TOPIC 1
My sense of identity

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 Introduction

This topic will explore the concept of identity, the importance of forming your own identity and the many factors that shape your identity, such as physical characteristics, skills, abilities, culture, contexts and interactions with others. You will explore the benefits of developing a positive identity in order to improve self-confidence and self-esteem.

You will also learn about growing up and entering adolescence, including the physical, social and emotional changes and challenges of puberty. Understanding these challenges and investigating questions such as ‘Am I normal?’ can be helpful as you navigate the landscape of change.

Finally, you will learn about the importance of connecting to your community and how a sense of belonging enriches human life and adds to your overall health and wellbeing.

Resources

- eLesson: My sense of identity (eles-2942)
- Digital doc: Key terms glossary (doc-29235)

Essential Questions

How do physical, social and emotional changes and transitions shape my identity?
How is my identity, health, safety and wellbeing influenced by a sense of belonging and connection to community?

Syllabus Outcomes

A student:

- examines and evaluates ways to manage current and future challenges (PD4-1)
- examines and demonstrates the role help-seeking strategies and behaviours play in supporting themselves and others (PD4-2)
- investigates effective strategies to promote inclusivity, equality and respectful relationships (PD4-3)
- applies and refines interpersonal skills to assist themselves and others to interact respectfully and promote inclusion in a variety of groups or contexts. (PD4-10)
1.2 My identity

In this subtopic you will explore the ways in which each of us is unique and how we develop our identity — that is, our ideas and beliefs about ourselves.

1.2.1 We are all unique

We are all individuals with our own set of characteristics that makes us unique. Our uniqueness is very special; it allows us to offer different skills, abilities, thoughts and opinions, and makes our relationships with others interesting. Even though everyone is unique, in some respects we are similar; for example, you and your friends may play the same sport, like the same music or dress in a similar way.

How are you unique? How you see yourself and what you believe about yourself forms your identity. We express our identity in various ways such as in the way we dress, behave, interact with others, treat other people and through the things we enjoy or dislike.

Use either the Wordle or WordItOut weblink in the Resources tab to create a word cloud that describes you.

1.2.2 Forming your identity

The formation of your identity is seldom a deliberate or self-conscious process. In other words, we do not generally set about creating a particular identity for ourselves. Rather, we find that over time we come to consider ourselves in certain ways. For example, you may consider yourself to be a reliable and trustworthy friend or a good sportsperson.

Many factors shape our identity, for example, our physical characteristics, skills, abilities and interactions with others. How these factors influence us varies as we move through different stages of our lives. Early in life, sense of identity is generally associated with the support and security of a caring adult. In the early primary school years, identity may be influenced also by attributes that parents/carers value and model. Thus, when we are children, our family has the greatest influence on our identity. As we reach adolescence and during later school years, our peers have an increasing influence on our behaviours, attitudes and beliefs, and peer values and peer pressure become important elements in shaping identity.
How our peers treat us can have a major impact on how we feel about ourselves. We all want to be accepted by others, so as adolescents we dress and behave in ways that can help us connect with our peers. This is because society, through the media, often promotes a belief that you must look and act a certain way to be valued and accepted as a male or female. The ‘perfect’ mould the media creates is not possible for most people to achieve. Additionally, the use of filters and media editing tools create images that are unrealistic. It is important to look at the whole person — that is, who they are, not just how they look — and to value and appreciate the unique qualities that each person offers.

Some areas of the media have started to celebrate these unique qualities, which empowers all people in our society. Examples are SBS’s dedicated television channel NITV (National Indigenous Television) and the use of plus-size models in fashion magazines. This allows a greater range of people to feel a part of the broader media scape and thus have a sense of belonging. This empowers them to assert their place in society rather than succumb to pressure to be something that they don’t feel comfortable with.

Our sense of self and identity changes as we grow older. It develops as we start to experience a wider range of relationships and situations that affect our thoughts and feelings about who we are. We learn to recognise our personal qualities and characteristics, and what is important to us. Our sense of self and identity can also vary in different situations. For example, we may feel very confident and self-assured when we are with our family but less confident with our peers at school.

Acceptance, respect, appreciation and being valued all remain strong contributors to a person’s sense of personal identity at all ages. We all feel a sense of belonging when we feel accepted, respected, appreciated and valued within a community.

1.2.3 It’s great to be different!

Look around you. Are you identical to anyone else? We are all different in many ways. The physical, social and emotional changes that we experience during adolescence happen at different rates and times for each of us — no two people have the same experience. There are a number of reasons why no-one is exactly the same as anyone else. These reasons are both physical (biological) and social (environmental).

When we are conceived — that is, when an egg from a female and a sperm from a male unite — we receive genes from both parents. Our genes determine many of our physical characteristics, such as the colour of our eyes, hair and skin; our biological sex; our height and blood type; and whether we are born with certain diseases or disabilities.

But the differences are not just in the way we look. We live in a very diverse society, comprising people with different cultural background, sexuality, gender, ability, intelligence, wealth and various other facets that form our sense of who we are. From the day we are born, we are influenced by many things within our environment. Our culture affects our diet, the way we dress, the language we speak, our religion and the customs we follow. Our family influences us even more, affecting how we deal with our emotions, the relationships we have, our education, the values we hold, what we think about ourselves, what we eat, how active we are and what interests or hobbies we may have.

Remember, we are all unique! An inclusive society that embraces diversity in all its forms benefits from the wealth of human experience and culture, with positive impacts on health and wellbeing for all.
DID YOU KNOW?
Australia has a diverse society made up of people from many different countries. In the year June 2015 to July 2016, our population grew by one international migrant every two and a half minutes.

1.2.4 It’s okay to be me!
Most people find it easy to identify things about themselves that they would like to change. This is okay, as long as you can also easily identify things about yourself that you like or that are good qualities. Self-acceptance includes knowing your good qualities and recognising that there may be things that you can improve. Accepting who you are and liking things about yourself is the first step to a positive identity.

Beliefs about what it means to be a boy or a girl are influenced by the media, peers, family, religion and culture.

1.2 Activities
This is me!
1. Using the Prezi weblink in the Resources tab, compile a profile of yourself. This profile should show how you see yourself, your beliefs about yourself and what you value in yourself and others. You may wish to include photos, videos or a collage of words that describes you. When compiling your profile, consider:
   • who you are
   • where you come from (your cultural background)
   • how you see yourself
   • how you get along with other people
   • things you are good at, and things you are not so good at and would like to improve
   • your future goals and dreams
   • your beliefs and the things you value
   • your family
   • your school experiences
   • who your role model is.
2. In pairs, compare your profile with that of your partner.
   • Write down all the similarities and differences that you notice.
   • Explain the factors that may have influenced the similarities and differences.

Identity statements
3. Complete the sentence stems below.
   • I can …
   • I have …
   • I like …
   • I am …
   • I remember …
The changing nature of our identity

4. It is common for people to feel differently about themselves in different situations (social contexts). In groups of three or four, discuss how you feel and act when you are with people you know well compared with when you are around people you do not know well. Then answer the following questions.
(a) Does your identity vary when you are in different social contexts (for example, with your family as opposed to at school with your peers)?
(b) In what ways does your behaviour change when in different social contexts?
(c) Describe another social context (apart from at school or with family) that you have experienced in which you feel your identity has varied. Explain the factors that influenced your identity in this situation.

1.2 Check and challenge

Explain
1. Define the term ‘identity’.
2. List some characteristics we inherit genetically from our parents and some characteristics we have because of our environment.

Evaluate
3. Describe your identity. Identify three things that have influenced the development of your identity and then explain how they did so.

Elaborate
4. Why is having a positive identity important to your health, wellbeing and relationships?
5. ‘The first step in developing a positive identity is accepting who you are.’ What does this mean?

1.3 Developing a positive identity

Our identity is shaped by many things. In this subtopic you will explore how family, peer group, cultural identity and school environment all play a significant role in the development of a positive identity.

1.3.1 Influences on our identity

As we considered in subtopic 1.2, many factors help to shape our identity. Our beliefs about what it means to be a boy or a girl, for example, are influenced by various factors, including gender stereotypes, culture, media images, peers and family. These factors can also be interdependent; that is, they can influence the effect of another factor. For example, if a student is bullied by their peers at school every day and then criticised by their parents at home, the combined effect will be greater. He or she will most likely have a poor identity. Conversely, if a person is praised by their parents and teachers, and respected by their peers, the combined effect will most likely be a more positive identity. What are some of the other factors that shape your identity?
1.3.2 Factors that shape our identity

Factors that influence our identity include the following.

**Family**

Young people who are encouraged and supported by their family tend to feel good about themselves. Your self-esteem develops positively as a consequence of your interactions with your parents in early adolescence, and later with your peers. If you view these interactions as positive experiences, then you tend to develop confidence, which is a factor in a positive identity.

**Peer group**

Having a close friend or group of friends is very important for young people. Good friends will listen, be supportive and help you when you need it.

The things you say to your friends and how you treat them can affect how they think about themselves. Being a good friend means treating your friends with respect. Developing positive relationships with friends is important, so understanding what makes a positive relationship is essential. Positive relationships have the following qualities:

- mutual respect
- trust
- honesty
- support
- fairness/equality
- separate identities
- good communication.

Our identity is shaped by many factors.
Culture and traditions

Cultural background is one of the most significant influences on our identity. Each person’s culture consists of their customs and traditions, beliefs, values and language. The original inhabitants of Australia are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have lived here for at least 45,000 years. Today, although the majority of the Australian population is of Anglo-Celtic ethnicity, our society is also made up of migrants from more than 200 countries around the world. In fact, 49 per cent of Australians were born overseas or have a parent who was born overseas. This makes Australia a culturally rich and diverse society.

The multicultural nature of Australian society means that most of you will experience and interact with a range of people from cultural backgrounds different from yours. However, you may sometimes feel more comfortable being with people from a similar cultural background to your own because you will have common interests and traditions. There is much to be learned, however, from interacting with people from different cultures.

Differences in culture may be quite visible in the way that people dress, their customs, behaviours and interests; however, some cultural differences are less visible and are relatively innate, such as values, attitudes and beliefs. Culture is something that we learn; it is dynamic and adapts to changing circumstances. Traditions are often identified as practices and beliefs that are handed down from one generation to the next. Traditions are many and varied. Your family may have a traditional way of celebrating a particular event. The Australian culture has a unique blend of established traditions and new influences. Follow the ReachOut weblinks in the Resources tab for some tips on how to understand different cultures.

School

Schools that provide interesting and challenging learning opportunities help students grow and succeed. Acknowledgement of this personal growth and success helps students feel good about themselves. For many adolescents, school is a place where they can feel supported and connected.

Gender

Gender beliefs influence our identity. They can shape our attitudes and behaviours. Sometimes, there is a lot of pressure on us to behave in certain ways or to fit a certain stereotype. For boys, this stereotype may mean being strong, tough and sporty; for girls, it may mean being more sensitive and nurturing. Young people who do not fit these stereotypes may be bullied or teased by their peers; this has a negative influence on their identity.
Sexuality
Adolescence is a time when young people become physically and sexually attracted to others. These attractions can be for people of the opposite sex or people of the same sex, or both. When a young person is sensitive about their sexuality, they may feel unhappy about themselves. Treating everyone with respect and accepting difference can be a positive influence, allowing young people freedom to explore and understand this aspect of their identity.

Body image
What we look like and what other people think of our appearance contribute to our beliefs about who we are. People who are not happy with their body shape, size and/or weight are often not happy with themselves more generally. Some young people, in an attempt to change their body image, may develop poor eating habits or eating disorders. It is important to remember that we all come in different shapes and sizes, and that we are worthwhile and valuable people regardless of how we look.

Physical development
The rate at which we mature or grow can affect our identity. For example, girls who develop breasts or start menstruation before their friends sometimes feel uncomfortable or embarrassed. Boys who mature early are often more confident with their peers than those who mature later.

Sport
It is important for adolescents to participate in sport and physical activity so they can benefit from health and fitness, social rewards and connection to a community. Many young people feel a sense of identity from the sport they play. In addition, many adolescents aspire to be like their favourite athlete, which can shape the development of their identity.

Online
With the rise of social media, many adolescents are using a variety of platforms daily as a way to connect with their peers. Young people are creating an identity of who they are and what they like due to their exposure to online communication. It is important to act respectfully when online to ensure a positive sense of identity and reputation is achieved.

The media
We are influenced by the stereotypes of males and females that we see on television, and in movies and magazines. Some young people compare themselves unfavourably to these unrealistic images, and this comparison can have a negative influence on their identity.

Success and failure
Most of us, if we are successful at the things we do, will feel good about ourselves. Some of us avoid activities we are not as good at because we may feel embarrassed or inadequate. Identifying areas in which we can improve and working to achieve success in a variety of activities is an important part of personal growth and can have a positive influence on our identity.
1.3 Activities

Gender

1. In small groups, collect pictures of males and females from magazines and the sports section of newspapers.
   (a) List the characteristics of males and those of females that are portrayed in the pictures.
   (b) Discuss the messages that are given about what males should be like and what females should be like.

2. As a whole class, discuss each of the following.
   (a) Do you think the images of males and females shown in the media are accurate representations?
   (b) Are these healthy images?
   (c) Do you think these images and messages will have a positive or a negative effect on young people’s identity? Explain why.
   (d) What can young people do to counteract negative media images and messages?
   (e) What kinds of images do you think should be shown to encourage young people to develop a positive identity?

Cultural similarities

3. As a class, brainstorm the different cultural groups to which students belong (including interest groups such as football, horse riding, dance or drama). Complete the following.
   (a) List the characteristics that help identify each group.
   (b) List the ways in which cultural groups influence the people who belong to them. (Think about people’s beliefs and behaviours, such as the clothes they wear.)

Family traditions

4. List as many of your family traditions as you can think of.

5. Explain how you think each of the traditions you have identified may have already influenced and will continue to influence your identity.

Cultural identity

6. ‘Many people believe that Australia’s Indigenous heritage and a deep knowledge of Indigenous cultural identity is important to all Australians.’ Write a 300-word personal reflection on your thoughts about this statement.

1.3 Check and challenge

Explain

1. (a) Define the term ‘body image’.
   (b) How can our friends influence our body image?

2. Explain how a person’s body image can influence their identity.

3. Explain, using an example, how factors that influence identity are interdependent.
Elaborate

4. Identify who and what influences your identity. Explain, using examples, how these factors influence your attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.

Evaluate

5. (a) What types of images does the media use to stereotype males?
(b) What types of images stereotype females?
(c) Why can these stereotypes be unhealthy for young people?
6. Describe how a person’s culture can influence the way in which they think and feel about themselves.
7. There is a move in the fashion industry and media towards using models who have a healthy body size. Why do you think this has happened? Do you think this is a positive thing? Use the Advertising and body image weblink in the Resources tab to investigate one company’s campaign to challenge beauty stereotypes in advertising. To further explore the topic, watch the Body image video eLesson in the Resources tab.
8. Develop a slogan that promotes a healthy body image to young Australians.

1.4 From birth to adolescence

If you think about it, the changes that you have gone through over the past 12 or so years are incredible. In such a short time you have grown from a tiny baby to a young person. In this subtopic you will explore the first part of the human life cycle: from conception to adolescence.

1.4.1 The cycle of life

We begin our life journey when a sperm from a male unites with an egg from a female. This cell then rapidly divides into more and more cells and eventually forms a human foetus. The female provides both a safe environment within her uterus and the nutrients we need to grow during the nine months of pregnancy.

After birth, babies grow at a very fast rate. They need to be cared for and nurtured, and are totally dependent on someone else for their survival. As babies grow into toddlers, they develop skills such as crawling, walking, speech and finer hand manipulation of objects. There is constant input of information from the world around them that stimulates their growth and development.

It is not until puberty that obvious male and female characteristics become evident. This is a time of rapid growth — physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally.

As young adults, our bodies stop growing between the ages 18 and 25; similarly, the brain may take until around 25 years of age to fully develop. Our ability to solve problems, organise, make decisions and positively deal with our emotions continues to improve. We become more independent in many ways — moving away from our parents, earning a living, starting a career and developing new interests.

As adults, we are almost completely independent. This is usually the time when we start our own family. As we move into old age we may need the help of family and friends to care for us and thus the cycle of life ends with dependence on others.
1.4.2 A rapid rate of change

You are growing and changing by the day. From the time of birth and through adolescence you acquire new physical abilities, develop thinking skills and learn emotional regulation, as well as experiencing social growth. Substantial physical (e.g. learning to walk and becoming taller), social (e.g. family and school friends), emotional (e.g. tantrums and negotiations) and intellectual (e.g. learning about the alphabet and Pythagoras) developments have occurred in a relatively short period of time. The changes that occur from infancy through to adolescence are vast and quite profound. You grow and change day by day. From infancy, to toddler, to preschool age, to primary school, to secondary school (adolescence), many changes have already taken place.

**HEALTH FACT**

The number of bones in our bodies varies over our lifespan. When we are born, we have about 300 bones, but as we grow many bones in the lower vertebral column and pelvic region fuse into solid structures. On average, adults end up with about 206 bones.

**on Resources**

- Digital doc: Worksheet 1.4 Percentile growth charts (doc-29178)

1.4.3 Adolescence

Adolescence is the time during which we mature from childhood to adulthood. This is a time of significant physical, intellectual, social and emotional change. The beginning of adolescence is signalled by the onset of [puberty](#).

1.4.4 Growth and development milestones

Growth and development is a lifelong process of physical, [cognitive](#)/intellectual and social/emotional change. Enormous changes take place from infancy through to adolescence and adulthood.

The developmental milestones in table 1.1 occur in most young people during each stage of their lives. However, individuals may reach each stage of development at different times.
### TABLE 1.1 Developmental milestones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of life</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Cognitive/intellectual</th>
<th>Social/emotional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infancy (0–3 years)</td>
<td>• Double in height</td>
<td>• Learn language and communication skills</td>
<td>• Develop trust for caregivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Triple in weight</td>
<td>• Develop an imagination</td>
<td>• Have relationships primarily with family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop teeth and the ability to eat solid foods</td>
<td>• Understand the world primarily through their family</td>
<td>• Kiss and hug to show love and yell to show anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop 75 per cent of their brain capacity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Learn to crawl and walk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool (4–5 years)</td>
<td>• Grow at a slower rate than during infancy and the toddler years</td>
<td>• Begin to experience the world through exploration</td>
<td>• Still rely on caregivers but no longer need or want as much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reach 50 per cent of their adult height and about 20 per cent of their</td>
<td>• Begin separation from family caregivers and more</td>
<td>physical contact with caregivers as they received in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>adult weight by age five</td>
<td>independence</td>
<td>infancy and as toddlers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop more coordinated large motor skills, enabling them to skip,</td>
<td>• Understand what is good and bad and able to follow</td>
<td>• Continue to express emotions physically and to seek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>run and jump</td>
<td>rules</td>
<td>hugs and kisses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop fine motor skills, enabling them to tie shoelaces and draw</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Socialise with peers as friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>recognisable figures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Complete 90 per cent of brain development by age five</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower primary school (6–8 years)</td>
<td>• Experience slower growth of about 6 cm in height and 3.5 kg per year</td>
<td>• Develop the skills to process more abstract concepts and</td>
<td>• Develop relationships with people outside the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>complex ideas</td>
<td>• Express themselves through sharing and talking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Spend more time with their peer group and turn to peers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>for information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage of life</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Cognitive/intellectual</td>
<td>Social/emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower primary school (6–8 years)</td>
<td>• Grow longer legs relative to their total height</td>
<td>• Develop an increased attention span</td>
<td>• Understand more complex emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop less fat and grow more muscle than in earlier years</td>
<td>• Improve in self-control and recognise appropriateness in behaviour</td>
<td>• Want more emotional freedom and space from parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increase in strength</td>
<td>• Think for themselves and develop individual opinion</td>
<td>• Become better at controlling feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lose their baby teeth and begin to grow adult teen</td>
<td>• Understand more complex emotions</td>
<td>• Begin to recognise their own strengths and weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sustain peer group interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper primary school (9–12 years)</td>
<td>• Experience a growth spurt with significant weight gain, muscle growth</td>
<td>• Become more independent as they move into secondary school</td>
<td>• Feel self-conscious about outward appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and genital maturation (growth spurt begins earlier for girls; lasts</td>
<td>• Shift their school focus from play-centred activities to academic study</td>
<td>• Consider peers to be more important than family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>longer for boys)</td>
<td>• Look to peers and media for information and advice</td>
<td>• May develop sexual feelings for others as a new dimension within relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enter puberty; this usually begins earlier in girls (9 to 12) than in</td>
<td>• Develop increasing capability for social conscience and for abstract thought,</td>
<td>• Develop the capacity to understand the components of a caring, loving relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>boys (11 to 14)</td>
<td>understanding complex issues such as poverty and war</td>
<td>• Experience feelings of insecurity and begin to doubt self-concept and previous self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>During puberty:</td>
<td>• Take on increased responsibility, such as family jobs and babysitting</td>
<td>• Struggle with family relationships and desire privacy and separation from family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hair grows under arms and on pubic area and, in males, on face and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>chest.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Body proportions change (hips widen in females, shoulders broaden in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>males).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In males, genitals mature, voice deepens, and erections, ejaculation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and wet dreams are more frequent.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In females, genitals mature, breasts develop, and ovulation and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>menstrual cycle begin.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teens/adolescence (13–17 years)</td>
<td>• Complete puberty and the physical transition from childhood to</td>
<td>• Attain cognitive maturity — the ability to make decisions based on knowledge of</td>
<td>• Have the capacity to develop long-lasting, mutual and healthy relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>adulthood</td>
<td>options and their consequences</td>
<td>• Understand their own feelings and have the ability to analyse why they feel a certain way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Nearly reach their adult height, especially females</td>
<td>• Continue to be influenced by peers (the power of peer pressure lessens after early</td>
<td>• Begin to place less value on appearance and more on personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(males continue to grow taller into their early twenties)</td>
<td>adolescence)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Build skills to become self-sufficient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Respond to media messages, but develop increasing ability to analyse those messages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop increasingly mature relationships with friends and family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Seek increased power over their own lives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.4.5 Puberty — a time of change

Puberty is a time of many changes. Some of these changes are exciting, others may be a little daunting. Your body begins to develop and change during this time and will grow faster than at any other time in your life, apart from when you were an infant.

Puberty is triggered by a change in hormone levels in our bodies and is a time during which our bodies change physically. Our reproductive organs mature so our bodies become capable of procreating — that is, having babies.

The changes that occur at the beginning of puberty happen inside us, meaning often we can’t tell it has started. It is not until we see the outward physical changes that we can tell puberty has begun. For boys the commencement of puberty is usually around 12 to 13 years of age and developments can occur throughout a six-year period. For girls it can commence between 9 and 11 years of age and developments can occur throughout a five-year period. However, it is important to remember that the commencement of puberty and developments will be different for everyone; for example, it may start earlier for some and later for others, which is all normal.

Hormones and puberty

Hormones play a large role during puberty. They are the cause of many of the body’s physical changes during this time. They are released by the pituitary gland, which is located in the brain. During puberty, it releases increased amounts of growth hormone, which causes a rapid growth spurt. This growth spurt usually occurs earlier among girls. Together with a rapid growth in height, body parts such as the hands, feet and head mature to their full adult size. Internal organs also grow during puberty, for example, the heart and lungs increase in size. This accounts for our increased physical capacity for endurance and strength as we mature to adults.

The pituitary gland triggers the secretion of the female reproductive hormone, oestrogen, and the male reproductive hormone, testosterone. Oestrogen is secreted by the ovaries in girls and testosterone is secreted by the testes in boys.

Sexual development occurs during puberty. Both boys and girls experience enlargement and maturity of their primary sex organs. For boys, this means their penis and testes grow bigger and their testes start to produce sperm. Girls start to release mature ova (eggs) from their ovaries. The production of sperm in boys and mature ova in girls is referred to as a primary sex characteristic.

The release of the female and male reproductive hormones in greater amounts during puberty leads to the development of secondary sex characteristics, as shown in table 1.2 in section 1.4.6.

Am I normal?

Changes that will happen to you during puberty happen to everyone. The timing of these changes is different for each individual so it is important not to be concerned if the onset of puberty for you occurs later or earlier than it does for your friends. Not only is there great variability in the timing of the onset of puberty, the speed of the changes that occur and the length of time puberty takes to complete also differ greatly. This is another factor that contributes to your uniqueness. The experience of puberty results in a changing body that may sometimes feel a little out of control. Some of the changes may be a little uncomfortable to deal with at first and may take some time to adjust to but in time, you will be better able to cope with them and they will become a normal part of your life. The important thing to remember is that while sometimes challenging, puberty is a brief but important transition from child to adult.

HEALTH FACT

The growth spurt during adolescence occurs at different rates in different parts of the body; for example, hands and feet grow faster than arms and legs, and arms and legs lengthen before the torso. This explains the feeling of ‘gawkiness’ that some adolescents experience.
1.4.6 Secondary sex characteristics

The visible and more noticeable changes that occur during puberty are known as the secondary sex characteristics. They are considered secondary because they occur only after the release of hormones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Testes and scrotum grow.</td>
<td>Breasts grow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pubic hair develops.</td>
<td>Pubic hair develops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The body grows taller.</td>
<td>The body grows taller and curvier, and the hips widen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair develops under the arms and on the arms, legs, body and face.</td>
<td>Hair develops under the arms and on the arms and legs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil glands in the skin produce more oil, which can lead to pimples and acne.</td>
<td>Oil glands in the skin produce more oil, which can lead to pimples and acne.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The penis grows.</td>
<td>Menstruation begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweat production increases.</td>
<td>Sweat production increases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscle growth occurs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The voice deepens.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Physical development from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood

1.4 Activities

Growing and changing word cloud

1. Use the Wordle or WordItOut weblinks in the Resources tab to create a word cloud that shows what changes have occurred in your development from infancy until now. Include all the words that you can think of and remember to type the words that you believe are the most important a number of times so that they are presented boldest and largest in the word cloud.

Am I normal?

2. Using the Kids Health weblinks in the Resources tab, visit the ‘Am I normal? Girls and Puberty’ and ‘Boys and Puberty’ pages and complete the following.
   (a) Watch the video ‘Am I normal? Girls and Puberty’.
   (b) Read through the ‘Boys and Puberty’ page.
(c) In pairs, discuss your understanding of ‘What is normal?’
(d) Share your ideas and develop a whole class understanding.

Anonymous message — growing up
3. Complete the following task as a whole class.
   At the top of a piece of paper write the following sentence stem:
   • The best part about growing up is …
   At the top of another piece of paper write the following sentence stem:
   • The hardest part about growing up is …
   Fold the two pieces of paper so that the sentence stems are always visible. Pass each piece of paper around the class so every student can write their own ending to each sentence. After you write your comment, fold the paper over so that the comments remain anonymous. The teacher or a member of the class can then read out some of the responses and facilitate a whole class discussion.

1.4 Check and challenge
Explain
1. Which hormone causes growth spurts?
2. Describe the differences between the infancy and preschool stages in the human life cycle.
3. Outline the secondary sex characteristics of:
   (a) boys
   (b) girls.
4. Identify the major hormones released during puberty and the effects they have on the body.
5. Explain why it is important not to compare yourself to others in relation to your growth and development during puberty.

Elaborate

Evaluate
7. Do our bodies and brain develop fully at the same time? Give reasons for your answer.
8. Do girls and boys grow at the same rate? Give reasons for your answer.

1.5 Puberty — the physical changes

During puberty, our bodies change a lot. We need to understand what these changes are and why they occur so we can deal with them positively. Although everyone goes through puberty, it’s important to remember we each do so in our own time.
1.5.1 Growing and maturing

Puberty is a time of many physical changes. It is the stage during which you undergo sexual maturation. Puberty can also affect your social and emotional development, but the physical changes are generally identified first. You will undergo growth surges that make you taller, and your muscles will change shape and make you stronger. Other physical changes that take place are quite different for boys and girls. It is important that girls learn about the changes boys go through and that boys learn about the changes that girls go through. This subtopic will take a closer look at these changes.

You are already familiar with some of the physical, social and emotional changes that occur during puberty. While many of the physical changes of puberty are visibly noticeable, there are also some physical changes that are not so noticeable. It is important to remind yourself that everyone goes through puberty and that it is just a part of your growth and development. It is also important to be aware of the many resources that you can access to understand what is happening to you.

1.5.2 Puberty and girls

Puberty usually occurs in girls between the ages of 10 and 14, but may occur as early as 8 years of age. Generally, the first sign of puberty for girls is the development of breast tissue, however, it may also be the growth of pubic hair. Breast development will start with small, firm and relatively tender lumps under one or both nipples and then the whole breast will start to get bigger. Underarm hair will grow and pubic hair will start to grow on the vulva. A girl’s body will start to become curvier as her hips start to widen. Usually within one to four years of the commencement of breast development, menstruation will begin.

Menstruation

Menstruation is also known as a girl’s ‘period’. Girls start to menstruate (or get their periods) during puberty. It usually happens around two years after the first physical signs of puberty appear but because puberty starts at a different time for everyone, the age at which a girl gets her period will vary. It will generally occur anywhere between 9 and 16 years of age. The arrival of a girl’s first period signifies a girl’s ability to reproduce; however, sometimes ovulation can happen just before a girl has her first period so it is important to be aware that it is possible for a girl to become pregnant prior to having her first period.

The menstrual cycle

A menstrual cycle is about 28 days in length, although the length of a cycle is different for each girl. It is controlled by the release of different hormones that regulate what happens in the cycle. The first day of a girl’s period signals the start of her menstrual cycle. A ‘period’ is the shedding of the uterus lining, which is called the endometrium. The lining comes out as fluid through the vagina. This fluid comprises the lining of the uterus wall, blood and the unfertilised egg. Once the period is finished — that is, the bleeding stops — hormones direct the body to start building up the endometrium again. The endometrium builds up or thickens to house the egg if it is fertilised by a male’s sperm.

A period usually lasts three to seven days, with bleeding being heaviest in the first few days. The length and heaviness of a period are different for each girl. Periods are irregular for most girls in the first year or two but then usually settle into a fairly regular cycle. Some girls may experience abdominal pain and/or backache when they get their period or in the few days before, while others may experience only minor or no real discomfort.
HEALTH FACT
Many girls use sanitary pads when they first get their period and try tampons later, but it is a personal preference and choice. It’s a good idea to carry a pad in your bag just in case your period starts while you’re at school. Many females find that using tampons helps them lead a normal and active lifestyle even when having their period, allowing them to participate in activities such as swimming.

Hormones and the menstrual cycle
The menstrual cycle is controlled by the release of different types of hormones. Each hormone has a specific role to play. The menstrual cycle has four phases:
1. the menstruation phase (days 1–5)
2. the follicular phase (days 1–13)
3. the ovulation phase (day 14)
4. the luteal phase (days 15–28).

During the menstrual phase, the thickened lining of the uterus (endometrium), blood and the unfertilised egg flow from the uterus and out through the vagina. This is the phase commonly referred to as a period.

The follicular phase is the time between the first day of menstruation and when ovulation occurs. During this phase, the pituitary gland releases follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH). This hormone stimulates the ovary to produce a number of follicles (approximately 5–20). In most cases, only one of these follicles will mature into an egg. Also at this time, the lining of the uterus begins to thicken in preparation for possible fertilisation of an ovum and the resulting pregnancy. There is also a rise in levels of the female sex hormone oestrogen.

The ovulation phase occurs when the mature egg is released from the follicle on the surface of the ovary. Ovulation usually occurs in the middle of the menstrual cycle, that is, around day 14 of a 28-day menstrual cycle. As oestrogen levels rise during the follicular phase, the brain triggers the release of gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH). This hormone prompts the pituitary gland to produce higher levels of luteinising hormone (LH) and FSH. Ovulation is triggered by high levels of LH. The egg moves from the follicle on the
surface of the ovary down through the fallopian tube to the uterus. The life span of the egg is around 24 hours and unless it meets a sperm during this time, it will die.

The luteal phase is approximately two weeks in length. During this time, the ruptured follicle on the surface of the ovary changes into a structure called the corpus luteum. The corpus luteum starts to release the sex hormone progesterone and small amounts of oestrogen. These two hormones maintain the thickened lining of the uterus. If the ovum is not fertilised by sperm to create a pregnancy, the corpus luteum will die. This occurs around day 22 of a 28-day cycle. This causes the levels of progesterone and oestrogen to fall and the lining of the uterus to come away and flow with blood from the uterus through the vagina as a menstrual period.

1.5.3 Puberty and boys

Puberty usually occurs in boys between 12 and 17 years of age and an average of about one to two years later than when girls start puberty. Generally, the first physical sign of puberty for boys is the enlargement of the testicles and penis and also the growth of pubic hair. A boy’s limbs, hands and feet will often grow faster than his torso and other parts of his body. His shoulders will start to broaden and he will also experience an increase in weight and muscle in line with the significant growth spurts that occur. Boys may also notice the development of an ‘Adam’s apple’ at the front of their throat and at this time their voice may be a little unpredictable, but by the end of puberty a boy’s voice will be deeper. Boys will start to grow hair on their face and more hair on their body. Erections may occur when boys become nervous or excited, but also at times for no particular reason.

DID YOU KNOW?

Even tiny babies sometimes get erections but during puberty, boys start getting more erections — sometimes without any obvious cause.

Ejaculation

During puberty, boys experience their first ejaculation, which is a release of semen from the penis. This usually occurs when a boy masturbates or when he has a nocturnal emission (wet dream).

The epididymis is located at the back of the testes. It collects immature sperm from the testes. When the sperm mature, they are released into a tube called the vas deferens. The sperm travel up the vas deferens, where they mix with semen released by glands lining the vas deferens. They then travel through another tube called the urethra, which runs through the penis.
1.5.4 Conception/reproduction
The most common way the sperm enters the female’s body is through ejaculation during sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse is when a male’s erect penis is inserted into a female’s vagina.
When an ovum (egg) and sperm unite, conception occurs — the start of a new life through the process of reproduction. The lining of the uterus provides nourishment to the foetus in the first stage of its life.

Conception occurs when a sperm and ovum (egg) unite. A fertilised ovum inside the uterus develops into a foetus.

1.5 Activities
Male and female puberty
1. Complete one of the following tasks.
   (a) Write a letter to a younger sister or brother telling them what happens to a boy’s or a girl’s body during puberty and why it is important that they don’t compare themselves to their friends during this time.
   (b) Follow the weblink in the Resources tab to the free audio editor program Audacity and record a radio interview with a friend that informs people of the changes likely to take place as they enter puberty. The interview should aim to inform and reassure other students about their changing bodies.

Anonymous questions
2. Use a class question letter box or set up an online poll using the Poll everywhere weblink in the Resources tab so students in your class can ask questions about puberty. These questions are anonymous so there is no need to feel a little embarrassed in front of the rest of the class.
1.5 Check and challenge

**Explain**
1. Describe what happens during the menstrual cycle.
2. Describe what happens during the process of conception.
3. Describe the path of sperm from where they are produced to when they are released during ejaculation.
4. Explain the process of puberty for boys.

**Elaborate**
5. Is every girl's menstrual cycle the same? Why or why not?

**Evaluate**
6. What advice would you give a friend struggling with the physical changes of adolescence? Provide at least four strategies to help your friend cope.

1.6 Puberty — the social and emotional changes

During puberty, as well as physical changes, we also experience social and emotional changes. It is helpful to understand what these changes may be and why they occur so we can deal with them positively.

1.6.1 Feelings and emotions associated with puberty

During adolescence, we begin to think independently of our parents and family, and form our own ideas, attitudes and values. We start discovering the world for ourselves; through our day-to-day experiences, we learn more about ourselves and have thoughts about who we are and what our place is in the world. As we grow and experience life, our views and beliefs change. We begin to develop our own identity as individuals.

As our bodies change in size and shape, the way we think about our body also changes. For some young people, the rapid growth of their body can be embarrassing. They may become self-conscious, particularly if their body is growing and changing ahead of the bodies of their friends. The increase in the release of hormones not only affects our physical growth but can also heighten the emotions we experience. It is common for adolescents to feel extremes in their emotions that may sometimes seem difficult to manage. It can be useful to develop strategies that help you calm yourself before you react in an emotion-arousing situation.

**HEALTH FACT**

Measures you can take to help you manage your emotions include: talking things through with a parent, friend or someone else you trust; taking time out from the situation that may be upsetting you; going for a walk, meditating or listening to some music; writing down your thoughts and feelings; talking to your school counsellor.

Taking time out can help with managing emotions.
1.6.2 Understanding your feelings and emotions

Developing an understanding of emotions and feelings is part of the emotional change that happens during puberty. Children often may not understand their feelings and can act out in negative ways, such as by starting arguments or fights. As we grow and mature emotionally, we become better at recognising and managing our feelings and thus our behaviours. Some changes that show us we are maturing emotionally include:

- knowing what our feelings are
- using feelings to help us make good decisions
- managing stressful moods
- controlling impulses
- being motivated and optimistic
- bouncing back after a difficult time
- managing our emotions in a positive way
- communicating with others in a respectful way
- expressing ourselves appropriately
- planning future goals
- solving problems rather than avoiding them
- resolving conflicts in non-violent ways.

Achieving all these changes takes time and work. This means you need to think about what you are feeling rather than just reacting, and you need to work out positive ways in which to deal with challenges and cope with difficult situations. Talking to people you trust and who can help you is a good start to helping you understand and manage your emotions.

1.6.3 Social changes

Adolescence is also a time of social change. It is when we develop from a dependent person to an independent person. The way in which we interact with others changes as we mature. We start to make decisions for ourselves and plan for the future. Adolescence is also a time when we start to develop a range of relationships that can be quite meaningful and long-lasting. As we go through adolescence, we increasingly spend more time with our friends and less with our family. Parents and family still play an important role in most young people’s lives by providing love, support and guidance as young people find their way to adulthood.

Forming a close group of friends who make you feel connected and supported can contribute to a positive sense of identity. This group of friends is your peer group. Many young people want to be like their friends and
want to be popular within their peer group. Sometimes, your peer group can put pressure on you to do certain things. This pressure may be negative, such as the pressure to smoke, or positive, such as encouragement to play sport. If you are being pressured to do something you don’t feel comfortable doing, it is a good idea to talk to someone (such as a parent or teacher) and try to work out some strategies to deal with the issue. Just as our family influences us during childhood, our peer group plays a big role in helping to define who we are during adolescence.

During adolescence, there are times when we feel like, and want to be treated as, an adult; at other times, we feel like a child and want the security that our family provides. Conflict with parents can occur when we want to do things independently. Parents worry because they know that young people sometimes take risks when they are with friends. Try to work things out with your parents when a conflict arises. Listen to what they have to say, then talk to them about what you need. Share your ideas about what you can do to keep safe.

**HEALTH FACT**

During adolescence, having a close friend or group of friends is a protective factor for young people.

In later adolescence, it is common for parents, family and teachers to start to increase their expectations of you. Your parents will expect you to take more responsibility for the freedom that you want, including making decisions for yourself. Some of these decisions will be values-based, such as what’s right and what’s wrong. People will expect you to take responsibility for your thoughts, feelings and actions. This responsibility includes making decisions and accepting the consequences of those decisions.

During adolescence, we also start to become more aware of our sexuality and can develop a desire or sexual attraction for another person. That other person can be someone of the opposite sex or someone of the same sex. We may form a relationship with that person. In early adolescence, these relationships usually last for a short period. In late adolescence, relationships usually last longer and become more significant.

Social change is about making new relationships that are independent of family, making decisions for yourself and taking responsibility for those decisions. These experiences help you develop a better understanding of yourself and will influence the path you choose in life.

**1.6.4 Your developing brain**

You might be surprised to know that during puberty not only is your body physically and emotionally maturing but so is your brain. Research has shown that the brain does not fully mature until we are in our early to mid 20s. This means that young people’s ability to judge things, plan, organise, make decisions and control their emotions is not yet fully developed, and may in some part account for the moodiness and emotional outbursts that some adolescents display. But don’t worry! As your brain matures your ability to make decisions and to analyse situations will improve and in turn, you will gain greater ability to monitor and adapt your emotional responses.
1.6.5 Dealing with puberty
You are now in your early years of adolescence, probably experiencing some or many of the physical changes of puberty. It may be an exciting time when you look forward to the changes ahead, or a more challenging time when you become self-conscious and overly concerned about what other people think of your looks and personality. Try to remember when things are difficult that every adult in the world has experienced the period of change that you are experiencing now. All your friends are going through the same thing in their own way. The following are useful tips to remember when you are dealing with the changes of puberty:

• Read and learn about the physical, emotional and social changes of puberty so you have a better idea of what to expect.
• Talk to your doctor or another health professional if you are worried about aspects of your development or do not understand some of the changes in your body.
• Be patient with your parents. Remember, they are trying to do the best for you.
• If there are disagreements, listen to what your parents have to say and then calmly let them know your view.
• Try to negotiate with your parents. You need to show them that you are responsible by making good decisions, letting them know your plans and compromising in some situations.
• Remember that you will mature at your own pace because you are a unique person.

1.6 Activities

1. Personal beliefs and attitudes
   Our beliefs, attitudes and values form a part of our sense of self. In small groups, discuss one of the following issues then answer the questions that follow.
   • Homework should be mandatory for all high school students.
   • Junk food should be banned from school canteens.
   • Girls are more mature than boys.
   (a) What were the main views expressed by the group?
   (b) What factors influenced your own view of these issues?
   (c) How does your view influence your behaviours or actions?

2. Becoming independent
   Read the scenario below and answer the questions that follow.
   Sandra is 14 years old. She is going out with Serge, who is 17 years old. Serge has asked Sandra to an 18th birthday party on Friday night at his friend's place. Serge says he will pick her up at 8.00 pm because he has his mum's car for the night. Sandra is excited about going to the party and asks her parents if she can go. They are worried about her going in the car and will allow the date only if they drop her off at the party themselves and pick her up at 10.30 pm. Sandra thinks her parents don't trust her, so she yells at them and they get into an argument. Her parents ground her for her disrespectful attitude. Sandra sneaks out of the house and goes to the party anyway.
   (a) Explain why young people and their parents have more conflicts during adolescence.
   (b) Explain why Sandra's parents are worried.
   (c) Do you think Sandra made a good decision or a bad decision? Explain your answer.
   (d) Identify strategies that Sandra and her parents could have used to reach a better outcome.

3. I'm only 12!
   In small groups, read the scenario below and then discuss the questions that follow.
   Andrea is a 12-year-old girl who has physically matured into a young woman. A boy in Year 11 who is 17 years old starts to give her lots of attention and lets her know he is sexually attracted to her. He is treating her as being much older than she is. She has never experienced this situation before and doesn't know what to do.
   (a) What might Andrea be feeling?
   (b) What might Andrea do or say to manage this situation?
   (c) Brainstorm why a relationship between a 12-year-old girl and a 17-year-old boy is not a good idea.
1.6 Check and challenge

Explain

1. Identify two important relationships in your life and explain why they are important.
2. Explain how your parents’ and teachers’ expectations of you have changed as you have grown from childhood into adolescence.
3. Explain what is meant by ‘managing your emotions in a positive way’. Give at least one example to support your explanation.

Elaborate

4. What are some positive strategies to help you manage puberty. Provide reasons for these strategies.
5. Identify acceptable ways of expressing your thoughts, feelings and opinions. Why are they acceptable?

1.7 My sense of belonging and community

We can help all people to feel valued by appreciating who they are and understanding that their differences enrich our society. In many cultures, kinship and extended family structures can enhance our sense of identity and support and enhance our health, safety and wellbeing.

1.7.1 Valuing diversity and inclusion

Each one of us is unique. This means that, although there will be similarities between individuals and groups of people, no one person or group is identical to another. There are differences in the things people do and like, their religion, the food they eat, the clothes they wear and the people to whom they are attracted. The diversity that exists in every society is something that should be valued and celebrated. It offers us opportunities to experience different lifestyles and alternative ways of thinking.

Use the Valuing diversity weblink in the Resources tab to investigate how Australia embraces diversity.

The diversity found in our society should be valued and celebrated.

Resources

Weblink: Valuing diversity
1.7.2 Feeling connected and supported

Wellbeing is strongly linked to happiness and life satisfaction.

While diversity brings many positive things to our society, it is not always valued. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and fairness and to have the same opportunities. If we are valued and appreciated by others then we also feel safer and supported within the community in which we live. A community that embraces diversity and recognises the value of all its members is more likely to be one that thrives. Ensuring that everyone feels they can belong and connect in a community can have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of both individuals and communities.

Health and wellbeing encompasses many aspects, not just the physical body. Looking after your mind, body and spirit is about creating balance in your life by nurturing your whole self, which includes spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical needs. Different cultures see the link between the mind, the body and the spirit in different ways, whether that be through activities such as yoga, meditation, prayer or tai chi. The traditional Chinese approach to health and illness focuses on the balance between body, mind and spirit, commonly expressed as yin and yang. Through embracing diversity, Australia has benefited from the introduction of traditional and contemporary movement activities from the Asia region.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mind-body-spirit values are about connections to Country/Place, people and ways of being. Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medicine is holistic and recognises the social, physical and spiritual dimensions of health and life. It considers the personal, family and community issues surrounding illness. It looks at how the whole person became sick and the reasons underlying the sickness.

Weblink: Why are culture and identity important?

1.7.3 Kinship and extended family structures

Grandparents have a central role in some cultures.

The network of social relationships that form an important part of human lives in most societies is known as kinship. Kinship systems define how a person fits into the community. Australian society was multicultural long before the arrival of European settlers. In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures the richly complex system of classes or skins puts everybody in a specific kinship relationship. These relationships all have specific roles and responsibilities attached to them and have a significant influence on the development of identity. The kinship system has strict rules and laws for people to follow and live by. This system tells people who their relatives are, what their skin names and totems are, and where their traditional lands are located. It is similar to a modern family tree, except that the learning of customs, tradition, language, Dreamtime stories and songs connected to traditional lands is also an important part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship.
In many cultures, extended family structures enhance an individual’s health and wellbeing. Extended family may include grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces. For example, in many Asian cultures, grandparents play an important role in helping to raise children while parents are working. Close connections to extended family are a key part in the transmission of cultural traditions and values, which increases a sense of identity, belonging and connection. Indigenous communities also have strong family values, which enhance health, safety and wellbeing. Children are not just the concern of the biological parents, but the entire community. Therefore, the raising, care, education and discipline of children are the responsibility of everyone. This fosters a very strong sense of community, sense of identity and sense of belonging. The strong sense of identity fostered through kinship relationships can help support health and wellbeing.

A positive sense of identity encouraged by strong connections to family, extended family and community helps people feel supported and included. This has a positive impact on physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Table 1.3 identifies possible health, safety and wellbeing benefits that result from kinship and extended family structures in different cultures.

### Table 1.3 Health, safety and wellbeing benefits of kinship and extended family structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Safety</th>
<th>Wellbeing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Different medicines and treatments</td>
<td>• A greater sense of safety and security</td>
<td>• A greater sense of connectedness and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Introduction of alternative health therapies such as acupuncture and remedial massage</td>
<td>• Family members support and watch out for each other.</td>
<td>• Positive mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participation in physical activity such as cultural dances, tai chi and martial arts</td>
<td>• Always someone to talk to when experiencing difficult times</td>
<td>• Increased social wellbeing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1.7 Activities

**Kinship**

1. In pairs, research the importance of kinship in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
   (a) What is the importance of kinship?
   (b) How does kinship support and enhance the health, safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities?

**Sense of belonging and connection to communities**

2. In groups, create a campaign to show students at school the importance of having a sense of belonging and connectedness in the school community. In your campaign, include the benefits a sense of belonging can have on an individual’s health, safety and wellbeing. You may like to present your information in the following ways:
   - a speech
   - PowerPoint or Prezi presentation
   - website or blog.

**Kinship tree**

3. Develop the personal kinship tree of your family to as far back as your great grandparents. Include any traditions, customs and values that have been passed down and are important to the development of your identity. Under the tree, write about how your family has contributed to your health, safety and wellbeing.
1.7 Check and challenge

Explain
1. Explain how diversity enriches Australian society.
2. How can you promote inclusion of others?

Elaborate
3. What value does having extended family connections bring to your sense of identity?
4. How does connection to Country/Place enhance the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities?

Evaluate
5. How could you become a role model for people looking to promote inclusion? Give some specific examples.
6. What does ‘connection and belonging’ mean? Why is it important?

1.8 Review

1.8.1 Summary

- Everyone is unique, with their own set of characteristics.
- Many factors affect our identity, such as peers, family, relationships, the media, gender, culture, traditions and sexuality.
- A positive identity is important to our wellbeing and health.
- Accepting people for who they are and appreciating the difference between people and cultures can help everyone feel valued.
- The time from birth to adolescence is one of rapid growth and development, and a shift from full dependence to seeking independence.
- Puberty is the phase of adolescence characterised by many physical changes. It is when secondary sex characteristics develop in preparation for reproduction.
- Puberty is triggered by the release of hormones.
- The pituitary gland releases growth hormone. This gland also triggers the female reproductive hormone, oestrogen, and the male reproductive hormone, testosterone.
- One of the major changes for girls during puberty is the start of menstruation. For boys, it is the production of sperm.
- Girls and boys mature at different rates. Generally, girls tend to mature earlier than boys.
- Physical maturity does not necessarily mean emotional maturity.
- Adolescence is also marked by significant social changes. Adolescents start to seek independence from their parents, and their peer relationships take on a new importance.
- Forming a close group of friends who make you feel connected and supported can contribute to a positive sense of identity.
- Gender, culture and sexuality are all factors that influence us during adolescence.
- Exploring and expressing sexual feelings is a part of adolescence.
- In later adolescence, it is common for parents, family and teachers to start to increase their expectations of you.
- The brain does not fully mature until we are in our early to mid 20s. This means that young people’s ability to judge things, plan, organise, make decisions and control their emotions is not yet fully developed.
- There are many physical, social and emotional changes associated with puberty.
- Diversity is the richness and uniqueness of human life and it helps makes life interesting and rewarding.
• Valuing and appreciating diversity starts with us being curious and open-minded about difference.
• Being connected or having a sense of belonging to a place or people will help your physical and mental health and wellbeing.
• Wellbeing involves the link between the mind, the body and the spirit, and different cultures value this in different ways.
• The strong sense of identity created through kinship relationships and extended family can help support health, safety and wellbeing.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS
How do physical, social and emotional changes and transitions shape my identity and those around me?
How is my identity, health, safety and wellbeing influenced by a sense of belonging and connection to community?

Evaluate your initial response to the essential questions after having studied this topic.

1.8.2 Key terms

- **Adam's apple** a projection of the thyroid cartilage at the front of the neck
- **adolescence** the time during which we mature from a child to an adult
- **cognitive** relating to the mental processes of perception, memory, judgement and reasoning
- **conception** the union of a female's egg and a male's sperm
- **connected** having a feeling or sense of belonging to someone, a group of people or a place
- **culture** where we come from or the group with whom we identify. It is the ‘way of life’ of societies.
- **diverse** varied or different
- **ejaculation** the release of semen from the penis
- **emotional** refers to our feelings
- **endometrium** the lining of the uterus. It is made of hormones, mucus and blood, and nourishes a foetus.
- **erection** stiffening and enlargement of the penis
- **follicles** small clusters of cells. Human egg cells develop in follicles on the ovaries (and your hair grows in the follicles on your head).
- **gender** our beliefs about what it means to be a male or a female
- **genes** the biological units through which we inherit traits from our parents
- **growth hormone** causes a rapid growth spurt
- **hormone** a substance in our bodies that affects how our bodies work and grow. Hormones are produced by glands.
- **identity** sense of self in terms of characteristics, beliefs, qualities, etc.
- **menstruation** the process of the shedding of the uterus lining (also known as a period)
- **nocturnal emission (wet dream)** an ejaculation of semen when a male is asleep
- **oestrogen** female reproductive hormone, produced in the ovaries
- **ovaries** part of a girl's reproductive system. Girls have two ovaries, which produce oestrogen and ova.
- **ovulation** the process of the ovary releasing an ovum
- **ovum** the egg produced by the ovaries. The plural of ovum is ova.
- **peer** someone who is of similar age or shares common interests
- **physical** refers to our body; in particular, its movements, systems (such as the muscular system) and structures (such as our bones and joints)
- **pituitary gland** a gland located in the brain. It produces a number of different hormones.
- **primary sex characteristics** the characteristics directly necessary for reproduction; the ovaries and the testes
- **progestrone** a hormone produced by the ovaries that plays a key role in sustaining pregnancy
- **puberty** the time during which our bodies change physically so we can reproduce
- **secondary sex characteristics** traits that distinguish females from males but are not directly part of the reproductive system
- **semen** a whitish fluid released by the prostate gland, which may contain sperm
- **social** refers to our interactions with other people
- **sperm** the male reproductive sex cell. It is produced in the testes.
### 1.8 Check and challenge

To answer questions online and to receive immediate feedback and sample responses for every question, go to your learnON title at www.jacplus.com.au Note: Question numbers may vary slightly.

**Key terms quiz**

**Multiple choice quiz**

**Check your understanding**

1. How can you develop a positive sense of identity?
2. Describe some of the physical, social and emotional changes that young people experience during adolescence.
3. What role do hormones have during puberty?
4. Describe the menstrual cycle.
5. Explain why young people mature at different rates.
6. What advice would you give to someone who is not coping with the changes they are experiencing during adolescence?
7. What future changes and challenges do you expect in your life and how will you deal with them effectively?
8. Valuing the difference between people is important for both the health and wellbeing of individuals, but also for Australian society. Outline strategies that you could undertake to be more inclusive of differences.
9. Explain why celebrating diversity can support others’ sense of identity.

**Resources**

- Digital doc: Worksheet 1.7 Key terms quiz (doc-29181)
- Digital doc: Worksheet 1.8 Multiple choice quiz (doc-29182)
- Digital doc: Key terms glossary (doc-29235)