

Boys' Body Changes During Puberty

Puberty is the time when boys naturally mature into adults.

Hormones (messengers in the body) trigger the following changes:

- **Physical** – Growing taller and bigger
- **Sexual** – Organs mature; sperm are made which can combine with an egg to create a baby
- **Emotional** – Feeling and reacting differently
- **Mental** – Thinking and processing information differently

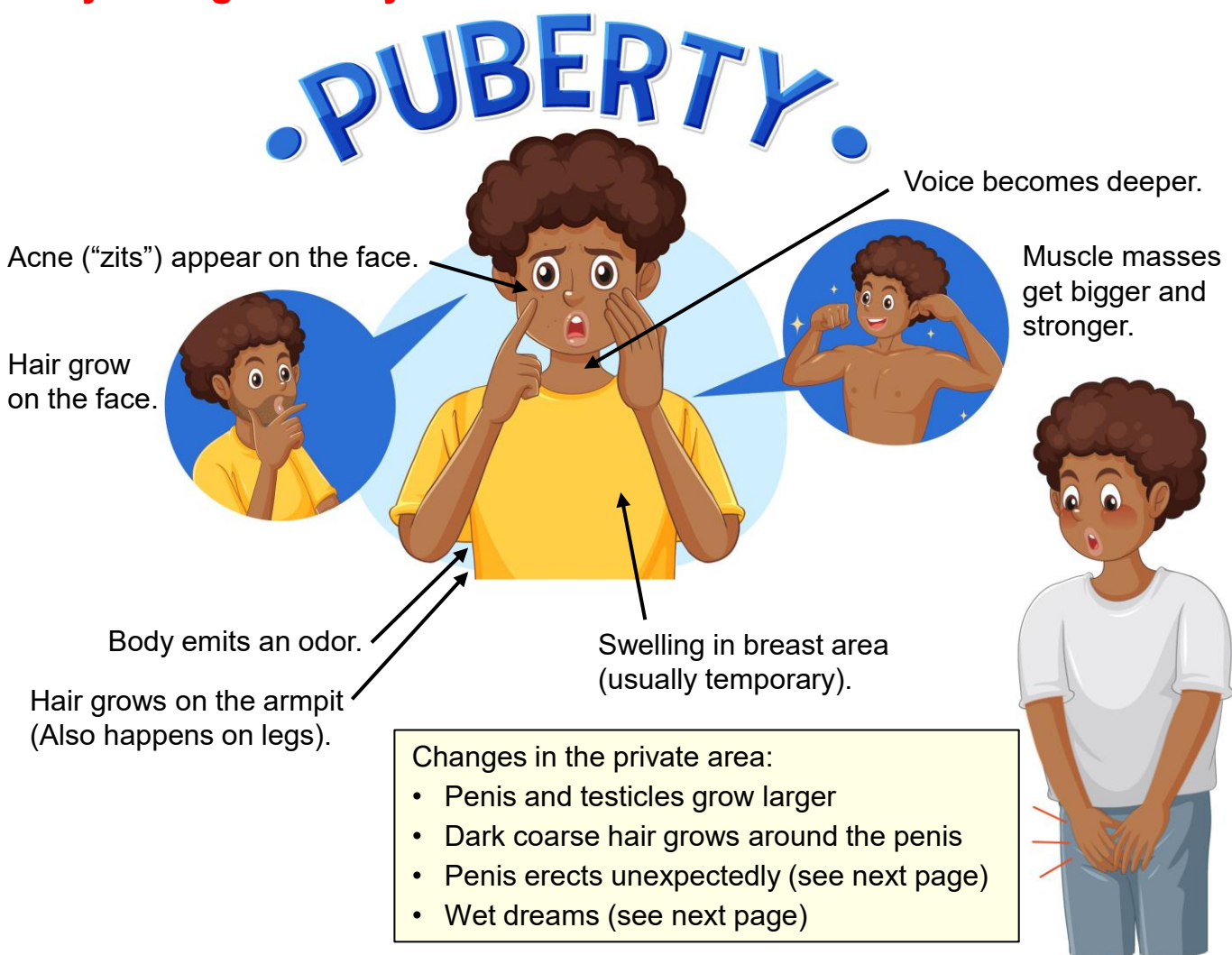
Puberty usually starts between 9 to 14 in boys. Boys of African- or Latin-American-descent tend to start puberty earlier than those of European descent. Each boy goes through puberty at his own pace, usually 2-5 years. 22q differences do not delay the start of puberty unless there is a significant chronic illness. Delayed puberty (no testes/scrotal development) should be investigated at 14 years of age.

Height and Weight in Teens with 22q11.2DS

Teens with 22q11.2DS may not grow as tall as their peers, but they gain weight easily. See [Growth Charts](#) from a 2012 [study](#) on children of European descent.

Teens with 22q11.2DS may be [at risk of obesity](#). It is very important to have a healthy diet and maintain an active lifestyle to decrease this risk.

Body Changes in Boys



Boys' Body Changes During Puberty (continued)

Erections

- **Erection** means the penis is enlarged and hard. The inside of the penis is filled with blood so it “stands up” and points away from the body.
- An erection can happen when:
 - ❑ A person is sexually excited from visual cues or fantasies
 - ❑ Something (e.g. clothes, hands etc.) touches the penis
 - ❑ A person is sleeping deeply
 - ❑ For no reason at all
- It is common and normal for teenage boys to have a number of erections during the day.
- An erected penis becomes soft again after it ejaculates (releases sperms). However, it can also become soft without ejaculating.
- An erection can last from a minutes to a few hours. However, if it lasts for more than 4 hours, go to the emergency room for medical treatment.

Nocturnal Emissions (Wet Dreams)

- As a boy grows up, his testicles will begin to make sperms. The levels of hormones guide the process.
- Sperms are released from the penis during **ejaculation**. If a sperm meets an egg, the fertilized egg may form a baby. In other words, boys who are capable of ejaculating can get someone pregnant.
- **Nocturnal emission** or **wet dream** is ejaculation that happens during sleep. It is a normal part of puberty and not within a person's control. The wet dream appears as a wet sticky spot on the underwear, pajamas, or bedsheets. The teen may think that he wet the bed and is afraid to tell the parents.
 - ❑ Parents can explain wet dreams to their son before he has them. Assure him that it is a normal process but encourage him to clean up. See p. 20 of the [Health Bodies Appendix](#).



Boxers or Briefs?

- Boxers may be easier to put on and take off
- Briefs may give more support to the penis and the testicles. They also make erections less visible.

Let the boy try both to see which one he likes better.

Differences in the Reproductive System in Boys

A small minority of boys have structural differences in their reproductive systems. For example:

- **Cryptorchidism** – Undescended testicles
- **Hypospadias** – Urethral opening at the bottom of the penis instead of being at the tip
- **Phimosis** – Foreskin being too tight.

It is recommended that all individuals with 22q11.2DS receive a complete physical exam at diagnosis. Structural differences in a boy's reproductive system may need surgical repair.

References / Resources

- [Puberty | Erection](#) – Cleveland Clinic, USA
- [Puberty: Adolescent Male](#) – John Hopkins Medicine, USA
- [What is Puberty?](#) (Video - 2 minutes) – Society for Endocrinology, UK
- [The Healthy Bodies Toolkit for Boys](#) (multiple resources, including a parents' guide for teens with disabilities, autistic teens) – Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, USA
- [Puberty/Adolescence/Disability Sex-Ed Resources](#) – The Arc Foundation, USA
- [Growth charts](#) from [Syndrome-Specific Growth Charts for 22q11.2 Deletion Syndrome in Caucasian Children](#) – 2012.
- [Anomalies of the genitourinary tract in children with 22q11.2 deletion syndrome](#) – 2019
- Updated clinical practice recommendations for managing [\[children | adults\]](#) with 22q11.2 deletion syndrome – 2023
- Graphics on p. 1 of this info sheet were adapted from [magnific.com](#)
- Graphics on p. 2 of this info sheet were adapted from [emojipedia.org](#)