

Fundamentals of Teaching Anatomy and Reproduction

CORE CONCEPT

An understanding of reproductive anatomy and reproduction is an essential component of comprehensive sex education.

Rationale

How do we teach, and why do we teach that way?

- A basic understanding about how our bodies function helps participants make informed decisions about sexual behaviors, contraception, and protection.
- When teaching about anatomy and reproduction, educators should use a body-positive, sex-positive, pleasure-positive framework to make students feel comfortable and maximize learning.
- When teaching about anatomy and reproduction educators should use language that is inclusive of people of all gender identities and sexual orientations to maintain an inclusive environment.
- When talking about body parts, refer to their function rather than the gender of the person with that body part. Students need to feel included and represented in the lessons.

TALKING POINTS

What do we say?

- It is important to have basic information and an understanding about reproductive organs and their functions. This includes knowing about the menstrual cycle, ovulation, sperm, sexual intercourse, and pregnancy.
- For a pregnancy to be established, ovulation, fertilization, and implantation must occur. (Ovulation + Fertilization + Implantation = Pregnancy)
- It is important to have basic information about the names, variations, and functions of external sexual and reproductive body parts, including information about pleasure.
- Many people have questions about if their bodies are normal. Good education on reproductive anatomy emphasizes that differences are normal and healthy.
- Body parts don't determine a person's gender.

KNOW THE FACTS

FACT: All bodies share many of the same parts. Even parts that are different are similar in form and function. For example, both the clitoris and the penis contain erectile tissue that can become engorged when aroused.

FACT: Some people are intersex. Intersex is a word used to describe bodies that are born with variation in sex characteristics including chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, or genitals that may not fit a doctor's notion of binary "male" or "female" bodies. ⁱ

COMMON QUESTIONS STUDENTS HAVE ABOUT ANATOMY AND REPRODUCTION

One of my testicles hangs down lower than the other. Is that normal?

We get lots of questions from folks asking whether the unique variations of their bodies are normal. In this case, we can assure you that yes, it is completely normal for testicles to hang differently. Bodies come in many shapes and sizes, and testicles are no exception. In fact, it is very common for one testicle to hang lower, for one breast to be larger, or one part of the labia to be larger than the other. Bodies are not symmetrical. For example, one foot is almost always slightly smaller than the other. Bodies are full of variety, and that variety is part of what makes a body beautiful. There is a lot of great information about our bodies and their variety on the website www.scarleteen.com.

Can I get pregnant even before I have my first period?

I am so glad that you asked this question. It is important to know when starting a pregnancy is possible. So, the answer is yes, a person with ovaries and a uterus can get pregnant before their first period starts, if they have begun ovulating. This is because ovulation, or the release of a mature egg from the ovary, happens earlier in the menstrual cycle than the first menstrual flow (approximately 14 days before). If a person has penis/vagina sex, and a sperm is present to fertilize that egg, a pregnancy could occur. Understanding how pregnancy happens can be complicated. If you have more questions about this, I recommend checking out this Planned Parenthood video on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n04NPtZl4QQ>.

Can a dude get pregnant?

This is such an important question. Yes, any person who has a uterus, ovaries, and fallopian tubes can become pregnant. Some transgender men, for example, do have those body parts, and therefore can become pregnant. For more information about how a pregnancy occurs, I recommend this great Planned Parenthood video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n04NPtZl4QQ>.



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ⁱ "Intersex Definitions." *InterACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth*, <https://interactadvocates.org/intersex-definitions/>.