

Session 4_Girls

Learning about my body: Reproductive system

Rationale

Pubertal changes begin around 9 -10 years in girls and around 11 years for boys. Acknowledging the mental, emotional, and physical changes that adolescents go through helps put them at ease with themselves, satisfies their curiosity and allays any fears regarding bodily functions.

Materials required

- Marker pen
- Any sticking substance (Blu Tac / double sided sticking tape / cello tape / board pins)
- Charts/Session worksheets

Objective

At the end of the session 4 the children will internalize:

Core message 1: Knowing how my body works helps me take better care of my body.

Core message 2: Understanding the reproductive system helps me be healthy and safe.

Core message 1: Knowing how my body works helps me take better care of my body.

Methodology: It is important to know about our likes and dislikes and be more aware of “Who I am”. To be able to take care of ourselves, we also need to know about the different organs and systems that make up our body.

Draw your body in as much detail as you can.

Call out/ write down/ the names of the male and female reproductive organs.

Discussion: We are taught most parts of the body right from early childhood but there are certain parts which we often don't talk about even as adults. These are the reproductive system and related body parts. Knowing ALL of them is also very important. Let us now name all parts of our body. Draw and name all parts of the female and male reproductive organs. Name the clitoris, urethra, vagina, vulva, uterus, tubes and ovaries; testis, scrotum, penis, vas deferens, seminal vesicles, prostate, urethra and penis.

You can use the diagram to talk about reproductive system and puberty in Annexure 4:1

Material Required

Marker pen, Blu Tac / Board pins /
Double sided sticking tape / Cello tape
Marker pen, Chalk, Duster,
Blackboard,

Advance preparation:

Make a chart of reproductive systems

Tips for Trainers

- Session 4 will be conducted separately for boys and girls.
- Put up a chart with the different changes
- When answers are wrong or inappropriate, these should be stated in order for children not to internalize incorrect responses as correct.
- Praise children who have answered correctly or are on the right track by using words like, "very good response"
- Incorporate a lot of hand gestures and voice modulation to capture the interest of the students.
- **You can use the diagram to talk about reproductive system and puberty in Annexure 4:1**
- One of the tasks of growing up is discovering who you are and what that means about what you like. Every person goes through this process of exploration, but what happens when it leads to feeling different, confused or even alone as nobody talk about it. Hence, give children ample time to raise questions and clear their doubts.

Core Message 2: Understanding the reproductive system helps me be healthy and safe.

Question: What is menstruation? Why does it happen?

Discussion: Normal cells in the body have 46 chromosomes. However, there is a special cell in the female body which has 23 chromosomes. This is called the ovum. The male also has cells with 23 chromosomes which is the sperm. Every month one ovum comes out of the ovary and waits to get fertilized by the sperm which also has 23 chromosomes. At the same time, the inner lining of the uterus gets soft and spongy with lots of blood, oxygen to nourish the potential baby. This is called the endometrium. If fertilization does not happen, then this inner endometrium lining comes out through the vagina, this trickles out as blood for 4-5 days. The same process repeats every month.

Question: How is a baby born? How does sexual reproduction take place?

Discussion: Explain in simple words how sex happens. The penis is used to deposit the sperms close to the womb. The sperms travel up the womb and one fertilizes the ovum to form a zygote which develops into a baby. Baby grows in the womb for 9 months and then is born through the birth canal.

Question: What are pads? How do we wear a sanitary pad? How often should we change a sanitary pad?

Discussion: Explain how to wear a sanitary pad/ use cloth pieces, how often to change it and the importance of personal hygiene. There is **no** need to remove pubic hair for any health or hygiene reason.

Question: Are the periods regular or irregular during puberty? Is it ok for the periods to be irregular? Do we lose a lot of blood during periods?

Discussion: During puberty, the body is still going through changes. So in the beginning for 2-3 year, the periods maybe irregular. After sometime, it will become regular. For some girls, it maybe regular too and that is also ok. We lose only between 30- 50 ml of blood during periods. It appears like we lose a lot of blood because it continues for 4-5 days.

Question: Why do we get pain or cramps during periods? Is it ok to take pain killers during periods?

Discussion: During periods, the muscles of the uterus contracts to let the blood out. This may cause cramps or pains during or a little before periods. It is ok to take a pain killer during periods.

Tips for Trainers

- First ask the question to a single child and then put it forth to the other children. This helps giving every child an opportunity to answer as well as provides opportunities to clear doubts if necessary.
- If any child gives a different answer from the expected response, do not correct the child; rather ask the child to state the reason and use such incidents as points for discussion.

Making Connections

Understanding these changes are normal part of growing up and it's a phase which is unique for each one will have a calming effect on children's anxiety of growing up.

Refer to Annexure 4:3 for diagrams of menstruation

Question: Is it ok to exercise during periods?

Discussion: It is ok to exercise during periods. Exercising does not increase menstrual flow.

Question: Can the timing of the periods be changed?

Discussion: There is no natural method of doing this. Periods depend on the hormonal balance in the body and altering this is quite risky. Many say that exercise increases the blood flow or pre-pones the periods but this is entirely baseless. In fact, athletes may get their periods more rarely than other women.

Question: Are periods dirty? Is the blood that comes out during periods impure? Will plants die if you touch them during periods?

Discussion: The blood that collects as lining in the endometrium is full of nutrition and nourishment for the expected baby. So it is very pure. Hence the blood that comes out during periods cannot be impure. Touching plants during periods does not harm plants. If this was true prehistoric women would have been incapable of gathering her food.

Methodology: Why are girls not allowed to touch or eat certain foods during menstruation?

Discussion: It's a myth that during menstruation certain foods should not be taken. On the contrary Indian women need more iron containing food during their periods, as 80% of them are anemic. Women doctors do surgeries on people, take out babies, dress wounds – during their periods. No harm comes to anyone!

Question: What is masturbation?

Discussion: Girls may touch or rub the clitoris for pleasure. It is normal and natural.

Question: Where is the hymen?

Discussion: It is a thin membrane covering the vaginal opening. There is a small opening or aperture in this membrane to let out the menstrual blood. Hymen can be torn during other physical activities like cycling. These torn areas may or may not bleed. No bleeding during the 1st intercourse does not indicate that the partner is sexually active. Hymen is a part of the body. No respect or shame resides here.

Material Required

Marker pen, Blu Tac / Board pins /
Double sided sticking tape / Cello tape
Marker pen, Chalk, Duster,
Blackboard, Box for collecting
questions, white chits

- Refer to Annexure 4:2 for diagrams of menstruation
- If you don't have answer to any question it is best to be honest with children. However, make an effort to find out the answer and share during the future sessions.
- As children do not have much spaces to discuss about issues related to puberty and reproduction there might be a lot of questions. In order to streamline it you can do an activity called "WORRIES IN A HAT":

After explaining puberty/changes during growing up, children are given time to think about which they write on blank chits and put in the box that will be passed around.

Question: Can we know if a woman is a virgin?

Discussion: A virgin is a person who has never engaged in sexual intercourse. There is no 100% sure way of testing virginity in women.. Only if the hymen is very small and intact we can assume virginity. If it is naturally large and elastic, we can't assume virginity. Virginity denotes different things to different people. Traditionally, virginity is only lost through vaginal penetration by the penis irrespective of the act being consensual or non – consensual. Other non - penetrative sex do not result in loss of virginity according to heterosexuals. Other sexually oriented people consider most acts of sexual nature as losing one's virginity. It depends upon what one thinks. **Virginity is of no value in judging a person's character and worthiness.**

Question: Why do women have more rounded body contour?

Discussion: Imagine if a woman is bearing a baby and there is difficulty in getting food for a few days. She will obviously need more stored energy to feed herself and the baby. Fat is stored energy. Women have more fat giving the impression of a roundish contour. If a woman has fat content of below 17%, she will not ovulate (make eggs). Fat is stored energy. Women need certain amount of fat to be healthy.

Question: Do the size of the breasts determine the secretion of milk? Why do breasts bulge and develop only in females?

Discussion: The size of the breasts is not related to the ability to secrete milk as that is done by glands and not the fat deposited in the breast. The size of the two breasts may also vary and it is normal. Breasts are secondary sexual features and are designed to attract.

Question: What is the white/yellowish discharge?

Discussion: The white discharge is acidic in nature. It is secreted to protect the vaginal area from infections. It is normal and healthy. Normal white discharge is clear or whitish in colour, with a sticky mucus like consistency. Only if causes itching or it has a foul smell or it is brownish or greenish color, then need to get it checked by a doctor.

Question: How to maintain genital hygiene?

Discussion: It is very important to wash the pubic area with soap and water during a daily bath. The folds of skin - the labia minora and labia majora - must also be cleaned, as secretions tend to collect there. After passing fecal matter, always wipe from the front to the back so as to prevent the vagina from being infected. The pubic hair might get matted with blood during periods, wash it thoroughly to clean it. Some people may clip or remove this hair. This is not necessary for hygiene or sexual activity.

Question: What is the effect of watching pornography?

Discussion: We all are curious about knowing how sex happens. Some people watch pornography to learn about sex.

Pluses: Enjoyable, educative (is it?)

Time pass. Minuses: Addictive, not realistic, ends up giving you a skewed idea about women and men, the act of sex, your own bodies. It does not build respect for women. If a person watches pornography, it can lead to addiction and excessive masturbation.

The person will neglect studies/ time with friends/ sports/ family time to watch pornography. How do we manage this? Playing outdoor sports/ running/ jogging helps to channelize this energy in a way that is not harmful, taking professional help to deal with the addiction.

Question: Apart from girl and boy, is there any other gender?

Discussion: Sexuality is diverse. Explain and discuss about LGBT in short. Gender identity (inner feeling that I am a girl or a boy) and sexual orientation (person towards whom one feels sexually attracted) is inborn, due to genetic and epigenetic factors, and naturally determined. At times, gender identity does not match the anatomical sex of the person. Gender of such people is referred to as transgender. They may choose to take medication and or undergo surgery to transition – that is, change their anatomical sex to match their inner feeling.

Every human being is equally human. LGBTQ community members are as intelligent as others. We need to respect every person for their intelligences, skills and behavior.

Tips for Trainers

To respond to the question, apart from girl and boy, is there any other gender?

While responding to this question the trainer need to convey there are wider, more flexible range of gender expressions, with a range of interests and behaviors. Gender is not a binary, but a continuum; and that many children and adults express their gender in multiple ways.

The idea that gender is a continuum with many ways to express oneself as a person. We express our gender through our clothes, hairstyle, mannerisms, speech patterns, body language, social interactions, or choice of activities. People express their gender along a continuum from feminine to masculine.

Concluding the session:

Activity: Worries in a Hat (Questions about puberty) : The students write any questions they have left about their changing bodies and feelings on note slips distributed anonymously. These questions and doubts are answered by the trainers in the next session without reference to any particular person.

Concluding the session

Ask students to draw their body. What did they draw and what did they leave out?

Summarize and review the key messages:

Ask children to share what they learnt today in the session

Reiterate:

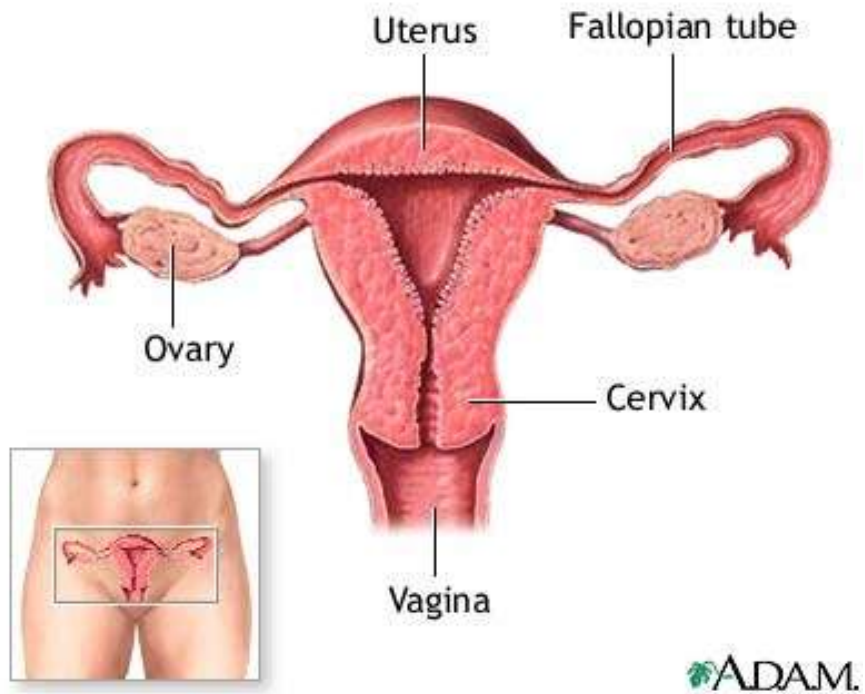
Core message 1: Knowing how my body works helps me take better care of my body.

Core message 2: Understanding the reproductive system helps me be healthy and safe.

I came here to help you learn more about yourself, how you interact with others and how to be safe. I will come again and we will learn some more things.

Annexure 4:1

Reproductive System of Girls



Annexure 4:2

Explaining Menstruation

