

THE ANSWER BOX: GRADES 4, 5 AND 6

You may find your students have a lot of questions. They are asking these questions because their bodies and minds are changing rapidly at this stage in their life and they are frantically searching for answers about what is happening to them. We have put together a list of common questions we have been asked from students of all genders in grades 4, 5 and 6, as well as tips on how to answer these questions while staying within the curriculum.

1. Q: What age can I date?

A: This is a common question, but one that doesn't have an answer with a specific age. This is something you should check with your parents/guardians about because many families have certain rules about when/if you can date. Everyone makes different decisions at different ages and when you feel the time is right for you then it might be the right time. You don't ever need to date anyone if you don't want to. It is your decision to make when you feel ready, and not one that you should feel pressured into by anyone.

2. Q: What is the age people start to have sex at?

A: *Similar to question 1.* Everyone makes this decision for themselves. Families, beliefs, values, culture and religion are all factors in helping us make this decision. Sex is not something you ever have to have if you don't want to. It also is a decision that should be taken seriously when you have all the information you need. Usually people wait until they are older so they have more time to make the best decision for them.

3. Q: Do you have to have sex?

A: Good news! You never have to have sex if you don't want to. This is another decision you get to make when you get older. You are the master of your own body. This means that you get to decide what happens to it. You can decide if you want to roller blade, play soccer, swim, etc. It's the same thing with sex.

4. Q: What is sex?

A: Sex means different things to different people and there are many definitions you will learn as you get older (grade 7, 8 and high school). For the purposes of these lessons, as we learn about menstruation and spermatogenesis, you will learn that sometimes sex is a way for pregnancy to happen and happens when a penis goes into a vagina.

5. Q: Is it okay to like both genders?

A: Absolutely! It is okay to like people of all genders! Some people like people for who they are inside and not what gender they are on the outside. It is common and perfectly normal to be attracted to whoever you feel attracted to.

6. Q: How does a period work?

A: In simple terms, a period is the shedding of the lining of the uterus. This lining sheds when a baby is not growing in the uterus, and usually happens once a month. A uterus is a small organ that's main function is to grow babies. Every person on this planet once lived in a uterus – so it has a pretty important job. Babies don't grow in stomachs or tummies as many people say they do. Not everyone with a uterus will have a baby, but the body still prepares just in case. Usually people who have a vulva/vagina will also have a uterus. So if you have a vulva/vagina you could get a period. It looks like a reddish brown coloured mark that shows up on your underwear. (It can be helpful to use diagrams and models when discussing periods and uteruses).

Answer from the curriculum: Menstruation is the medical term for having a 'period' and is the monthly flow of blood from the uterus. This begins at puberty. Not all girls begin menstruation at the same age. Generally, every month, an egg leaves one of the ovaries and travels down one of the fallopian tubes towards the uterus. In preparation, the walls of the uterus develop a lining of extra blood and tissue to act as a cushion for the egg in case fertilization occurs. When an egg is fertilized, it attaches itself to the lining of the uterus and begins to develop into a baby. If fertilization does not occur, the lining of the uterus is no longer needed and is discharged through the vagina. This is the monthly flow of blood. The whole process is called the menstrual cycle.

7. Q: What is a wet dream?

A: It is not wetting the bed like many people think, but it does happen at night when a person is sleeping. You may notice it has happened when you wake up and there is sticky, white stuff in your underwear or pajamas. Similar to the way people with vulvas/vaginas might get their period, a wet dream (or the scientific word for it is nocturnal emission) is the body's way of practising its function. In people with penises, it is a way for the semen to leave the body (ejaculation) every once in a while to make sure everything is functioning properly. It does not stain underwear, pajamas or sheets. This may or may not happen to people with penises. Either way is common.

8. Q: Why do testicles hang at different lengths?

A: They hang at different lengths from each other so they don't bump against each other and cause discomfort, as hanging at different lengths allows them to roll around each other instead of hitting each other. Testicles hang outside the body so they stay at the proper temperature for sperm production. The perfect/optimal temperature is about 2-3 degrees cooler than average body temperature. It is very important to remember to keep your testicles safe and healthy by not hitting or kicking people with testicles and wearing protective gear when playing sports.

9. Q: How do you make a baby?

A: A baby can be created in many different ways but there are always 3 things you need to make a baby. An egg, a sperm and a uterus. A sperm must fertilize an egg (conception) and together they implant in the wall of the uterus. Some people don't have these ingredients for various reasons, so they need help from science and/or other people to help a pregnancy happen. Some people get egg donors or sperm donors and some people use someone called a surrogate to carry the baby in their uterus. Many people have sex to create a baby. The type of sex that can lead to a pregnancy is when a penis goes inside a vagina.

Answer from the curriculum: The testicles are glands within the scrotum that produce sperm and hormones, beginning at puberty. After sperm develops in the testicles, it can travel through the epididymis until it reaches the vas deferens where it is stored until ejaculation occurs. During ejaculation, the prostate gland releases a liquid that mixes with the sperm from the vas deferens to make semen, which then leaves the body

through the urethra. Fertilization can occur when the penis is in the vagina, sperm is ejaculated, and the sperm and egg connect. Babies can also be conceived by having the sperm and egg connect using assisted reproductive technologies.

10. Q: If you make out with a person can you get pregnant?

A: Making out is a slang way of saying kissing. Kissing someone cannot cause pregnancy because there is no way for a sperm and egg to meet through your mouth.

11. Q: How does the sperm get to the egg? / How does the sperm get out of the penis?

A: Sperm begin their journey in the testicles where they are produced, they are then stored in the epididymis at the back of the testicles. When they leave the body they travel through the Vas Deferens and urethra, picking up seminal fluid and prostate fluid along the way, to leave the end of the penis through the urethra opening (pee hole). If it is released into a vagina, it then begins its journey towards the egg by swimming through the vagina, through the cervix, through the uterus and into the fallopian tube where it *may* find a waiting egg. The egg is released from the ovary (ovulation) and is swept through the fallopian tube very slowly where it waits for a sperm to meet it and fertilize it. This is how pregnancy can happen.

12. Q: What is masturbating? Can you masturbate too much? Can girls masturbate?

A: Masturbation is something some people choose to do and others choose not to do. It is a way of exploring one's body by touching, often the breasts or genitals. Some people find this pleasurable, but it is not something you ever have to do if you don't want to. It is common and not harmful or dangerous in any way. All people are able to masturbate regardless of the body parts they have. Masturbating too much might be if you find it is hurting your body in any way or causing you to miss out on daily living and other activities that you like to do.

13. Q: What is that sticky stuff that hangs off my pubic hair?

A: If you have a vulva and vagina, the sticky stuff that hangs off your pubic hair is called discharge. Discharge is the vagina's way of cleaning itself – similar to the way the eyeball cleans itself while we are asleep and leaves "gunk" in the corners of our eyes. Discharge

is common and a sign of a healthy body. It also might be a sign that the person will be getting their period soon. You may also see this discharge on your underwear. It may be slippery or sticky, clear or white. Not to worry it does not stain.

14. Q: Is it true a girl has 3 holes?

A: Yes. People with vulvas and vaginas have three openings. One is the urethral opening where urine (pee) leaves the body. The second opening is called the vaginal opening where menstruation (period) leaves the body and sometimes a baby. Finally the last opening is the bum (anus) where feces (poo) leaves the body. If you have a penis you will have 2 openings, one for pee (urethra opening) and one for poo (anus).

15. Q: What is a condom?

A: A condom is a thin piece of latex or polyurethane that covers the penis to collect semen. They are often worn to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). This is something that will be explained in further detail in grades 7 and 8 when you learn about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and birth control.

16. Q: Can you have a baby without having sex?

A: In today's world with modern science and technology there are many ways to have a baby. Many people today go to fertility clinics and use fertility treatments/drugs and/or sperm and/or egg donors. Some people use a surrogate which is a person who carries their baby and some people adopt or foster babies and children.

17. Q: What is porn?

A: Porn (or pornography) is a movie/video about sex. It is not real, just like movies are not real. The people who make porn are actors and lots of editing and special effects are used, just like in movies. It is made for adults, not for children, and is something that adults sometimes watch. Often the people in porn do not look like people in real life and the things they do often do not happen in real life. If you are curious about sex, which is common and ok, it is best to ask a trusted adult questions.

18. Q: How do you get a boner? Should I see a doctor if I see something poking up under my blanket when I wake up?

A: A boner is a tricky word as the penis does not actually have a bone in it. A penis has 3 tubes of spongy tissue inside that fill with blood to make the penis hard. This is called an erection (boner). This process is common and natural and not something to worry about. Sometimes erections happen while people are sleeping (often 3-5 times per night) and it is common to wake up with one. As long as an erection does not last longer than 4 hours, and does not hurt, you do not need to see a doctor about it.

19. Q: What is a clitoris?

A: A clitoris is an organ on the top and external part of a vulva (above the urethra opening) that is very sensitive because it has 8,000 nerve endings. It doesn't have any biological purpose other than to feel good.

20. Q: I heard black guys have bigger penises, is that true?

A: No, this is not true. In fact, scientists have not found clear links between penis size and any other characteristic on a person. There is no way to judge penis size simply by looking at a person's skin colour, height, foot size, hand size, or any other body part. Also, the size of a penis is a common concern for young people, but just like the rest of your body it will continue to grow as you go through puberty.

Tips:

- If the question is outside of the curriculum for the grade you are teaching you can give a very brief answer and let them know they will learn more in ___ grade.
- You can let the student know they can ask their parent(s) that question. "That sounds like a good question for you to ask your parents." This is especially appropriate for a question that requires an opinion such as, "Should boys be circumcised?" or "Should you have sex before you get married?" Again you can give brief answers relying on facts (e.g. explain what circumcision is) before referring them elsewhere for an answer.
- Sometimes it may be appropriate to talk to a student one-on-one (e.g. you have concerns, you know they are physically maturing before their classmates etc.)
- Read the class a book or show a You tube video
- Use a video from amaze.org – educational, fun and animated videos about sex, bodies and relationships
- Use diagrams/pictures