

*what, why, and how?*

# gender expansive puberty.

**AN EDUCATIONAL GUIDE.**



@queersexedcc

# What is gender expansive puberty?

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Gender expansive puberty is a dynamic subject that not only **recognizes** the dominance of *cisheteronormativity* in sexual health education but **actively works to dismantle it.**

**This can look like:**

- Centering *trans* and *nonbinary* experiences.
- Teaching about *gender*, *gender identity*, and *sexuality*.
- Recognizing and validating the **variation** of *bodies*, *identities*, and *lived experiences*.

# Why teach gender expansive puberty?



Puberty education is the **earliest** health education children receive (as early as elementary school).



Puberty education teaches *foundational* ideas about **sex** and **gender**, as well as **bodily autonomy** and **consent**.

Puberty is often taught through *outdated practices and principles* that reinforce **gender binaries** and **biological essentialism**.



# Puberty education is heavily gendered.

*Puberty education is often built on false assumptions about the naturalization of gender binaries, cisgenderism, and heterosexuality. For example, a common practice is splitting up classes into "boys and girls" to learn about puberty.*



- 1) This teaches kids that their bodies are something to be **silent** and **shameful** about.
- 2) It leaves absolutely zero options for kids who are **trans**, **gender non-conforming**, or **questioning** their gender.

**Children should be taught about the biological functions of all bodies.**

# Brain and body changes:



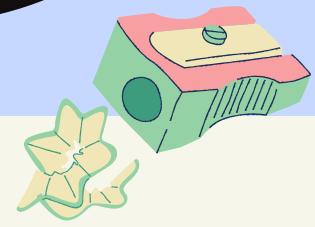
- Changes in **skin** and **body hair**. **Acne** can *appear* and *disappear* with puberty.
- **Body hair** can also *appear* in new places, or *get thicker* as puberty progresses.
  - Expect hair in new places, like the **chest**, **legs**, **face**, and **pubic area**.
- Expect the body to change in **size** and **shape**.
  - **Height** and **weight** may *fluctuate* a lot during puberty.
  - **Muscles** *grow and shift*, and **fat** gets *redistributed* across your body.

- Mental states can become more **varied** or **intense**. Puberty is infamous for *causing extreme mood swings*.
  - This is sometimes called “teenage angst” but can be belittling.
  - The brain is suddenly *exposed to* and *swimming in* a bunch of new hormones! Changes in **brain chemistry** can lead to shifts in mood, emotions, etc.

# Puberty and gender dysphoria

**What is gender dysphoria?**

Gender dysphoria is an experience that can occur when one's *physical characteristics* or *socialization* do not match their **gender identity**.



Puberty can cause changes to the body that may trigger gender dysphoria, such as **widespread body hair**, **enlargement of breast tissue**, or the **beginnings of menstruation**.

This means that **puberty might be a time when many kids first encounter and question their gender**, or when **underlying feelings of gender dysphoria become stronger**.

# Helpful ideas for experiencing changes:



- **Puberty blockers:** Doctors can prescribe **puberty blockers** to pause or *delay* the onset of puberty in trans and/or gender-nonconforming children.
  - Oftentimes, medical care is inaccessible for various reasons. In this case, it's always a good option to find **community-based mental health solutions**. This can look like *joining a group for trans-identifying people*, or *seeking out gender-affirming therapy*.
- **New rituals:** This is a great time for youth to develop new rituals and healthy habits. Try *keeping a journal* or *beginning a meditation practice*.
- **Mental & Physical wellness:** As bodies and minds change, it's important to *update habits* and *routines* to keep up.
  - This is a great time to develop new rituals of **personal hygiene, social interaction, mental and physical wellness**, and even **spirituality**.

*Support youth on their own terms.*

Everyone is on their own journey with their **body**, **mind**, and **sexuality**.

**Puberty is an essential part of that journey.**