Puberty in Girls

Topics to Cover:

* breast and body changes (hips, stomach area, growth)
* emotional ups and downs
* acne
* sweating and cleanliness
* menstruation
* sexual desire

Puberty is a time when there are a lot of changes both physically and emotionally. Talking to girls about puberty will help prepare them for what is happening and will help reassure them that what they are going through is normal. Puberty is the time that a girl’s body prepares to start having babies. However, just because a girl is going through puberty, it does not mean that her body is big enough to have a baby.

* begins as early as 7 and ends as late as 17
* lasts 3 to 5 years
* five stages (not distinct stages, may overlap)
* stage one
  + slight growth spurt
  + rounded belly – energy store for puberty
  + increased hormone production which causes the ovaries to enlarge
* stage two
  + breast development
    - budding – swelling under the nipple
    - happens unevenly
    - breasts are tender and easily irritated
  + faster growth
  + development of hips and thighs
  + begin to grow pubic hair
  + sweat glands increase production of sweat and will begin to experience body odor
* stage three
  + breasts grow larger
  + pubic continues to grow and becomes curly
  + armpit hair begins to grow
  + hair on legs and arms gets thicker and darker
  + begins to create a white discharge from the vagina
* stage four
  + may have first period (although may have first period earlier)
  + periods are irregular
  + often a thick white vaginal discharge precedes the period
  + nipples become raised and separated from the areolae of the breast
  + pubic hair forms into a triangle
  + skin and hair may become oilier causing pimples
* stage five
  + breasts have reached full development
  + growth slows and stops
  + periods become regular

It is important to discuss the fact that hormonal changes in the body affect moods and that the girls may cry more or laugh more or even have a hard time controlling their anger. This will occur more frequently before her period but mood swings are a common part of puberty. If she is feeling angry or sad most of the time, it is important that she finds someone to talk to in order to be able to work through these feelings. This is a time where girls may look to boys for comfort or even think about suicide. Support is vital.

Hormones are released from the ovaries to help prepare the girl’s body to have babies. The glands in the brain tell the ovaries to release the hormones. Girls and boys have basically the same hormones but in different quantities.