

# THE ANSWER BOX: GRADES 7 AND 8

---

You may find you are getting a lot of questions from your students about a variety of topics. They are asking these questions because their bodies and minds are changing, they are possibly experiencing feelings of attraction and arousal and they are seeing more sexualized media than ever before. We have put together a list of common questions we have been asked from students of all genders in grades 7 and 8, as well as tips on how to answer these questions while staying within the curriculum. The majority of questions we get from this age group involve relationships, dating and crushes. These are not questions that necessarily have right or wrong answers – the important thing is to emphasize treating people with respect and using consent.

**1. Q: How is the baby growing in the vagina, I thought it grew in the stomach?**

**A:** A baby grows in an organ used only for that purpose called the uterus. The bottom of the uterus is called the cervix which is attached to the vagina. When it is time for the baby to be born the cervix and vagina stretch to let the baby out. A baby could never grow in a stomach because of stomach acid and because it is part of the digestive system not the reproductive system.

This is best answered using a diagram of the body which shows the stomach and the uterus where you can point out the digestive and the reproductive systems.

**2. Q: How long do you need to have sex in order for the sperm to go and meet the egg?**

**A:** Sperm can live inside a body for up to 5 days. It travels through the vagina, uterus and fallopian tubes trying to reach an egg. It doesn't matter how long sex lasts as long as there is ejaculation and the semen (which has sperm in it) is released into a vagina, there is a possibility the sperm can meet an egg. This is why some people choose to abstain from sexual intercourse or use condoms or other methods of birth control to prevent pregnancy. There are many intimate things you

can do with a partner without having sex (vaginal, anal, oral) that will not lead to pregnancy or STI transmission such as kissing, cuddling, massaging, rubbing, touching etc.

They may not know what ejaculation is. This is best described using a diagram that has the path of the sperm on it so you can describe that the sperm are made in the testicles, stored in the epididymis and leave the body through the vas deferens which becomes the urethra. There is information and a diagram about this in our Penis and Testicle booklet which can be found on our website under SHORE Centre Materials.

**3. Q: Why do some males have white stuff coming from the penis?**

**A:** That “white stuff” is called ejaculate or semen. It is made up of sperm and a lot of liquid that helps keep the sperm alive (seminal vesicle fluid, prostate fluid and fluid from the Cowper’s gland). It can be released during sexual arousal or during a nocturnal emission (wet dream). The sperm are one of the ingredients for pregnancy.

**4. Q: What happens if you punch someone in the testicles or get hit or hurt in the testicles?**

**A:** Testicles are sensitive organs. They need to be protected so they can continue to produce healthy sperm and testosterone. When testicles are injured there is a chance they may not be able to contribute sperm to a pregnancy. This is why it is important to wear a protective cup and jock when playing contact sports, keep testicles at the proper temperature by wearing loose fitting clothing and do not hit, kick or punch testicles; and no wedgies. If your testicles are sore or injured it is important to tell a parent/guardian or health care provider, even if you are embarrassed, they will probably be able to help.

**5. Q: Can you get vaginal cancer?**

**A:** Yes, you can get cancer on the majority of your body parts, including your vagina. A lot of reproductive system cancers (vaginal, cervical, anal, vulvar, and penile) can be caused by HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) which is a type of STI (Sexually Transmitted Infection). Barrier methods like condoms or dental dams can help protect against contracting an STI, as well as, the HPV vaccine – Gardasil 9.

**6. Q: Should I get the Gardasil (HPV) vaccine?**

**A:** Getting vaccinated with the Gardasil 9 vaccine can help protect people against 9 strains of HPV (Human Papilloma Virus). These strains are the ones most likely to cause cervical, vaginal, vulvar, anal, head and neck (through oral sex) cancers and genital warts. All health care providers in Canada endorse this vaccine and it has been greatly researched. Vaccines work best in young people because their immune system is usually strong. Gardasil also works best before any type of sexual activity happens, so that the transmission of HPV is less likely to lead to these cancers. In the Region of Waterloo, the vaccine is currently being offered free of charge for all students in grades 7. Students who did not receive the vaccine can catch up and also receive it free of charge. It is important to talk to your parents about the vaccine and make a decision for whether or not it is right for you. If you have questions you can talk to your health care provider.

**7. Can you get STIs through other ways other than sex? What are the chances of getting an STI through a “BJ”?**

**A:** STIs can be transmitted in many ways. Some are transmitted through an exchange of fluids (like semen or vaginal fluids) which often happens during vaginal, anal or oral sex, but others are transmitted simply with skin to skin contact or rubbing (HPV, herpes, public lice and scabies can be transmitted this way). The most common symptom of an STI is no symptom, so it is important to get tested and use barriers when doing any kind of intimate activity. Any STI that you can get on your genitals, you can also get in your throat. So it is important to use barriers for oral sex, such as flavoured condoms and dental dams.

**8. Q: What is the difference between an STD and an STI?**

**A:** An STD (sexually transmitted disease) is the old way of saying STI (sexually transmitted infection). A disease suggests something that you will have for the rest of your life, whereas an infection is something that can be treated and even cured. Many STIs are treatable, so we refer to them as infections because it has less stigma and is less intimidating. You may hear the term STD often because in the United States they use the term STD instead of STI which means you will often hear the term STD in the media.

**9. Q: How big is the average penis? Does penis size matter?**

**A:** There is no easy way to determine average penis size. Penis size varies with every person and does not determine function. Usually, penises that are smaller when flaccid (soft) will grow more when erect, and penises that are larger when flaccid, will not grow as much when erect. Penis size does not impact a person's ability to give and receive pleasure, and you cannot determine the size of a person's penis by their height, weight, foot size etc.

**10. Q: Can you make condoms out of a plastic bag?**

**A:** No! Condoms are made out of materials such as latex or polyurethane (non-latex) in which fluids, cells and bacteria cannot get through. Plastic bags, saran wrap and other types of plastic have tiny microscopic pores/holes in them that you cannot see with the human eye but make it possible for sperm, being the smallest cell in the body, to easily get through, as well as viruses and bacteria that cause STIs.

**11. Q: Can you make babies through anal sex?**

**A:** No. The only way to make a baby is with an egg, a sperm and a uterus. The anus is not connected to the uterus in any way, so even if sperm got into the body through the anus, there is no way an egg could be fertilized. However, the anus is very close to the vagina and it is possible for semen to run out of the anus into the

vagina. For best protection of pregnancy and STIs never let semen get close to the vagina (inside or out).

**12. Q: Do you need a prescription for the morning after pill?**

**A:** No. The morning after pill, officially known as emergency contraception, is an over the counter medication that can be purchased at any pharmacy without a prescription. Sometimes it is on the shelf, and sometimes it is behind the counter and you have to ask the pharmacist for it. The brand names are Plan B and Next Choice and can cost anywhere from \$21 - \$40. They need to be used properly and are intended as an emergency form of birth control in specific situations (e.g. broken/no condom, failed form of birth control, sexual assault etc.). They are most effective if taken as soon as possible (within 12 hours) but can be taken up to 72 hours after sexual intercourse.

**13. Q: Is “blue balls” real?**

**A:** No, testicles do not turn blue. However, when people get aroused, blood rushes to the testicles or the vulva. If there is no release (ejaculation or orgasm) there can be a feeling of discomfort until the blood in the area gets re-distributed throughout the body. This feeling will go away on its own and is nothing to worry about. While the slang word “blue balls” usually refers to testicles, this can happen to the vulva too. It is definitely not an excuse to pressure a person to have sex with you because while it may be uncomfortable for a short period of time it is not medically harmful in any way. If you do not want to wait for the discomfort to pass you can masturbate to relieve yourself.

**14. Q: At what age is “best” to have sex at? Is it okay to have sex at \_\_ age?**

**A:** There is no specific age that is best to have sex. This is a personal decision that each person makes for themselves. It may happen when you are married, in a committed relationship, or dating or it may not. The most important thing to figure out before you have sex is whether you are ready. This means you do not feel pressured by friends, peers or a partner, you are prepared and know how to use

condoms or dental dams, you understand your birth control options, you know how to get tested for STIs and you know what you will do in case of a pregnancy. There are a lot of things to discuss before having sex with someone, and it can take a while to feel comfortable to talk about everything. Once you feel ready to handle what might happen after sex, then you might be ready. However, it is important to remember that you are the only one in control of your own body and consent is very important. If at any time you feel nervous or pressured to have sex, it probably isn't the right time to be having sex or the right person to be having sex with. This can also be a good question to discuss with your parents/guardians.

**15. Q: What is porn? / Is it okay to watch porn? / We get many questions asking about porn.**

**A:** Porn is a type of movie/video that is intended for adults. It is not real – it is fantasy, and it is not meant to be educational, it is a form of entertainment. It is not intended for young people, although we realize that many young people are curious about sex and may want to watch porn to see what sex is all about. It is important to know that the people in porn are actors and are acting just like actors do in Hollywood movies. There are camera effects, lighting, make-up, editing etc. that goes on just like with other movies. So just like in other movies when car chases and fight scenes are shown, and you know that they are not real, and could not happen in real life, sex in porn does happen the way it happens in real life. If you are curious about sex or have questions, it is best to ask an adult such as your parents/guardians, teachers, counsellors etc.

**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 or in high school.
- 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](http://amaze.org) – educational, fun and animated videos about sex, bodies and relationships
- Use diagrams, pictures, props,
- Use examples from the media that are relevant to your students. If you are unsure ask them what they are watching, what music they are listening to etc.