change friends *just because* puberty is in progress. Again, take your time, reflect on what is happening in your life — where you are and where you want to be. Respect yourself, your goals and your values, and others will respect you, as well.

Caring For Your Body

As you grow through puberty, your body will need different care. For example, when you were a little boy, you could skip baths frequently. Now, however, it is very important for you to bathe every day.

Your sweat glands under your arms and in your *genital area* (penis, scrotum and surrounding area) begin to produce increased sweat (perspiration) during puberty. As bacteria on your skin contact the sweat, an unpleasant odor can occur. *You may not notice it, but others will!*

Take a shower or bath every day *and* after strenuous activities, such as gym or soccer. After you bathe, you may wish to use a deodorant or an antiperspirant. Always put on clean clothes.

Besides sweat, your *oil glands* (*sebaceous glands*) are now very active, producing an oily fluid called *sebum*. When sebum blocks pores in your skin and combines with bacteria, pimples (“zits”) can develop. Keeping your skin clean is the best way to prevent or lessen pimples; wash your face at least twice each day. Try to keep your hands away from your face; don’t pick at the pimples because an infection or scarring may result.

If the problem persists, you may try anti-acne creams, lotions or cleansing pads. If these fail to stop the acne, talk to your doctor. He may recommend topical antibiotics or other medications.

Oil glands are also active now in your scalp. Frequently — perhaps even daily — shampoo your hair to keep it fresh.

In order to give a total picture of cleanliness, gently brush your teeth, gums and tongue at least twice each day to keep them healthy. Floss the teeth you want to keep.

When you think you should start shaving the hair on your face, talk with your parents about shaving and the type of shaving equipment you will need.

Eating balanced meals means choosing foods from all four basic food groups, especially calcium- and iron-rich foods. Every day, teens need: two to three servings of dairy foods; two to three servings of protein-rich foods (builds muscles and body organs); five or more servings of vegetables and fruits; four or more servings of breads and cereals.

Eat balanced meals and exercise every day — try running, fast walking, swimming, rope jumping, skating, climbing stairs, bicycling, tennis or aerobics. Before you begin to exercise, do some warm-up exercises to help prevent sore muscles and to help avoid serious injury.

Celebrate Your Life!

You are in a *very exciting phase* of your life! Your future, with all of its promise, is just beginning to unfold. You are becoming a man and you are learning about your own sexuality.

Your sexuality, including your ability to produce children, is a marvelous gift, a precious part of who you are as a person. While fertility (the ability to father children) and virility are important to a male’s physical maturity, they do not make you an emotionally or intellectually mature man.

As you pass through puberty, reflect on the amazing ways your body is adjusting into manhood so that at the correct time in your life, you will be able to father your children and take responsibility to care for and raise them. The proper, time-tested, stable environment for sexual expression is within a loving and committed marriage.

This is a time of your life when you must make many important, long-term decisions. The mark of true maturity is making wise decisions. By understanding your body and how it works, you will understand yourself and your life-giving potential better. Recognize the tremendous responsibility you have to protect and save your awesome gift of sexuality. You can use this gift in the most positive and wonderful ways in a life-long committed relationship.

Be grateful for your gift of sexuality and protect it until marriage. “Safe Sex” is a deadly game; “Saved Sex” is the healthy choice!

You are of incredible value and dignity. Respect yourself and others will respect you, too!

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