



# WHAT'S GOING ON?

**your guide to  
growing up**  
(for boys and girls)



# Introduction

This is a booklet about growing up. As you get older you'll notice that your body changes and you develop new feelings and emotions. This change is called puberty, and this booklet contains lots of information to help you during this time.

This booklet also talks about relationships. You have relationships with many different people; your parents or carers, brothers and sisters, your friends, your teachers and other people who you meet during your life. Your relationships can help you as you grow up.

You might choose to read this booklet by yourself, or you could discuss it with your parents or carers. It's great to have someone that you can talk to, especially as you grow up and experience new things.

One good thing to remember is that everyone will have gone through similar things when they were around your age, so don't be embarrassed to talk to them.

Throughout the booklet you might come across new or unfamiliar words. We've tried to explain these whenever we can, but if you're unsure ask someone older or try looking them up in the dictionary.

**The last page of the booklet also gives you information about places you can look for help and advice.**

# Changes as you get older

Puberty is the name for the time when you begin to change from a child into an adult. It can happen anytime between 8 and 16. It usually starts earlier for girls than boys.

Sometimes you might feel excited to be growing up. That's great. Other times you might feel worried or embarrassed about the changes that happen during puberty. That's okay too.

## Fact:



Puberty starts when extra amounts of hormones are made in your body. Hormones are chemicals that carry messages around your body. They cause changes to how you look and how you feel.

## Ellie – on growing up

I thought I was the only girl in my class that wore a bra and had my period. I remember being embarrassed about looking more grown up but soon I found out some of the other girls had started too. I like that my body is becoming more like a woman's.

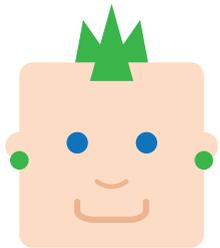


# What happens during puberty?

It's important to remember that everyone has a different experience of puberty and the changes can be different for each boy and girl. Here are some of the changes that might happen.

## Boys & Girls

- Lots of hormones! These cause new feelings and emotions. You might start to fancy other people, feel moody or be more aware of how you look.
- Hair grows under your arms and on or around your genitals. All grown-ups have body hair – that's natural. Some people choose to remove it, but that's an individual choice.
- You might sweat more so it's important to wash every day.
- Maybe you'll have spots or greasier hair.



### Ben, 13 – on his first shave

I wanted to shave as I had hair on my top lip that was really noticeable. I looked stuff up on the net and bought a shaver and foam. My uncle came round and showed me the best way to do it.

## Girls only

- Breasts can start to grow. One might grow faster than the other so they can be different sizes and it's nothing to worry about. All women have different size and shapes of breasts.
- Your hips might get more rounded.
- Your period starts – this is called menstruation. Read more about this on page **11**.



## Boys only

- Your chest and shoulders might get wider.
- Your voice can deepen ('breaks').
- You will start to get hair on your face.
- Leg and arm hair gets thicker and you might get some on your chest and back.
- Your penis will start to grow and will sometimes become hard. This is called an erection.
- Your testicles will grow bigger and one may hang lower than the other. You may also notice that the texture of the skin on the testicles changes.
- You will start to make sperm. Read more about this on pages **15** and **16**.
- You might get unexpected erections and wet dreams. Read more about this on pages **15** and **16**.



# Your Body – Girls

## Ovary:

You have two ovaries. They store tiny eggs and make hormones. An egg is released each month from one of the ovaries.

## Cervix:

This is also known as the neck of the uterus and is at the top of the vagina.

## Fallopian tube:

These tubes carry the egg from the ovaries to the uterus.

## Uterus:

When a woman is pregnant the baby grows and develops in the uterus (womb). Every month the lining of the uterus gets thicker in case it's needed to look after a growing baby. If the woman is not pregnant the lining breaks down and comes out as a period.

## Vulva:

The name given to all of a female's sex parts that are outside of the body. Lots of people use the term vagina, although the vagina is inside the body.

## Urethra

The tube that carries urine from the bladder to outside your body.

## Clitoris:

A small mound of skin which is very sensitive during masturbation or sexual activity.

## Labia

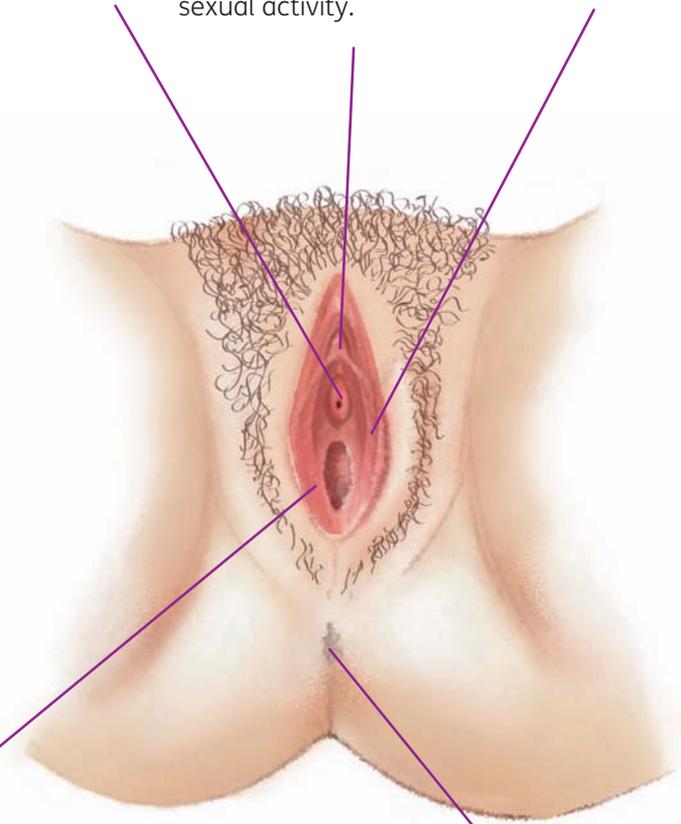
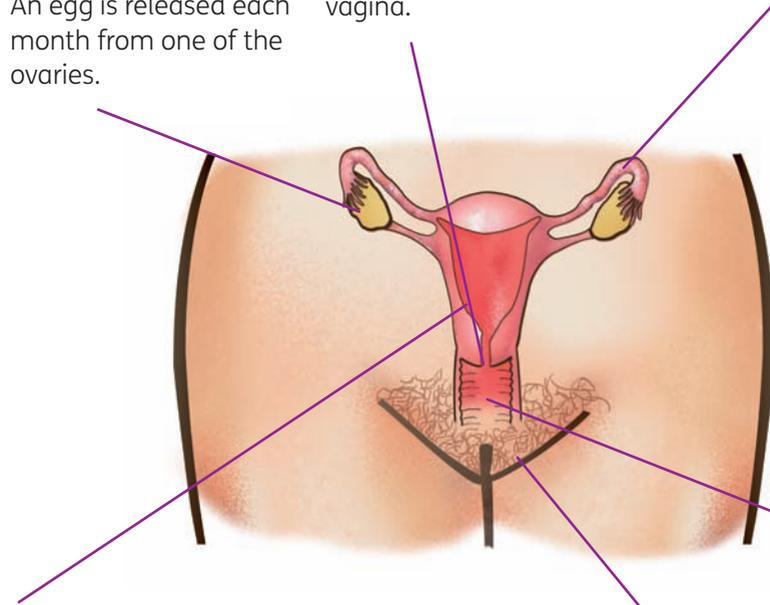
Folds of skin, or lips, that cover the vagina opening.

## Vagina:

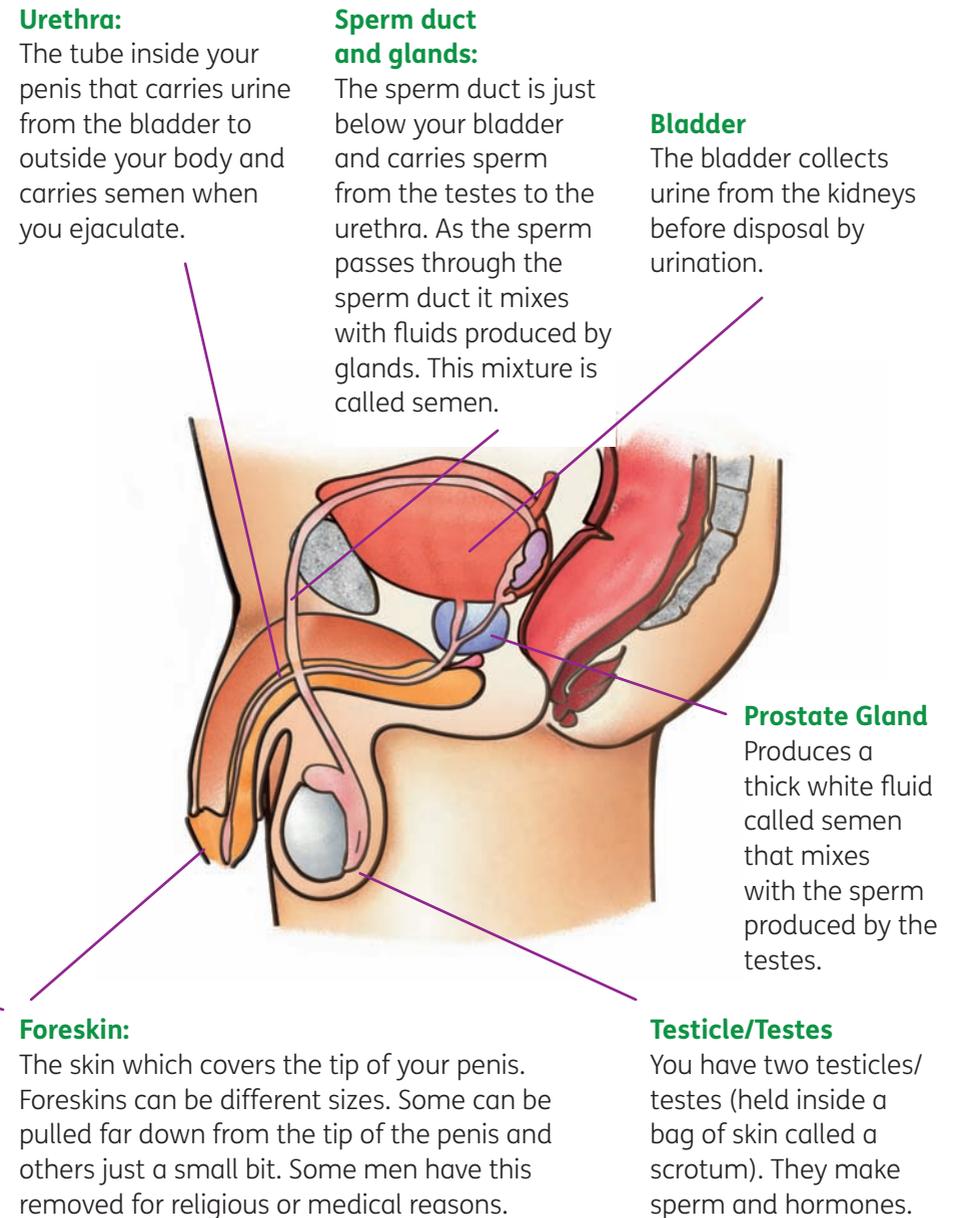
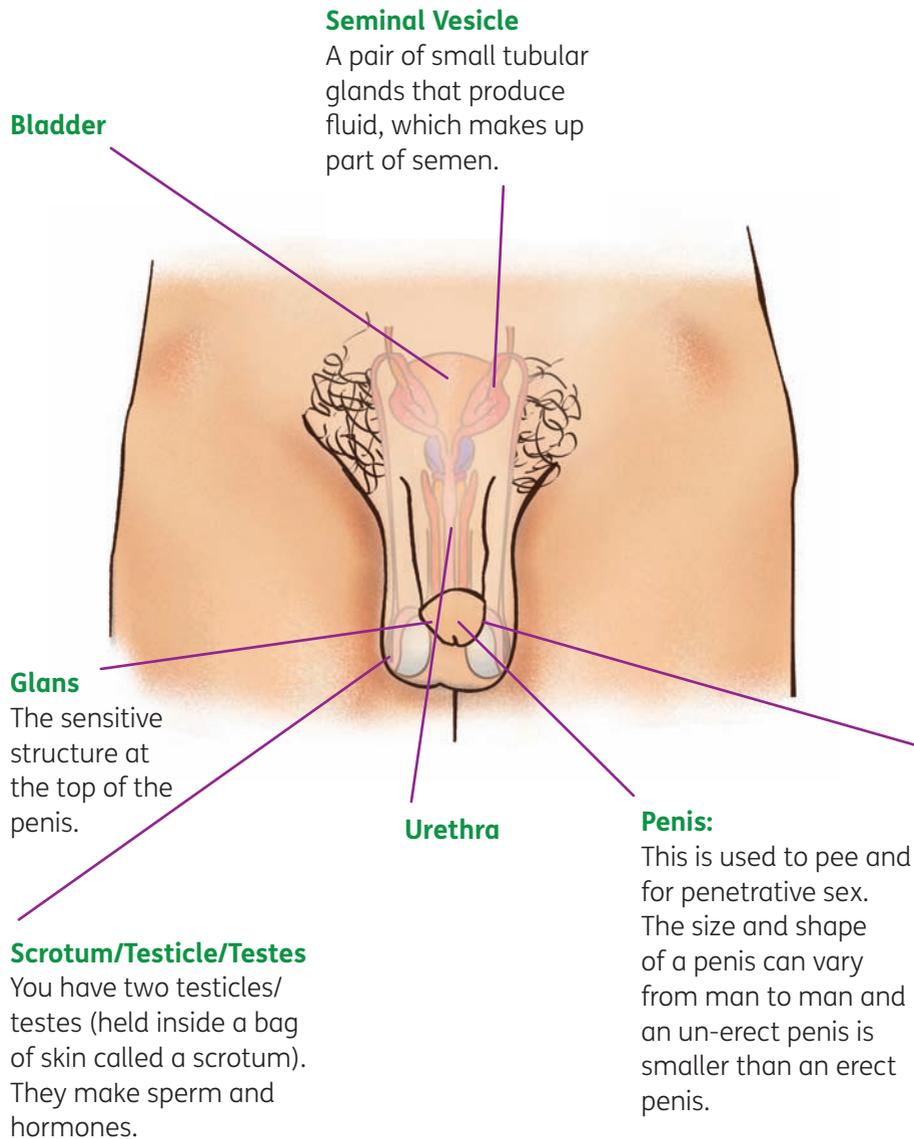
Passageway between the uterus and the outside of the body. This is where menstrual fluid comes from during your period, where a penis enters during penetrative sex and the birth canal through which a baby is born.

## Anus

The opening where faeces (poo) leaves your body.



# Your Body – Boys



# Keeping Clean

During puberty you might have hair growing in new places, sweat more, have hair that feels oilier or be worried about spots. Keeping clean is easy and can help you to feel confident about yourself.

- Wash your body – especially under your arms and between your legs every day.
- Uncircumcised boys should take care to wash and dry behind the foreskin of the penis every day. A white substance called smegma can collect there and if left too long can begin to smell.
- Shampoo your hair.
- Shower after playing sport or taking part in exercise.
- Change your underwear daily.
- Using deodorant or antiperspirant under your arms after showering or having a bath can help prevent body odour (B.O.)
- Girls – during your period change your sanitary towel or tampon regularly i.e. every few hours.
- Boys - if you have a wet dream, change your pyjama bottoms and take a shower when you get up.



**I wash my face all the time and still have loads of spots! What am I doing wrong!? John**

Spots happen naturally when you're growing up – especially during puberty, because of all the extra hormones in your body. Some things can help like eating fruit and vegetables and washing your face in the morning and at night. If you're still worried speak to your doctor or go to a chemist about advice on the many treatments available.

# Menstruation (Periods)

Menstruation is one important sign that a girl is growing up. It happens when a tiny egg is released from one of the ovaries. As this happens, the lining of the uterus gets thicker to get ready for pregnancy. If the egg meets a sperm it attaches itself to the lining and grows into a baby. If it doesn't, then the egg and the lining leave the vagina as menstrual fluid and this can look like blood. This is known as menstruation or a period. It usually lasts a few days and the menstrual fluid can be red or brown.

At first, your periods can be irregular – this means the time between them is different. After a while this will settle down and you will know roughly when your next period is due to start. Most likely it will start about a month after your previous one.

## Fact:



Did you know that girls are born with all the eggs in their ovaries that they'll ever need?



**Jenny - on her first period**

My mum told me all about periods and what to expect. I was a bit worried about getting them and everyone at school knowing. She told me not to worry, that it doesn't come out in a big gush and to carry sanitary pads and a spare pair of knickers in my bag just in case. When I eventually got my period I was well prepared.

## How will I know if I'm getting my period?

Some girls get signs their period is coming soon and others don't. You might just find a small amount of menstrual fluid on your pants one day, and that's how you will know your period has started.

### Some signs you might get before your period:

- breasts may feel tender and/or get a bit bigger
- spots on your face
- pains in your tummy
- headaches
- feeling moody, irritated or weepy – this is called P.M.S. (pre-menstrual syndrome)

There are lots of things you can do to make yourself feel better. The best thing you can do is get out and about and stay active.

### Remember:

Remember all women have periods so it's normal to talk to your mum, sister, aunt or friends about them!

## Keeping clean during your period

Sanitary pads and tampons can be used during your period to keep you clean and stop menstrual fluid getting onto your pants. You can buy them in any supermarket or chemist.

Sanitary pads stick to your pants and soak up the menstrual fluid as it leaves your body. Tampons look like a rolled up piece of cotton wool which you place inside your vagina to soak up the menstrual fluid.

Whichever you decide to use, it's important to change them regularly and keep clean. It's also a good idea to carry sanitary pads in your bag for when your period starts.



### I've heard you can't use tampons till you're older. Is that right?

Katy, 11

There's no right or wrong age to use tampons. Whether to use tampons or sanitary pads is a personal choice. Why not chat to your mum/ carer about it? Some girls find sanitary pads easier to use and others prefer tampons as it means they can still do things like swimming.

# Reproduction

When you're an adult, you might decide that you want to have a baby. The name given to how a baby is made is reproduction.

A man's sperm and a woman's egg need to meet for a baby to be made.

About once a month in a woman's body, a tiny egg leaves one of the ovaries and goes down a tube to the uterus. If the egg meets and joins with a sperm (fertilisation) it can grow into a baby. This is called pregnancy.

The egg and sperm can meet when a man's penis enters a woman's vagina during penetrative sex and semen (which includes sperm) is released. As well as the way to make babies, penetrative sex is a way for some adults to enjoy their own and others' bodies and show they care for one another.

If the egg doesn't meet with a sperm, it leaves the woman's body during menstruation (a period). For more information on periods see pages 11-13.

## Fact:



A baby takes around 9 months to grow in a woman's uterus. When it's ready to come out it moves down through the vagina and the woman gives birth.

# Wet dreams

Some boys have wet dreams. A wet dream is when a boy ejaculates while asleep – it's also called a nocturnal emission. Ejaculation is when semen comes out of a boy's erect penis.

Wet dreams are completely normal and happen to lots of boys, so there's no need to be embarrassed if it happens to you.

## Remember:



Wet dreams can be a bit messy. So you might need to get washed, and change your pyjama bottoms or sheets.



## Pete - on wet dreams

I was really embarrassed but my dad was great about it. He helped me get some clean sheets and explained that it's totally normal and there was no need to worry. That made me feel a lot better.

# Unexpected erections

Getting an erection when you don't expect it is very common during puberty. An erection is when the blood vessels in the penis fill up and it becomes hard. While it can be embarrassing, remember that it's totally natural and happens to all boys.

## Tips for dealing with it:

- Stay seated or cover it with a bag or jumper until it goes away.
- Try to concentrate on something else.
- Wear clothes that will make it less obvious.
- If people notice, try to laugh it off.

## Remember:

While it can be embarrassing, remember that it's totally natural and happens to all boys.

# Masturbation

Masturbating is when a girl or boy touches their body in a way which makes them feel good. For boys this often involves rubbing the penis and for girls rubbing the area around her clitoris. However it can be any part of the body which feels nice when touched.

Sometimes when you're masturbating you can have an orgasm. This is when you get a feeling of intense pleasure.

Masturbating is a normal and healthy way to explore your own body and find out what feels nice for you.

It's okay to masturbate as long as you do this somewhere private like your bedroom or bathroom.

# Different kinds of relationships

As you grow up you have lots of different kinds of relationships with lots of different people. This includes friendships, the relationships you have with your parents and family, and those you have with other people in your life.

Friendships in particular are really great. As you grow up you'll probably make loads of new friends. Some friendships are really close and will last all your life, and others will last only a short time before you both move on. Having a good friend means you have someone to talk to, to ask advice and to spend time and have a laugh with.

Sometimes you can develop strong feelings for someone and feel really attracted to them. This can be called fancying them. It's one of the fun things about getting older.

You might fancy someone in your class or school, an actor, sports person or a pop star. You might even think you fancy adults like a family friend or a teacher. This is a normal part of growing up.

Lots of young people growing up have dreams or strong feelings about someone who is the same sex as them. This is quite normal and doesn't always mean that they are gay, lesbian or bisexual.

**Some people are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Being lesbian or gay means that you're attracted to people of the same sex. Being bisexual means being attracted to both sexes. You might already know some people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual - maybe in your family or one of your friends. It doesn't matter who we are attracted to - what counts is treating everyone with respect.**

**Fancying people is fun and exciting, though it can sometimes make you feel nervous or uneasy. Some things to remember are:**

- The relationships you have with your friends and family are just as important as the person you fancy.
- Although you might think your feelings will last forever, normally they don't, and you move on.
- Be yourself and you'll probably find that people are attracted to you.
- Whatever you're feeling, talking to someone you trust can help.

# Sexuality and sexual health

When people talk about sexuality they mean things like relationships, emotions, feelings of attraction to other people and sexual activity. Information on all of these things is included in this booklet.

Everyone's sexuality is different and people experience sexuality in different ways. What is important is that you look after and respect your own and others' sexuality and sexual health.

Good sexual health means keeping safe, looking after your body, having healthy relationships and having confidence and respect for yourself and others. A big part of sexual health is being able to talk to other people about your sexuality, your feelings and your emotions.

## Fact:

A big part of sexual health is being able to talk to other people about your sexuality, your feelings and your emotions.

# Feelings and emotions

During puberty hormones can make your feelings and emotions more intense. There are easy things you can do to help you deal with these new feelings and emotions:

- Talk to someone you trust about how you feel or ask them about any questions or worries you have.
- Try keeping a diary to write down what you feel so it's not bottled up inside.
- Having friends around you is great and talking and spending time with them really helps. You can make new friends by joining a club, a sports team or volunteering.
- Run about, read a book, play the computer or listen to music.
- Simple things can help: take part in healthy activities, get a good night's sleep, be proud of the good things you've done!

## Remember:

Whether you're having a good day or a bad day what's important is that you feel good about yourself. After all, you're pretty great! The changes that are happening to your body and your feelings and emotions mean you're growing up.

## Body image

You don't need to look like a glamorous model to feel good about yourself. Did you know that the pictures of bodies and faces you see in magazines, TV and films are often changed to make them look thinner or younger? You don't have to try and make yourself look older or sexy to feel good. What's most important is that you can be yourself.

There are lots of false messages out there about how you should look or behave, such as those found in pornography or in some magazines.

What you see isn't real or accurate. Real life bodies don't look this way and this isn't really a true picture of what sex is. In fact many people find it offensive!

There's nothing wrong with asking for help when you need it – talking to someone about your worries and concerns is one of the best things you can do.



**I'm the only girl in school who doesn't wear a bra – I feel like no-one will ever fancy me. Sophie, 12**

During puberty bodies change and grow in different ways so you and your friends will look different. This doesn't mean that no-one will fancy you. Be confident, focus on the things you like about your body and be happy with who you are – people find that very attractive!

## Making choices

As you grow up there are lots of decisions to be made, some small, some bigger. Having friends to talk to about these really helps.

Sometimes it's easy to feel like you should do whatever your friends are doing, however it's important that, whatever you decide, it's what you want to do.

Good friends won't make you feel bad for saying no or doing things differently, and you might find that you're not the only one who feels the same way.

If you feel like your friends are always putting pressure on you to do things you're not happy with, talk to someone you trust. Sometimes in these situations it's better to say no and walk away, or find new friends who like the same things as you do.

### Remember:



Body parts like your breasts, penis and vulva are private. Nobody has the right to touch them or any other part of your body in a way that makes you feel uneasy or when you don't want them to. If this happens to you, talk to an adult that you trust about it or call **ChildLine** for free on **0800 1111**.

# Bullying

If you're being bullied, don't put up with it – it's not your fault. Talk to an adult you trust and get help to make it stop.

- Bullying is not just about punching and kicking. There are lots of different types of bullying.
- Gossiping or spreading nasty rumours in person, online or by text message.
- Calling a person names or writing nasty things about them.
- Forcing someone to do something that they don't want to do.
- Ignoring or leaving someone out.

For information on types of bullying, or if you or someone you know is being bullied visit [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

If you feel you have nobody you can talk to, and need some help or advice, you can also call ChildLine for free on **0800 1111**.

## Fact:

A lot of bullying happens by text message or on-line. This is called cyber-bullying.

# Staying safe online

You're probably on the internet loads. It's such a brilliant way to keep in touch with friends and family. Whether you're using messaging, chat rooms, social networks or gaming it's really important to stay as safe as possible. Here are a few tips:

- Never give out personal information or put personal information on social networking sites.
- Use a nickname rather than your real name.
- Remember you can block people you don't know and use privacy settings to make sure only your real friends can see what you post online.
- You can never be sure who you're really talking to online, so never arrange to meet face to face with anyone you've met online.

If you see or read something upsetting, or are worried about anything, talk to an adult you trust, like a parent or carer.

For more information on how to stay in control and report problems on the internet visit [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

## Remember:

Once you put something online you can never get rid of it – even when deleted, it leaves a digital footprint. Think carefully before you put something online.

# Talk about it...

Talking about growing up and relationships can really help. If you're unsure about anything covered in this booklet – talk it over with someone you feel comfortable with and can trust.

There are many people who can offer you good information and advice.

- A parent/carer
- Someone you live with
- A teacher
- A youth or group leader
- An older brother or sister
- A good friend

**Other people you can go to ask questions or talk about how you feel are:**

ChildLine **0800 1111** or  
**[www.childline.org](http://www.childline.org)**

**[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)** for more information on how to stay in control and report problems on the internet.

Websites that can give you information on puberty and relationships are:

**[www.likeitis.org.uk](http://www.likeitis.org.uk)**  
**[www.beinggirl.co.uk](http://www.beinggirl.co.uk)**  
**[www.teenagehealthfreak.org](http://www.teenagehealthfreak.org)**  
**[www.lgbtyouth.org.uk](http://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk)**

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