

# Adolescent Distress In Relation To Sexuality And Puberty

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## Introduction

The curiosity to learn more has remained an essential part of human life. As teaching conventional subjects to children is necessary to enable them to lead an accomplished life, coaching them about puberty is equally crucial to enhance their personality and prevent undesirable consequences. Puberty is the set of changes that the human body undergoes to make one capable of reproducing sexually. The teaching of puberty has triggered a debate of ethics since some people view the training process as a producer of negative impacts, and others feel uncomfortable and embarrassed to communicate such issues. That policy question is no longer unresolved in England: relationships education became compulsory in primary schools and relationships and sex education became compulsory in secondary schools from September 2020, subject to the statutory guidance and parental-withdrawal rules. The teaching of such matters should be mandatory at both home and school to avoid grave results.

## Discussion

Lack of awareness among early teenagers can result in sexual intercourse and, hence, pregnancy at a relatively young age. Teenage pregnancy, as it is usually referred to, can lead to low birth weight and improper physical growth and mental growth of an infant. Another risk associated with premature intercourse is disease transmission. Common Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) include HIV and AIDS (Galvin and Cohen, 2004). Keeping children unaware of these complications can lead them to unintended results like teenage pregnancy, inferiority complex, transfer of disease through intercourse and unnecessary stress.

Another set of repercussions that are results of a lack of understanding of puberty include an inferiority complex and anxiety. Children may feel that their bodies are not growing as much as their fellows. Research shows that people have a varying growth rate of organs and parts. Some boys have signs of puberty as early as nine years of age, while others have as late as fourteen years of age. Similarly, puberty in girls varies between the ages of eight and thirteen. Although it is normal to have early or late signs, some children get worried about the lack of growth or premature growth. This worry may lead to unnecessary anxiety and the complexity of not being like others (kidshealth). Girls with premature breast formation might feel embarrassed about sitting around their fellows and may fear becoming a target of bullying.

A large number of parents are already convinced that imparting knowledge of sexuality and puberty is as vital as teaching other conventional subjects. A study conducted in Ontario, Canada, reveals that over 87% of parents are satisfied with the decision to instruct Sexual and Health Education (SHE) at school (McKay et al., 2014).

The above discussion establishes the fact that a lack of teaching sexuality and puberty can result in extremely unpleasant situations. Thus, the debate about the appropriateness of imparting such instructions remains to be solved. Experts emphasize that, besides schools, parents should communicate about puberty with their offspring, no matter how embarrassing it may feel. Parents should initiate the discussion rather than wait for the children to take them into confidence. The initiation of such a conversation can be awkward, but once done, it relieves children of unnecessary anxiety. Moreover, initiation of conversation from parents can encourage children to talk to the parents about the issue without hesitation.

The menstruation in girls, ejaculation of semen in boys and growth of facial and armpit hair are natural phenomena but cause uneasiness in the affected children. Prevention of unwanted circumstances is always better than cure. Therefore, parents should feel free to communicate these issues with their offspring (parentinfo, 2018).

The teaching of sexuality and puberty in schools is under extensive debate, too. The earlier 2015 curriculum position has been superseded. In England, relationships education is compulsory in primary schools and relationships and sex education is compulsory in secondary schools under the statutory framework implemented from September 2020. The Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education Association has recommended parents ensure informal and short conversations with their children to convey the message. However, a rigorous conversation should be avoided (kidshealth). Furthermore, it suggests conveying the message through the family member or any credible person who is socially closer to the kid because children are more likely to listen to their dearest ones.

Although parents and teachers play the most vital role in developing awareness among children about sexuality and puberty, yet media, paediatricians and religious organizations should play a part, too. There is a huge amount of pornographic content available over the web without warning about the negative impacts that adolescent sex poses.

Countries outside North America have started to adopt sex education too as a compulsory part of the primary and secondary school curricula. Thailand is an example where sexual education has been a part of the course for many years now. However, the country needs to revise the course to add more content since the current content is too basic and barely serves the purpose (Vuttanont, 2010). All the countries in Western Europe and Asia that have adopted sexual education as mandatory have shown signs of improvement. The collective anxiety and depression rates of teenage pregnancy have significantly reduced. The case study of Thailand shows that adolescent issues have substantially increased since the rise in divorce rate as a result of independent women and liberalization.

Nevertheless, sexual education has improved the situation (Breuner & Mattson, 2016).

Despite the tremendous need for sexual education in schools and at home, parents have some obligations. Major arguments are highlighted below, along with their solutions. First, discussion on the sexual phenomenon with children can let them know about the things that they should not know at such a young age. Informing them about sex can increase their curiosity to know more about it. To quench this curiosity, they may seek unnecessary relationships. Second, discussions on such issues can offend teenagers and make them less comfortable talking to their parents in the future. Third, an informal conversation may let the children conclude that words like sex, puberty, menstruation, and ejaculation are fine to say in public, which can result in embarrassment, too (Goldman, 2008).

To answer these concerns of parents, extensive research is carried out, and conclusions are drawn. For the first concern, researchers are of the view that children get to know about sexual phenomena either from fellows at school or through the Internet. Therefore, it is essential to inform them about the bad effects of sex. For the second concern, as recommended earlier, the conversation should be made by someone who is closest to the subject. Using this approach, it is highly unlikely that soon-to-be teenagers get offended. Third, while conveying the bad effects of sex, children should also be informed that using such words in public is an unethical practice (Goldman, 2008).

## Conclusion

The age of technology has allowed access to vast amounts of information over the web and through media. Despite the availability of such technologies, they have been used extensively for wrong purposes. While allowing access to the internet to children at a young age, they must be warned about the negative effects of sex. Children should also be informed ahead of time about the occurrence of natural phenomena as a result of puberty and should be given the confidence to communicate such issues so that they can avoid unnecessary anxiety and tension.

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