

Year 5 Puberty Problem Page Teacher Guide

There are no 'set' answers for the puberty problem page letters - in this activity the children are asked to give advice, based on what they have learned about puberty so far. Encourage the children to focus on the specific questions that are being asked, such as 'Is this normal?' and 'What can I do?' Remind them to take into account the age of the person asking for advice. Accept advice that seems helpful and appropriate.

There are some general principles that can be useful when giving advice, relating to self-esteem and keeping safe and healthy. For example:

- Remind the person that they are not alone
- Encourage the person to talk to someone they feel they can trust.
- In the right circumstances and with the right person anything can be discussed.
- All children have a right to feel safe.

Below is some suggested advice that may be helpful for the problem page letters, bearing in mind that the children may come up with their own, very good suggestions.

Problem 1: A Spot of Bother

Dear Problem Page,

I started getting spots on my face and back when I was about 13. It makes me feel ugly and so I started watching videos on my phone to get advice. The problem is they all say really different things and I don't know which advice to follow. How do I work out which I should try?

P, age 13

Suggested Advice:

- Emphasise that this is happening because of puberty and it's very common. Oil glands in the skin are stimulated by active hormones during puberty. Lots of teenagers get spots at this time.
- Keeping the skin clean, drinking water and eating healthy food can help, but some people just do get lots of spots, whatever they do – it doesn't mean they have dirty skin.
- If someone has a lot of spots, this may be acne. A doctor or chemist may help by suggesting treatments for this. Always check with a trusted adult or doctor before following any health advice found on-line.
- This person is feeling very low and doesn't like going to school, so talking to someone they feel they can trust and sharing their problem may be helpful. They could talk to a friend, family member, carer, teacher or support worker, or use support services such as Place 2 Be or ChildLine 0800 1111

Problem 2: Hold The Phone

Dear Problem Page,

I don't have a phone yet and the only computer at home is in the living room. I want to chat with my friends on-line when I get back from school but I feel like my mum is always looking over my shoulder. I don't understand why I can't have a phone when everyone else has. R, age 11

Suggested Advice:

- Explain the potential risks of having a phone and why the mum might think they are dangerous, for example there is the risk of having them stolen, or of being mugged. Also, some people think there may be health risks for young people, if they use mobile phones a lot.
- Suggest talking to their Mum about how phones/computers can be used responsibly and safely.
- Encourage this person to consider how much someone of their age needs a phone, what are the advantages/disadvantages?
- Talk to their Mum about how a phone could be afforded – saving up pocket money for example
- Explore some of the reasons why their Mum might want to know what they are looking at on-line.

Problem 3: Bed Bug

Dear Problem Page,

Sometimes when I wake up in the morning there is a wet patch in my bed, but it isn't wee. It makes a stain so I've tried washing the sheets in the sink but there is nowhere to dry them without my dad seeing. Why is this happening and what should I do? S, age 14

Suggested Advice:

- Explain that this is happening because the boy has started to have wet dreams. This is when semen comes out of a boys' penis while he is asleep. Reassure him that this is a natural part of puberty and happens to most boys at this time. It means that the male body has started to produce sperm
- Suggest that he could talk to his dad about it, or someone he feels comfortable talking to – another relative, friend, sibling, carer, support worker.

Problem 4: Sleepover Stress

Dear Problem Page,

I started my periods last summer. I told my carer and she helped me to deal with it and it was ok. Now I've been invited to a sleep-over. I really want to go but I'm worried I'll have my period when I'm there. I don't know if my friends have started yet and I'm too embarrassed to talk to them about it. What can I do? P, age 11

Suggested Advice:

- Suggest trying to talk to someone about this. It may be that one of this person's friends would be sympathetic, and may have started their periods themselves.
- Suggest that this person or their carer could talk to the parent/carer of the person having the sleepover. Ask them to keep this confidential and explain how they are feeling.
- Suggest she tries to remember the date when her last period started. She could then work out whether her period is due.
- Be prepared – go to the sleepover with some sanitary protection.

Problem 5: Mood Swings

Dear Problem Page,

I used to be a really happy person. Now I'm 13 and I sometimes feel really miserable. I go up and down and people are beginning to notice. At home they keep calling me moody and tell me to snap out of it. Is this normal and how can I stop it happening? I, age 13

Suggested Advice:

- This is normal for many teenagers and it's important for this person to know that they are not alone. Mood changes are often a part of puberty, because hormones are very active during this time. A sudden change in hormone levels can have a big effect on how someone feels.
- It's difficult to stop this from happening, but you can try to recognise and understand these mood changes.
- Suggest the person talks to someone they feel they can trust – they may be able to suggest ways of coping with and managing these moods. Exercise, or physical activity can sometimes help to relieve stress and anxiety.

Problem 6: Puberty Worries

Dear Problem Page,

I learnt about puberty in primary school but now I'm 12 and I feel really confused about things and have lots of questions. I haven't got my period but I get this white stuff in my knickers. I don't wear a bra but my nipples hurt. I don't know if these things are normal. I'm really worried. What should I do?

C, age 12

Suggested Advice:

- These things are usually perfectly normal and are part of puberty. Girls' nipples and breasts often get tender or sensitive while they are growing.
- The 'white stuff' is a vaginal discharge which helps to keep the vagina clean and healthy. The body can start to produce this before a girl gets her periods. However, if a discharge is a different colour or smells unpleasant she may need to see a doctor.

Problem 7: Youtubers

Dear Problem Page,

My friends are always talking about the youtubers we like and some of them have started to wear clothes and make-up to look more like them. I think I look really ordinary and could never look that good. None of the youtubers look like me, they all look amazing. It's making me upset. What should I do? K, age 13

Suggested advice:

- Suggest that comparing how we look to other people is not always healthy.
- Some people have fixed ideas or stereotypes about what is or isn't attractive, but everyone is unique and we should celebrate that.
- Try to focus on things that they enjoy doing which can help to make them feel happier
- Encourage them to talk about how they are feeling with someone who can help

Problem 8: Chat Group Bullies

Dear Problem Page,

I am in a chat group with others in my class and we message each other after school. Some people have started to make nasty jokes about one of the group members even though she can read it. They would never say those things at school. I don't like it but worry they would do the same to me if I speak up. A, age 12

Suggested advice:

- During puberty people might spend more time socialising with their friends both on and off-line
- People should treat each other with the same amount of respect on-line as face to face
- Discuss some of the options that someone has if they see someone else being bullied, including reporting it to an adult.