

Human Development & Sexual Health - Grades 4-6

This glossary provides clear definitions of key terms related to human development. Understanding these terms is essential for fostering open conversations and ensuring students have a solid foundation as they navigate the changes that come with puberty. Use this glossary as a resource to clarify concepts and promote informed discussions.

Anatomy and Physiology Terms:

- **Anatomy:** The study of the body's structure and its parts.
- **Anus:** The opening at the end of the digestive tract through which waste is expelled from the body. It is the opening closest to the buttocks.
- **Bladder:** The organ that stores urine until it is expelled from the body.
- **Breasts:** The tissue on a person's chest that can develop during puberty.
- **Circumcision:** A surgical procedure that removes the foreskin, the fold of skin covering the head of the penis. It is commonly performed for cultural, religious, or medical reasons.
- **Clitoral hood:** Fold of skin that covers and protects the clitoris, serving as a protective covering that helps keep the clitoris sensitive and shielded from irritation.
- **Clitoris:** A small, sensitive organ located at the top of the vulva, it plays a key role in sexual arousal and pleasure.
- **Egg (ovum):** The reproductive cell produced by the ovaries. Each month, one egg is released during ovulation and can be fertilized by sperm.
- **Ejaculation:** The process of expelling semen from the penis, typically occurring at the peak of sexual arousal. It involves a series of muscle contractions that release sperm and seminal fluid.
- **Embryo:** The early stage of development of a fertilized egg as it implants in the uterus and begins to grow.
- **Erection:** The process in which the penis becomes firm, engorged with blood, and elongated, often in response to sexual arousal. This occurs when blood vessels in the penis fill with blood.
- **Estrogen:** The primary sex hormone responsible for the development of reproductive tissues for individuals assigned female at birth and secondary sexual characteristics, such as breasts and wider hips. It plays a key role in regulating the menstrual cycle.

- **Fallopian tubes:** The tubes that connect the ovaries to the uterus. They carry the egg from the ovary to the uterus and is the area where fertilization by sperm typically occurs.
- **Fertilization:** The process by which a sperm cell joins with an egg cell to form a zygote, initiating the development of a new organism.
- **Foreskin:** The fold of skin that covers the head (glans) of the penis in those assigned male at birth. It is present at birth and can be removed through a surgical procedure called circumcision. The foreskin serves to protect the sensitive glans and contains nerve endings, contributing to sexual sensation.
- **Gestation:** The period of development of a fetus inside the uterus from conception until birth.
- **Glans:** The sensitive, bulbous tip of the penis, often referred to as the "head," and the rounded structure at the top of the clitoris. It contains many nerve endings.
- **Hormones:** Chemicals in the body that help regulate functions, including growth and sexual development during puberty.
- **Menstrual cycle:** The monthly series of changes in the body of those with a uterus that prepare for a potential pregnancy, including menstruation.
- **Menstruation:** The monthly shedding of the uterine lining when pregnancy does not occur, part of the menstrual cycle.
- **Nocturnal emission (wet dream):** The involuntary release of semen during sleep, commonly known as a "wet dream." This normal part of sexual development typically occurs in individuals assigned male at birth during puberty, indicating the body is producing sperm.
- **Ovary:** The reproductive organ that produces eggs (ova) and hormones like estrogen and progesterone. Each month, an ovary releases an egg during a process called ovulation.
- **Ovulation:** The release of an egg from the ovary, typically occurring once a month in individuals assigned female at birth.
- **Penis:** The external reproductive organ in individuals assigned male at birth that delivers sperm. It also serves as the passageway for urine to leave the body.
- **Pituitary gland:** A small gland located at the base of the brain that produces hormones regulating various functions in the body, including growth, metabolism, and the menstrual cycle. It plays a crucial role in signalling other glands, such as the ovaries and testes, to produce hormones like estrogen and testosterone.
- **Progesterone:** A hormone produced by the ovaries that helps regulate the menstrual cycle and maintain pregnancy. It prepares the uterus for a fertilized egg and helps support early stages of pregnancy by thickening the uterine lining.
- **Prostate:** A small gland located below the bladder in individuals assigned male at birth. The prostate surrounds the urethra and produces fluid that nourishes and protects sperm, mixing with sperm from the testicles to form semen. During ejaculation, the prostate helps propel semen through the urethra.

- **Puberty:** The period of life during which a child's body develops into an adult body capable of sexual reproduction. It involves physical, emotional, and hormonal changes.
- **Pubic hair:** Hair that grows in the genital area during puberty.
- **Reproduction:** The biological process by which living organisms produce new individuals or offspring.
- **Reproductive system:** The system of organs and glands involved in producing offspring.
- **Scrotum:** The pouch of skin that holds the testicles. It regulates the temperature of the testicles, keeping them slightly cooler than the body's temperature, which is essential for sperm production and health. The scrotum can relax or contract to adjust to temperature changes.
- **Semen:** The fluid that contains sperm and is expelled from the male reproductive system during ejaculation.
- **Sex hormones:** Chemicals produced by the body that regulate sexual development and function. In those assigned male at birth, the primary sex hormone is testosterone, while individuals assigned female at birth primarily produce estrogen and progesterone. These hormones influence physical changes during puberty, reproductive processes, and sexual characteristics.
- **Smegma:** A natural substance made up of dead skin cells, oil, and moisture that can accumulate under the foreskin in individuals with a penis and around the clitoris and labia in individuals with a vulva. It can have an unpleasant odour if not regularly cleaned.
- **Sperm:** The reproductive cell typically in individuals assigned male at birth that fertilizes the egg.
- **Sweat glands:** Small, coiled glands located in the skin that produce and secrete sweat. They play a key role in regulating body temperature and removing waste.
- **Testicle (testes):** The reproductive organ typically in individuals assigned male at birth that produces sperm and hormones like testosterone. Each testicle is located in the scrotum and supports characteristic changes during puberty.
- **Testosterone:** The primary sex hormone in individuals assigned male at birth responsible for the development of reproductive tissues and secondary sexual characteristics, such as increased muscle and bone mass, and the growth of body hair.
- **Urethra:** The tube that carries urine from the bladder and semen from the reproductive system out of the body. In those assigned male at birth, the urethra runs through the penis and is the passageway for both urine and sperm.
- **Urethral orifice:** The external opening of the urethra, located above the vaginal orifice in individuals assigned female at birth, and located at the tip of the penis for individuals assigned male at birth, through which urine exits the body.

- **Uterus:** The hollow organ in an individual assigned female at birth's body where a fertilized egg can develop into a baby. The uterus is lined with a tissue that thickens each month in preparation for a potential pregnancy.
- **Vagina:** The muscular canal that connects the external genitals to the uterus; it serves as the birth canal during childbirth.
- **Vaginal discharge:** A fluid expelled from the vagina, made up of secretions from the cervix and vaginal walls. It can vary in colour and consistency throughout the menstrual cycle and helps keep the vagina clean and moist. Unusual changes in discharge may indicate health issues.
- **Vaginal orifice:** The external opening of the vagina, located between the urethral opening and the anus, allowing menstrual flow to exit and serving as an entry to the vaginal canal.
- **Vas deferens:** The tube that transports sperm from the testicles to the urethra during ejaculation. It plays a crucial role in delivering sperm during sexual activity.
- **Vulva:** The external part of the genitalia for individuals assigned female at birth, including the labia, clitoris, and vaginal opening.
- **Yeast infection:** A fungal infection caused by an overgrowth of yeast, often affecting the vagina, leading to itching and abnormal discharge. It can also occur in individual assigned male at birth, causing irritation in the genital area.
- **Zygote:** The fertilized egg formed when a sperm cell successfully joins with an egg cell (ovum). The zygote undergoes multiple divisions and transformations as it develops into an embryo.

General key concepts:

- **2SLGBTQ+:** Is an inclusive term that represents a diverse community of people who identify as Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and others whose sexual orientations or gender identities fall outside heterosexual or cisgender norms. The '2S' at the beginning stands for 'Two-Spirit,' a term used by some Indigenous peoples to reflect unique cultural understandings of gender and sexuality. The '+' symbol acknowledges the spectrum of identities beyond these letters.
- **Antiperspirant:** A product designed to reduce sweating by blocking the sweat glands. It helps to prevent body odour by minimizing moisture in areas where sweat is likely to accumulate, such as the underarms.
- **Assigned sex at birth:** The designation of an individual's sex (male or female) given by medical professionals at the time of birth, based on physical anatomy. This designation may not necessarily reflect an individual's gender identity later in life.
- **Body image:** The perception and attitude one has towards their physical appearance, which can impact self-esteem and overall well-being.

- **Body odour:** The smell that comes from the body, particularly from areas like the armpits and feet, due to the natural bacteria breaking down sweat. It can become more noticeable during puberty as sweat glands become more active.
- **Consent:** Recognizing and respecting the need for permission in interactions and relationships, ensuring that everyone involved feels safe and valued.
- **Deodorant:** A product applied to the skin to mask or neutralize body odour. It often contains fragrance and antimicrobial agents to help reduce the smell caused by sweat.
- **Emotional changes:** Shifts in feelings and moods that often occur during puberty and adolescence.
- **Gender:** The social and cultural roles, behaviors, and expectations associated with being male, female, or non-binary. Gender identity is how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves, which may or may not align with their assigned sex at birth.
- **Healthy relationships:** Building and maintaining positive, respectful connections with others that are based on trust, communication, and support.
- **Hygiene:** The practice of maintaining cleanliness and promoting health to prevent illness and infection. This includes regular washing of hands, bathing, dental care, and other habits that contribute to overall well-being and personal cleanliness.
- **Internet safety:** Recognizing the importance of protecting personal information and being aware of potential risks when engaging online, including understanding how to behave safely and respectfully.
- **Non-binary:** A gender identity that doesn't fit within the traditional categories of male or female. Non-binary people may feel they are a blend of both genders, fall outside these labels entirely, or identify differently over time.
- **Personal boundaries:** Knowing and communicating individual limits in relationships and interactions, helping to ensure mutual respect and comfort.
- **Physical changes:** Changes in the body that occur during puberty, such as growth spurts and development of sexual characteristics.
- **Respect:** Treating others with consideration and valuing their feelings, rights, and boundaries. It involves acknowledging differences and treating everyone fairly and kindly.
- **Self-awareness:** The ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, and how they influence interactions with others.
- **Self-esteem:** Developing a positive sense of self-worth and confidence, recognizing personal strengths, and valuing oneself.
- **Sense of identity:** Understanding who you are as an individual, including personal beliefs, values, and characteristics that define you.
- **Social changes:** Changes in relationships and interactions with peers, family, and community during development.