

Menstruation and conception

Year Learning Activity

Description

Students develop an understanding of the purpose and function of menstruation and conception, and the relationship between the two processes.

Learning focus

- Build on existing knowledge of male and female reproductive systems to develop an understanding of menstruation and conception.

Key understandings

- The changes associated with puberty happen to different people at different times.
- Puberty involves physical, social and emotional changes.
- There are changes associated with puberty that affect both males and females.
- Certain changes associated with puberty affect only males or females.
- Many of the physical changes associated with puberty allow people to reproduce.
- Sexual activity can result in conception, pregnancy and the birth of a baby.

Materials

1. 2 cups of water, 2 plastic plates, 1 pad, 1 tampon [one set per group]
2. Teaching Resource: *Reproductive systems* [one per student]
3. Teaching Resource: *Menstrual cycle*
4. Student Activity Sheet: *Menstruation myths and facts* [one per student]
5. Teaching Resource: *Relay race cards*
6. Teaching Resource: *Tampons and pads* [one set per group]

Teaching and Learning Activities

Before you get started

- The topic of puberty may be an exciting and interesting topic for some. Be mindful that some students (girls and boys) may feel embarrassed, uncomfortable or worried learning how their bodies are going to be changing. Increase the comfort of students through introducing this topic with excitement and fun.
- Review the Year 5 Learning Activity: [Reproductive systems](#) as an introduction to this Learning Activity.
- This activity is concerned with conception through sexual intercourse but it's important to inform students that there are families where other methods such as in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) are better and more appropriate. It is also important to recognise that there are families where the young person is adopted or fostered and/or where the parents are of the same sex.

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- Students may have questions that they feel uncomfortable to ask. Providing a [question box](#) for students to place their questions in anonymously will ensure their questions are answered in a safe environment.
- The WA Department of Health has developed a free resource for parents: [Talk Soon. Talk Often. A Guide for Parents Talking to their Kids About Sex](#). It is recommended that teachers communicate to parents and explain the topics that will be covered such as healthy relationships, puberty, hygiene, emotions, resilience, etc. and that you are not teaching their child to have 'sex'.
- Provide students with a copy of the booklets [Girls and Puberty](#), [Boys and Puberty](#) and [Relationships, Sex and Other Stuff](#) to take home and read.
- *Puberty kits*: The use of a puberty kit can be a useful tool in the classroom. Check with your school's public health nurse to see if there are any kits readily available or that can be made up to use.
- If you are using an educational video, students can often be distracted if the videos are obviously out of date, as evidenced by the clothes, hairstyles and quality of the video, although this could be used to add humour to the experience. Ensure that any multimedia used is current, relevant, appropriate and sufficient time is allocated for a discussion afterwards.
- Many teachers ask the question of whether or not they should separate the boys and the girls for such classes. Research shows that there is no significant difference for either strategy. You may choose to separate your class by gender, keep them all together or mix strategies by separating your class for certain activities.
- If you do choose to separate the sexes, ensure that both groups receive the same information. It is just as important for students to learn about their changing bodies as it is for them to learn what the other sex is going through in order to promote compassion.
- Understanding about this topic and overcoming any potential discomfort, forms the basis for students able to effectively communicate sexual matters in relationships when they are older.
- Refer to the Guides: [Puberty](#) and [Menstrual cycle](#) for further content information related to this activity.

Whole Class

Providing students with information about menstruation and conception allows them the opportunity to be prepared physically and emotionally. It also allows young people to make

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informed choices regarding personal hygiene products, readiness for sexual intercourse and contraception options.


1. Show the students a tampon and a pad. Group students in pairs and use the teaching strategy [think-pair-share](#) to identify the purpose of these hygiene products.
2. Revise the male and female reproductive anatomy and functions (provide handout of the Teaching Resource: *Reproductive Systems*; and revisit Year 5 Learning Activity: [Reproductive systems](#)).
3. Discuss the concept of menstruation using the Teaching Resource: *Menstrual cycle*.
 - Discuss why males should know about menstruation. Why will understanding menstruation be useful? How can they demonstrate and be understanding of girls' experiences?
4. Provide each student with a copy of the Student Activity Sheet: *Menstruation myths and facts*.
 - Ask students to complete it independently at first, then on completion ask them to compare their thoughts within a pair or small group.
 - Discuss final responses as a whole class and clarify any misconceptions.
5. Discuss the process of sexual intercourse. Highlight that people have sexual intercourse for pleasure as well as for conception (e.g. the sole purpose of the clitoris is for pleasure). Use biological terms when explaining the process when a male and a female have sexual intercourse (e.g. the erect penis enters the vagina. When the male ejaculates, sperm is released from the testes, travels along the vas deferens, through the urethra and into the vagina of the female. They travel up the vagina into the uterus and into the fallopian tube where they may or may not meet an egg).
6. Discuss implantation of the egg and fertilisation to make an embryo.
7. Discuss that being pregnant and having a baby is a major life transition and can impact significantly on a person's lifestyle. Ask students to contribute examples of social, emotional, physical and financial implications of pregnancy and child rearing.
8. The following activity provides a practical, competitive 'out of chairs' opportunity for students to develop and review their understanding of the menstrual and conception cycle.
 - Set up an area for this activity with enough space to accommodate a typical, short running relay race. The class will be divided into small groups that will all start the 'race' at one end; at the other 'finish-line' end there should be a card dispatch and ordering area (either a table or the floor).

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- Each group needs a set of the menstruation and conception relay race cards (Teaching Resource: *Relay race cards*). Model the first couple of 'dispatches' as a run through.
 - Taking it in turns, students take one card, run to the dispatch and ordering area, place the card onto the table or floor, and run back to tag another team member.
 - The next team member must place their card with the other card(s) but ensure they are on the dispatch and ordering area in sequence according to the menstrual/conception cycle.
 - The winners are the team that gets all of their cards to the dispatch and ordering area in the correct sequence first.
 - Only one team member is allowed to run at any one time, and each team member is only allowed to take one card per run.
 - The label cards are separate to the descriptor cards so students also need to ensure they label the stages of the sequence correctly.
9. Students write a summary of the Relay race cards in their workbooks and then write at least one question about conception, menstruation or sexual intercourse. These should be anonymous and placed in a [question box](#). Review the questions to determine the skills and content of future activities in this area, or to use as part of a visit to the classroom by a school nurse or other health expert.

Independent or Small Group

Many students of this age have not had the opportunity to open and explore menstruation products. This activity allows them this opportunity in a safe environment that is not isolating or judgemental. Students will be working together in small groups to develop a practical understanding of 'absorption' rates using female hygiene products. 

1. Provide each small group with the water, plates, a tampon and a pad. Display the pad and tampon diagrams in Teaching Resource: *Tampons and pads*.
2. Demonstrate then instruct students to take the packaging off the tampon and the pad and to place each one on a plate.
3. Pour the water slowly over both the tampon and the pad.
4. Stop pouring when the water starts to run onto the plate as this means the tampon or the pad cannot collect any more water.
5. Proceed with the reflection activity to debrief with students their observations and understandings.

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Reflection

1. When all the groups have finished, ask students to share their observations (some of these may be specifically aimed at girls).
 - *Highlight the difference in absorbency between the pad and tampon.*
 - *How do the absorbency levels affect the product's purpose?*
 - *Why is the tampon wrapped?*
 - *How do you insert the tampon?*
 - *How do you use the pad?*
 - *What are some advantages of tampons over pads?*
 - *What are some advantages of pads over tampons?*
 - *Girls: How do you feel about using tampons?*
 - Discuss the hints and tips of pad and tampon use in Teaching Resource: *Tampons and pads.*
2. Choose some of the following questions to discuss and/or write responses to.
 - *Why do girls menstruate?*
 - *What hygiene measures should be taken when menstruating?*
 - *Who would you talk to, to find out more about menstruation? Do you think this person is a reliable source of information?*
3. Write a sentence about how you feel about menstruation. Have students share their feelings with a partner.
4. Answer any questions students have.

External related resources

[Human reproduction video 1.49min](#) from [ABC Education](#)

Conception (egg releasing from ovary, meeting with sperm and implanting into uterus - does not show sexual intercourse or birth)

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Related assets (links to sections within GDHR site)

Teaching Note

[Question box](#)

Background Note

[Menstrual cycle](#)

Teaching Resources

[Reproductive systems](#)

[Menstrual cycle](#)

[Tampons and pads](#)

[Relay race cards](#)

[Menstruation myths and facts](#)

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