

How God Designed Women & The Stages of Womanhood

Female Reproduction, Conception, Signs of Pregnancy, & Puberty Through Menopause

Knowledge	<i>After working through this lesson, participants will be able to:</i>
Attitude	1. Describe how a woman's reproductive organs work.
Practice	2. Explain how conception occurs.
	3. Discuss how the sex of a baby is determined.
	4. Recognize the signs and symptoms of pregnancy.
	5. Describe how a baby grows during pregnancy.
	6. Describe the signs and symptoms of puberty and menopause.
	7. Identify the three stages of womanhood: puberty, childbearing, and menopause.
	8. Discuss ways to prepare girls for the onset of puberty.
	9. Examine ways a woman can better cope with the symptoms of menopause.

Overview For *How God Designed Women*: It is important to learn in advance how much sex education your participants have and adapt this information to their level. It is not meant to be embarrassing but to learn about how amazingly God made our bodies. Participants may need help in preparing to talk about this topic. In the Stages of Womanhood, the focus is on female development, the different stages in a woman's life, and what to expect with each stage. This lesson is long, and it may be helpful to divide it into 2 separate lessons.

Materials *Collect these items before beginning the lesson:*

- Poster-size paper, markers, and masking tape
- Starter: Role play: *Where Do Babies Come From? & I think I Might Be Dying!; What is Wrong with You, Mother?*
- Handouts or Drawings: *Female Reproductive System* (color or black and white versions); *Conception*; *Conception of Males and Females*; *How Gender Happens*; *Changes in Puberty*, *Three Stages of Womanhood Body Shape*, *Changes in Menopause*
- Knitted uterus, doll and placenta model (if available)
- Diagram of *Three Stages of Womanhood Timeline*
- Bible or verses from Psalm 139.

LESSON

60 minutes

STARTER: *Where Do Babies Come From?* (5 min)
Use the attached role play.

Ask SHOWD Questions:

*What did you **See**?*

*What was **H**appening?*

*Does this happen in **O**ur place?*

***W**hy does this happen?*

*What will we **D**o about it?*

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I. **Reproductive Organs:** (10 min)

Show a large drawing of the female reproductive system. Ask the large group to identify each organ and what it does. Have participants label the organs on the drawing.

A. **Ovaries:** Two organs where the eggs develop

An egg is released each month into one of the fallopian tubes.

B. **Fallopian Tubes:** Two tubes that connect the ovaries to the uterus

Where the egg and sperm unite at conception.

C. **Uterus:** The womb, a powerful muscle

1. Where the baby grows
2. Where menstrual flow comes from each month if there is no pregnancy

D. **Cervix:** The opening at the bottom of the uterus

1. Allows sperm in for conception
2. Allows menstrual blood out if woman is not pregnant
3. Opens in labor for birth of a baby

E. **Vagina:** Extends from the cervix to the outside of the body.

1. Passageway through which menstrual blood passes
2. Receives the male organ during sex
3. Serves as the birth canal

II. **Conception & Pregnancy** (10 min)

Have a large group discussion regarding conception. Show drawing of female reproductive system and/or drawings of conception.

A. **What is conception?**

Conception is when the sperm and egg meet. One sperm enters the egg which is called **fertilization**. This is the beginning of a pregnancy. Once the sperm and egg unite, no other sperm can enter due to chemical changes in the outer layer of the egg.

B. **How does conception occur?**

When sperm is released from the man during sexual intercourse, the sperm travels through the cervix and uterus and out to the fallopian tubes to meet the egg.

● **When are sperm available for conception?**

1. Men produce sperm continuously, with approximately 200-500 million per ejaculation.
2. Sperm can live up to 5 days within the woman's body but if there is no egg in the fallopian tube, the sperm will die.

● **When is the egg available for conception?**

1. Most women ovulate once a month, approximately 14 days after the start of the menstrual period (when the woman starts bleeding), but ovulation can be difficult to predict as it depends on the length of the woman's cycle, which can vary from month to month.
2. Usually only one egg is available at a time.
3. The egg lives for 24-48 hours.
4. It is possible for a woman to become pregnant up to 48 hours after ovulation.

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C. **When during a woman's fertility cycle does conception occur?**

1. Conception occurs in the first 24 to 48 hours after the egg is released. If the egg is not fertilized by a sperm during this time, it dies.

D. **How is the sex of a baby determined?**

Draw simple illustration of egg with "X" and two sperm, one with "X" and one with "Y" or use drawings, "Conception of Males and Females" and "How Gender Happens."

1. All eggs (from the mother) have only an "X" chromosome. Sperm have either an "X" or "Y" chromosome. Combination of X+X=girl. Combination of X+Y=boy.
2. The father's chromosome determines the sex of the baby.

E. **Is there anything that can be done to guarantee one sex or another?**

There is no way to guarantee having either a boy or a girl, and we must examine our cultural pressures that emphasize one or the other. A society works best when there are about the same number of males and females

III. **Signs of probable pregnancy** (10 min)

In a large group discuss. Make a list of the signs.

A. **What are the signs that a woman is probably pregnant?**

1. A woman's monthly bleeding stops - This is often the first sign of pregnancy.
2. Nausea and sometimes vomiting - usually starts three or four weeks after conception and improves around 3 months of pregnancy.
3. Tired and sleepy. This normally ends at 3-4 months of pregnancy.
4. Breast tenderness - starts 3-4 weeks after conception.
5. Frequent urination (pass urine) – most common in the first 3 and last 3 months of pregnancy.
6. Belly (abdomen) gets bigger as baby grows.
7. Breasts get larger as they prepare to make milk for the baby.
8. Develops a dark line on her belly, darker nipples and sometimes dark patches on her face and belly. Will fade after delivery.
9. Feels light, fluttering baby movements (starting at 4-5 months).

B. **Sometimes a woman's period stops and she's not pregnant, what might be some of the causes of that?**

1. Malnutrition
2. Excessive exercise or physical work
3. Using some types of birth control
4. Breastfeeding
5. Starting menopause (change of life)

IV. **Three Stages of Womanhood** (1 min)

Throughout this lesson, we will discuss the three stages of a woman's life (Puberty, Childbearing, Menopause). Using the attached diagram of "Three Stages of Womanhood Timeline," as a guide, draw a horizontal line on a piece of paper to represent a woman's life with birth at one end and death at the other.

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V. **Stage 1: Puberty** (10 min)

A. **What is Puberty?**

Puberty is the stage in a girl's life when her body changes from that of a child to that of a woman. It is also the time when she is physically able to become pregnant.

Ask participants to put PUBERTY where they think it belongs on the "Three Stages of Womanhood Timeline" that you have drawn.

B. **What changes happen to a little girl as her body changes to that of a woman?**

In small groups, list the changes that happen to a little girl as her body changes to that of a woman? (May use handouts: Body Shape Changes in Puberty, and Changes in Puberty) Report back.

1. **Breasts** - enlargement; separation of nipple from areola
2. **Body Hair** - pubic; hair under arms
3. **Body Size/Height** - growth spurt; girls get more fat on the body
4. **Menstruation begins** - about 1 year after breasts begin to develop, menstruation begins
5. **Body odor & Acne** - hormone changes cause both body odor and acne; keeping the body clean and dry help decrease both
6. **Emotional Changes** - sexual desire begins; moody (tearful, anger, drama)

C. **At what age do girls in this community generally go through puberty?**

Average age is 13 years, but it may be as early as 10 or as late as 15 years.

D. **What might affect the timing of puberty for a particular girl or community?**

Timing of puberty can be affected by a few factors:

1. Our inherited health
2. Overall nutrition and health. Better nourished girls tend to go through puberty at earlier ages.
3. Amount of work or exercise. Excessive amounts of work or exercise can delay puberty.

VI. **Stage 2: Childbearing Years** (5 min)

A. **What words do you think best describe the next portion of a woman's life?**

1. The next portion is often described as the "childbearing years." These years begin when a woman is fully developed and able to bear children.
2. For most women, their childbearing years begin at about 16 years of age, although culture often indicates the age at which women generally begin childbearing.

Ask participants to put CHILDBEARING YEARS where they think it belongs on the "Three Stages of Womanhood Timeline" that you have drawn. Much of this section is discussed in the beginning of this lesson.

**See Fertility Awareness Lesson to teach on the menstrual cycle using the bead activity.*

VII. **Stage 3: Menopause**

Ask participants to put MENOPAUSE where they think it belongs on the "Three Stages of Womanhood Timeline" that you have drawn.

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A. There is one more stage in a woman's life. How would we describe these later years in relation to childbearing?

1. These are the post-childbearing years.
2. The time where the body is changing is called perimenopause.
3. The time afterward, when the ovaries no longer release eggs and when menstruation no longer occurs, is called post-menopause.
4. Fertility decreases, then ends.
5. Birth control is still important until the woman has been without menstruation for at least 1 year.

B. At what age do women generally stop menstruating and bearing children?

For many women menopause takes place at around 50 years of age, but it can vary from 45-55.

C. What are some of the signs and symptoms of menopause?

List signs and symptoms on newsprint:

1. Periods change, may be lighter, heavier, longer, shorter, irregular.
2. May skip periods.
3. Mood changes, irritability
4. Bloating, breast discomfort
5. Weight gain
6. Hot flashes
7. Sleep problems, tiredness
8. Anxiety, irregular heartbeat
9. Difficulty with memory, concentration
10. Frequent urination, urinary leaking
11. Vaginal dryness, decreased sex drive

VIII. **Spiritual Application**(10 min)

How can I use what I learned to make disciples? Read Titus 2:3-5 & Colossians 3:16.

"Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God." -Titus 2:3-5

"Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts." -Colossians 3:16

- a. Be spiritual mothers to younger women
- b. Teach and admonish each other in all stages of life
- c. Encourage one another

Read Psalm 139: 13-16

Have someone read the following verses to the group. Discuss in the large group.

"For you created my inmost being;

you knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,

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I know that full well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.”

A. What do these verses tell us about God?

1. Even as long ago as the time of David, the Psalms tell us of God’s creative power.
2. We are so precious to our great God that He creates each and every one of us.

B. What do the verses tell us about us?

1. Only in recent times have we been able to know how we are created inside our mother’s body.
2. In this Psalm, it speaks of God knitting each person together in their mother’s womb.
3. All the days of our lives have been planned by God.

C. Does this change how you feel about God, or how you might think He feels about you?

IX. Conclusions and Take-Away (Optional) (5 min)

A. What did I discover in this lesson?

B. Who could I share it with?

C. What will I do with what I discovered in this lesson?

1. When?
2. What do I expect to happen?
3. How will I know if it happened?

D. Pray

References:

Bible References (NIV)

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/getting-pregnant/expert-answers/pregnancy/faq-20058504>

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Option 1: How God Designed Women

STARTER: Role play: *Where Do Babies Come From?*

An adolescent daughter is asking her mother many questions about how babies arrive.

The mother doesn't want to tell her and acts embarrassed. The young girl continues to ask her mother questions.

Finally, the mother in desperation, tells her daughter that the way you get babies is at night when you're asleep, an angel leaves the baby under your bed.

Option 2: The Stages of Womanhood

STARTER: Role play: *I Think I Might Be Dying!*

Young girl talking to her friend:

1st: I'm so scared! I think I might be dying!

2nd: What!!! Why do you think that?

1st: I can't tell you. I don't know. I just started bleeding one day! At first it was a little bit, but now it's more. It happened last month, too!

2nd: Oh, no! What do you think we should do? Maybe you should tell your mother. Maybe you need to go to the doctor.

1st: I'm too afraid! What if she thinks I am bad? I can't tell my mother! I'm so afraid (starts crying).

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Option 3: The Stages of Womanhood - Menopause

Role play: **What is Wrong with You, Mother?**

This role play is for use in section IV of Three Stages of Womanhood, Puberty Through Menopause, if it is taught separately.

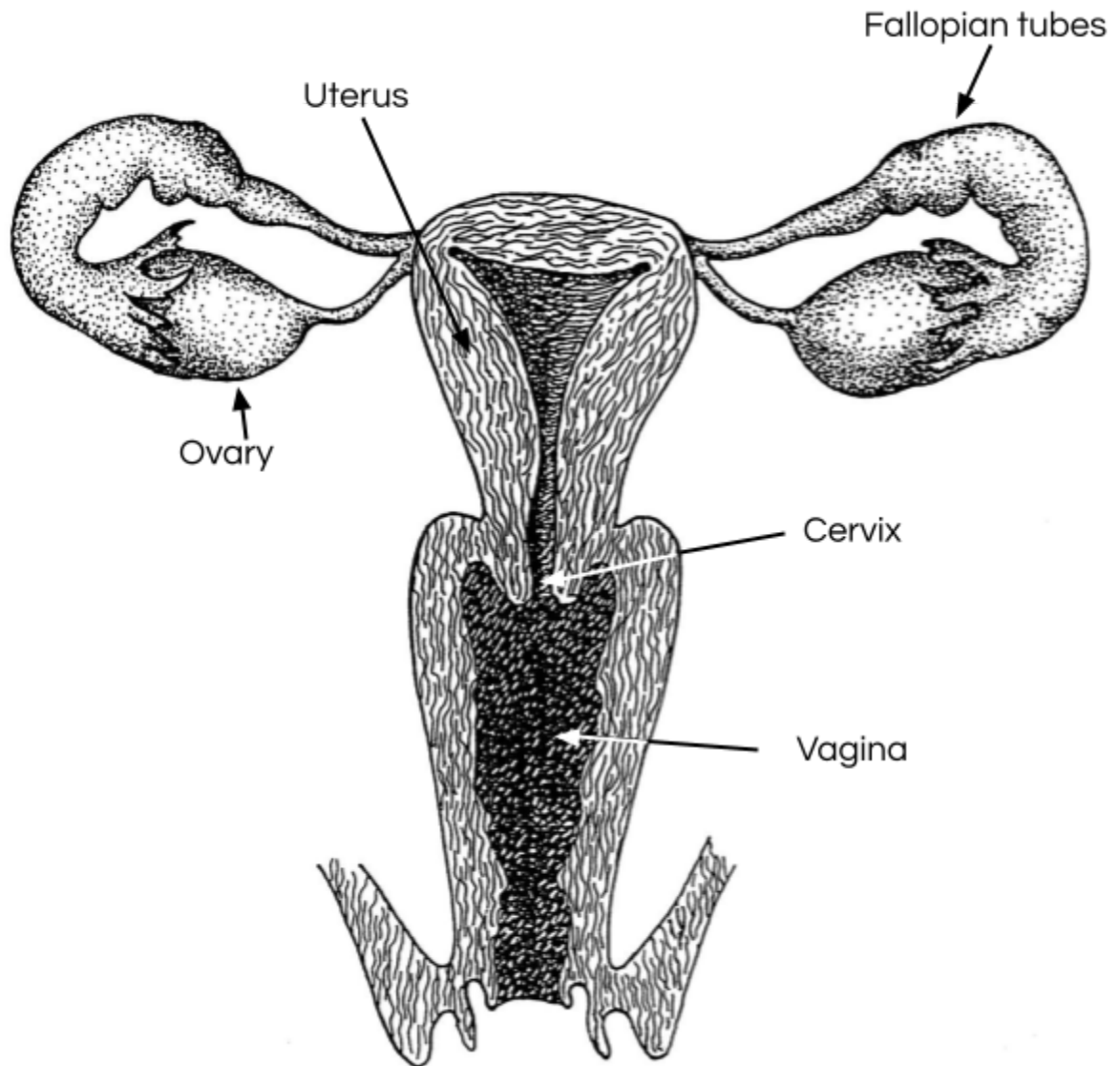
Mother and her adult daughter are outside preparing food. They are both working hard - the daughter is peeling the vegetables and the mother is scraping coconut.

Mother: Why do I always seem to get the hard work? I am an old woman; you should be doing more of the work now! I'm hot (as she tries to fan herself with her hand), I'm tired and all of these people coming for dinner are mostly your friends not mine. They were supposed to come tomorrow, not today!

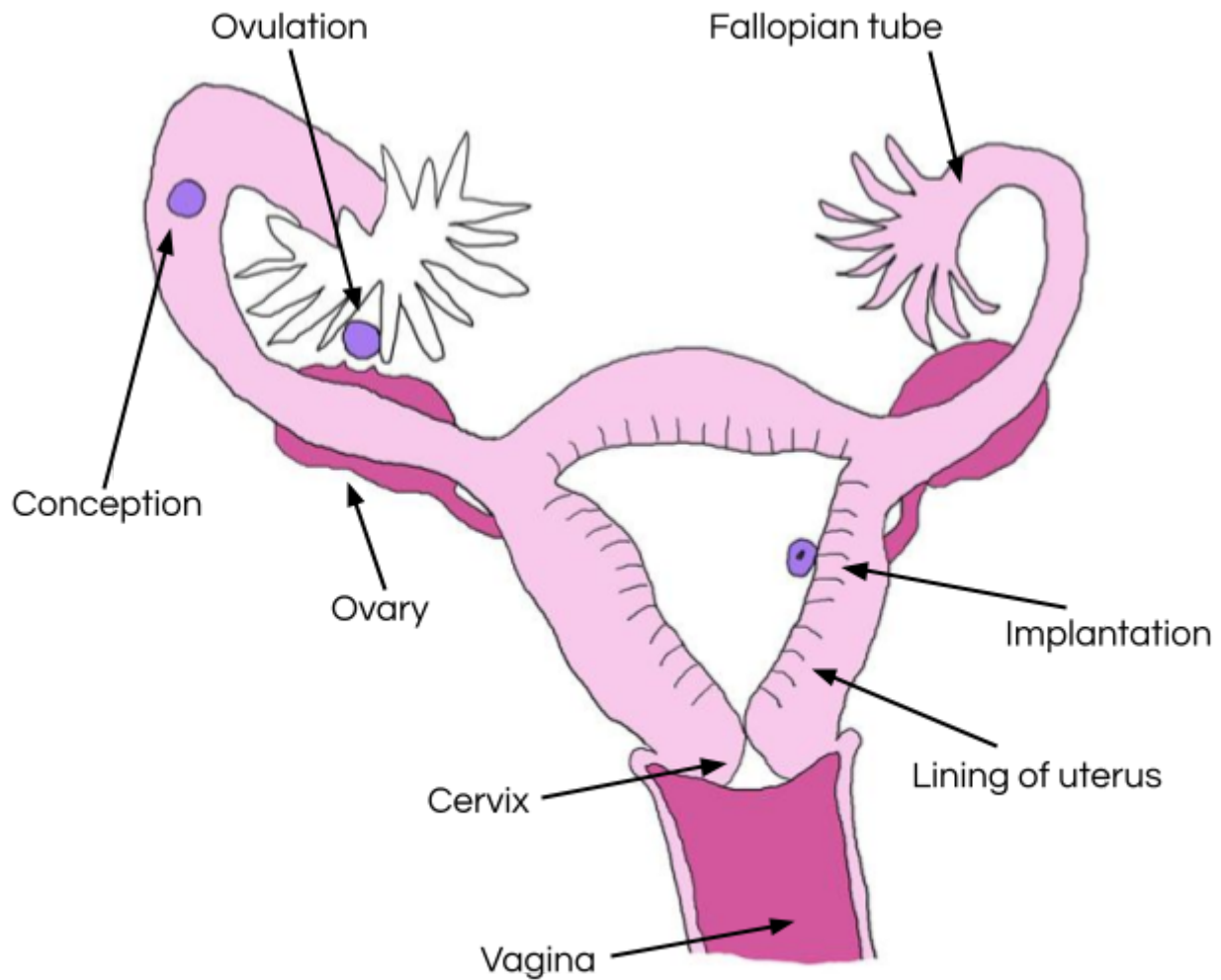
Daughter: What is wrong with you, mother? You are always so cranky, so grumpy lately. You're up in the middle of the night, and you don't want to get up in the morning. You forgot my friends were coming today. You used to love it when my friends came."

Mother sneezes loudly and has a frustrated look on her face, looks down at her leg and sees she has just lost urine. "I'm done with this coconut, you finish it! I am going to the toilet."

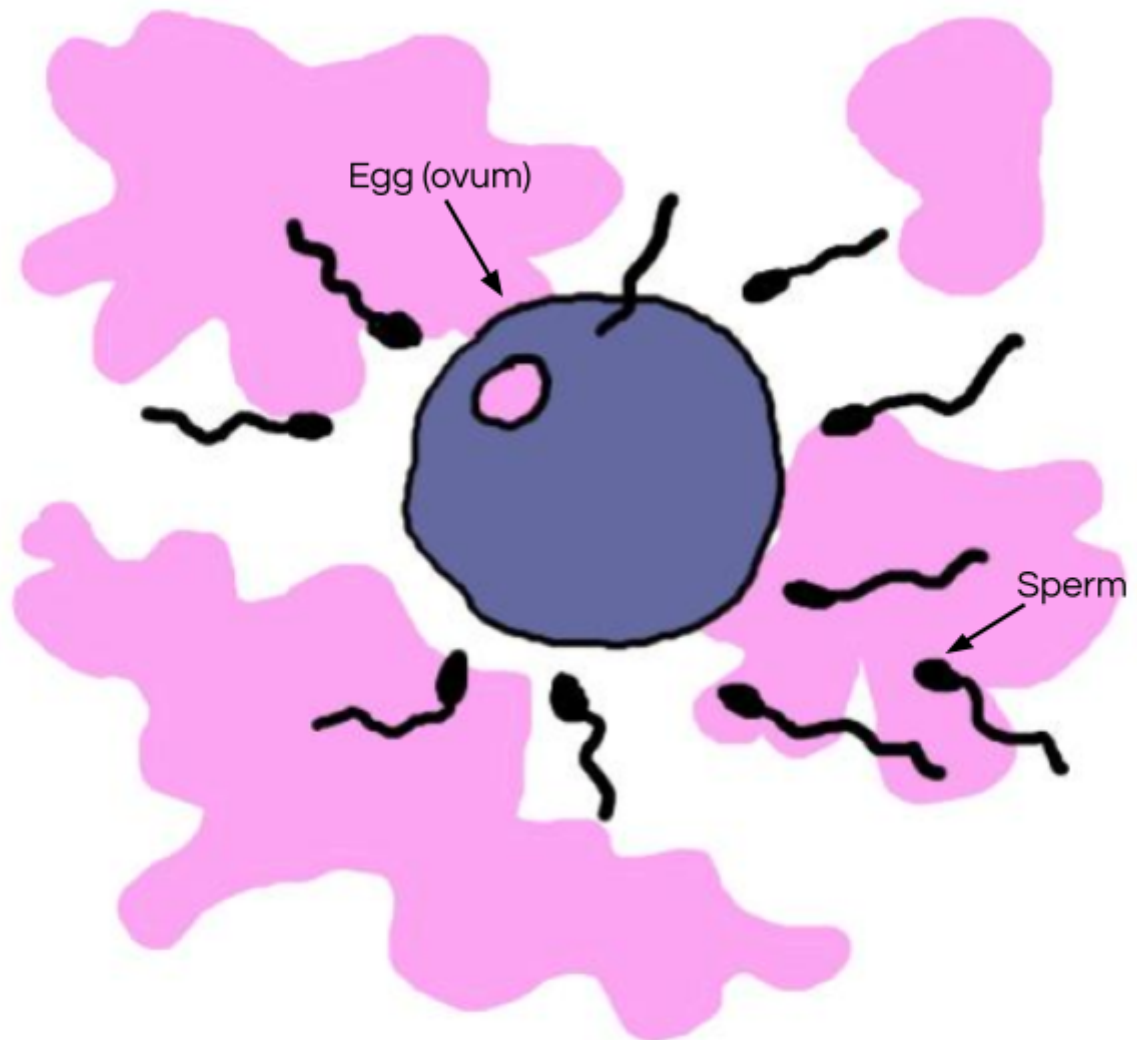
HANDOUT: Female Reproductive System



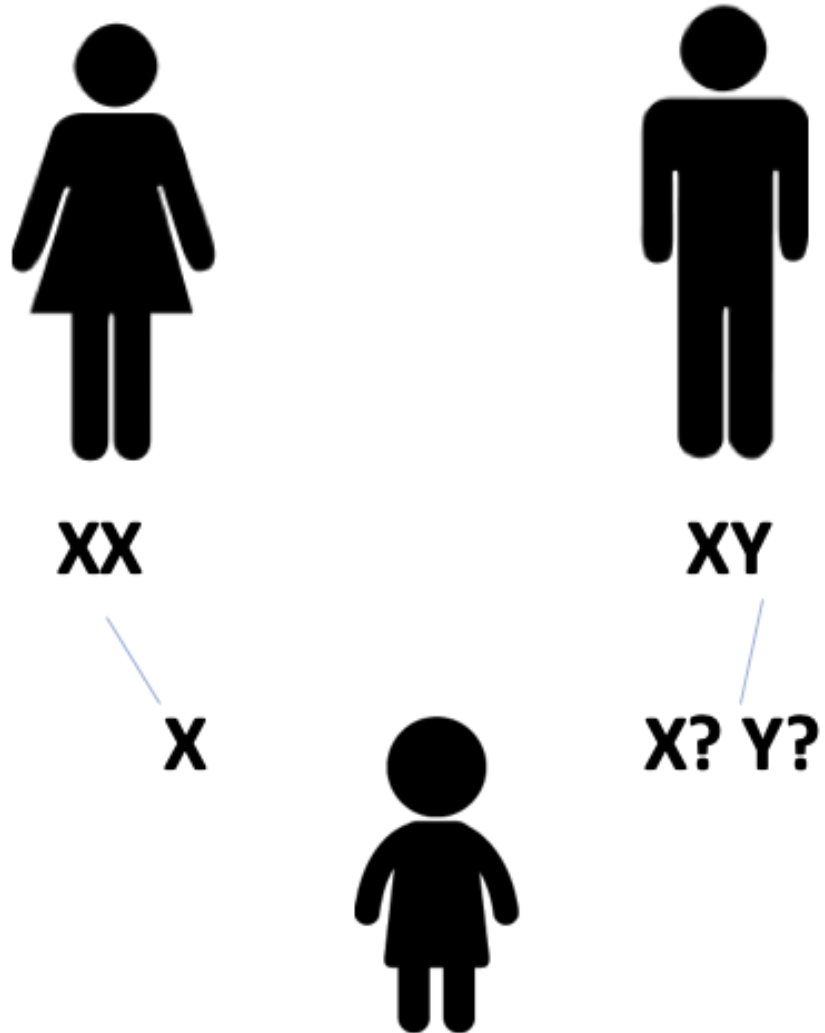
HANDOUT: Female Reproductive System



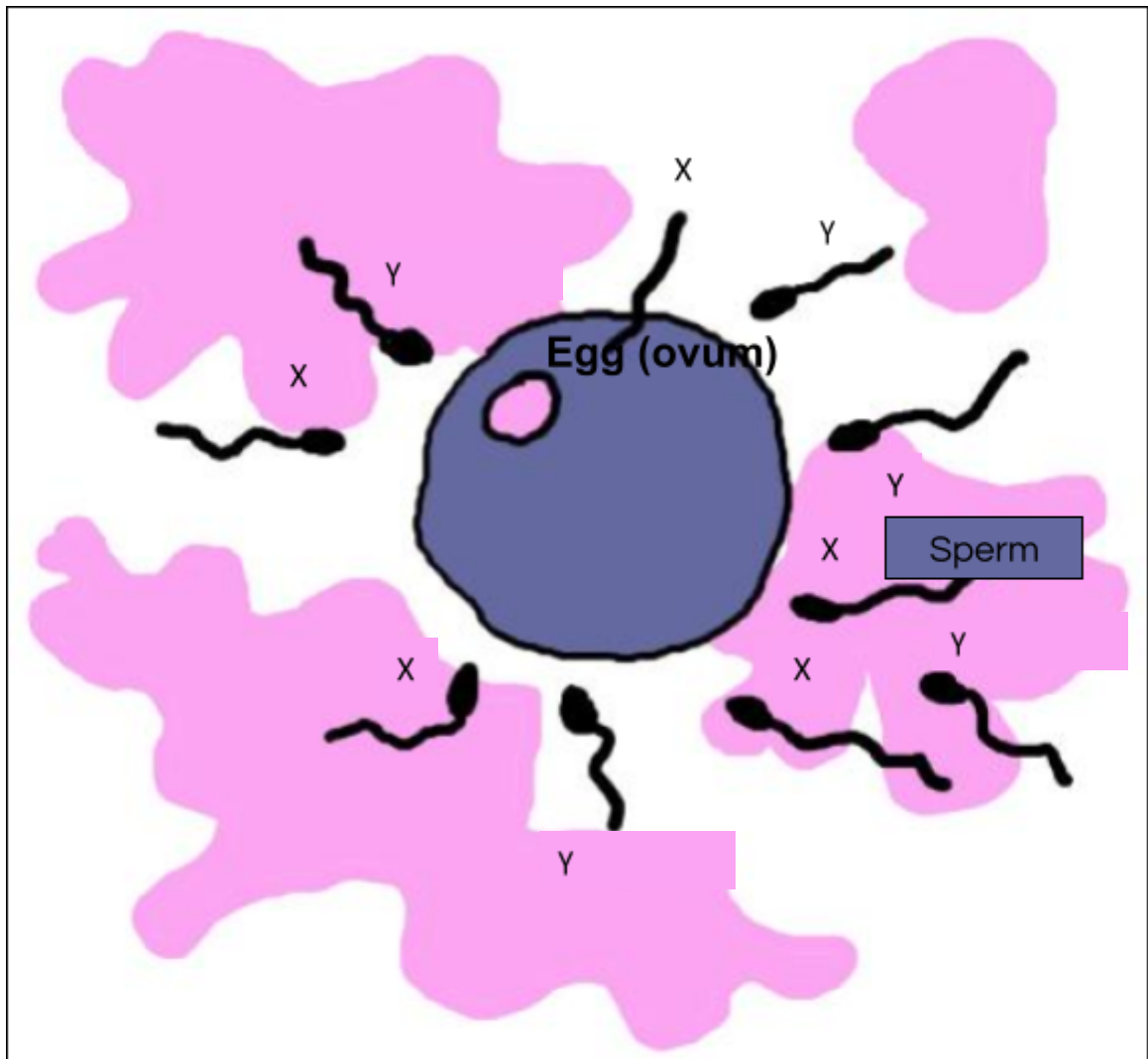
HANDOUT: Conception



HANDOUT: Conception of Males & Females



HANDOUT: *How Gender Happens*



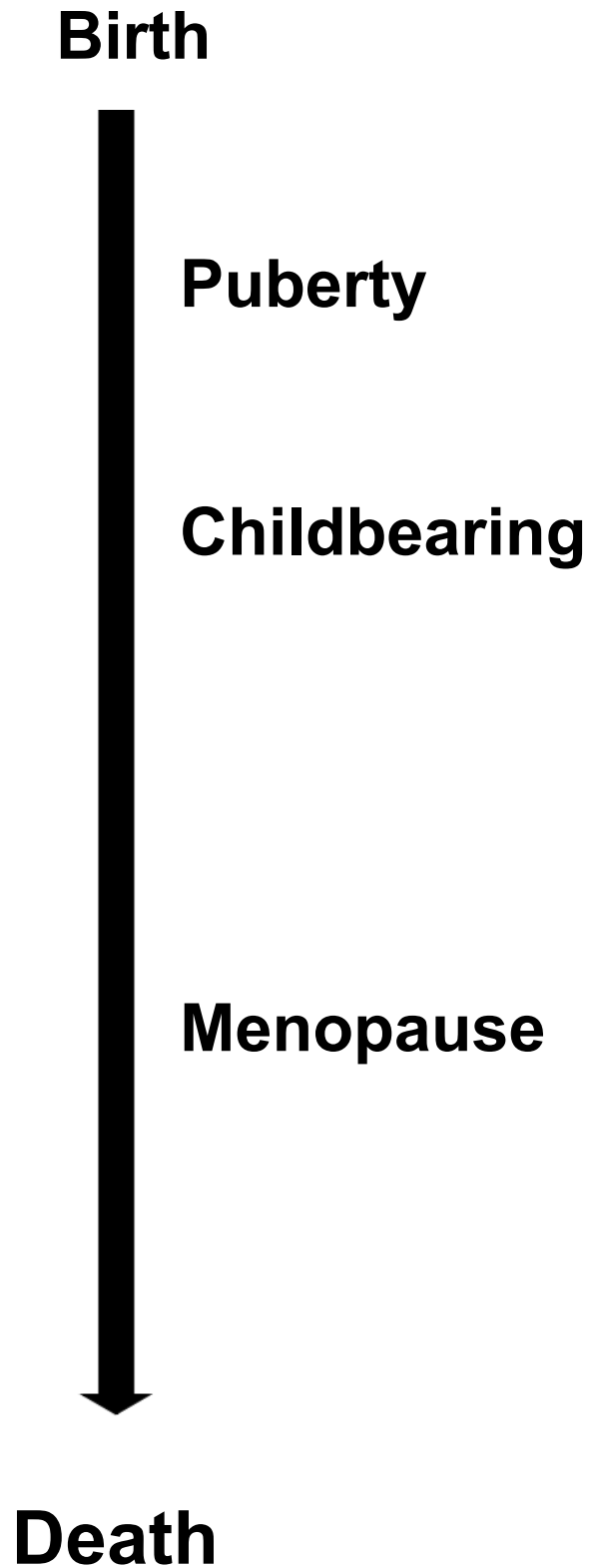
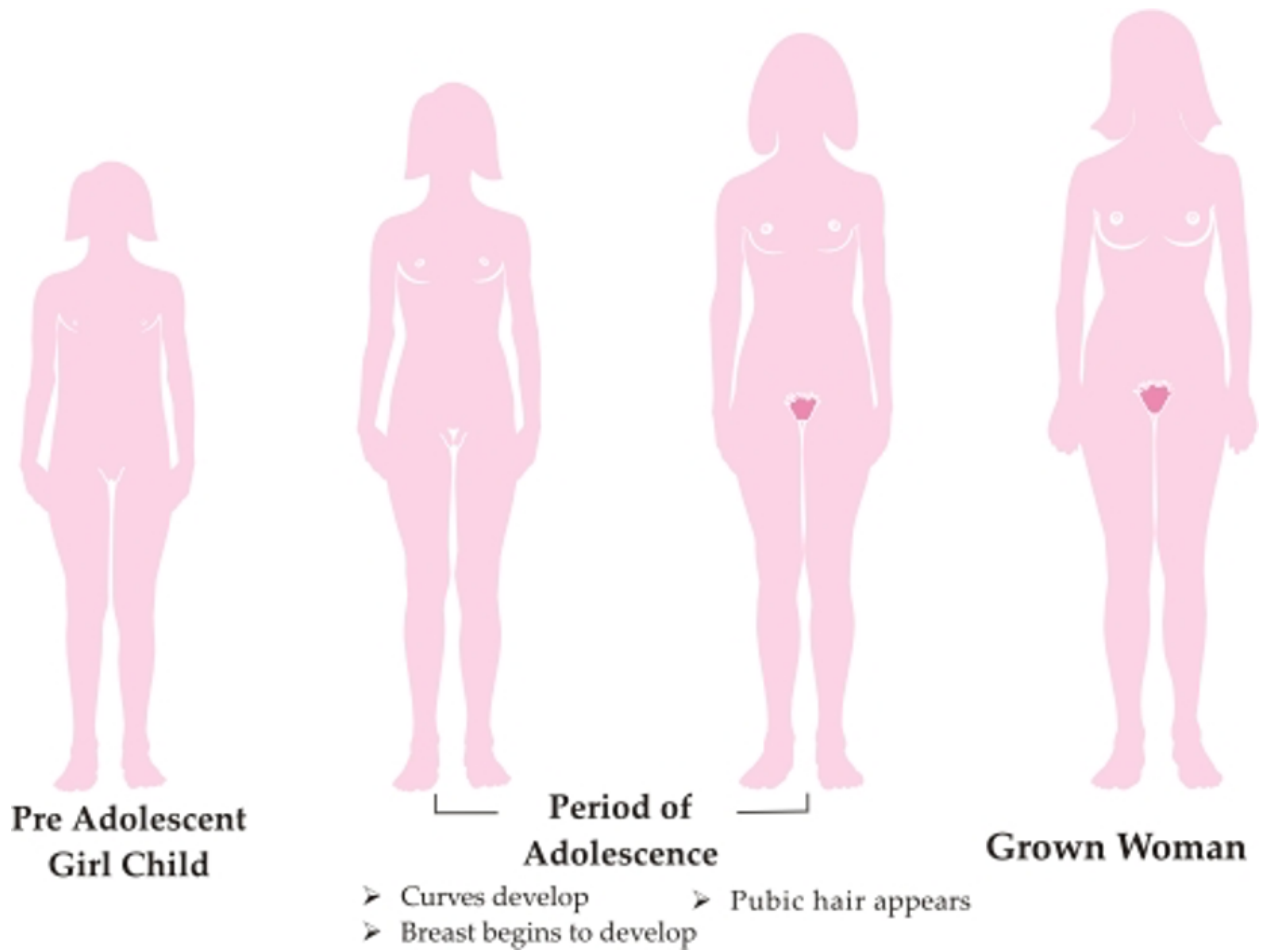


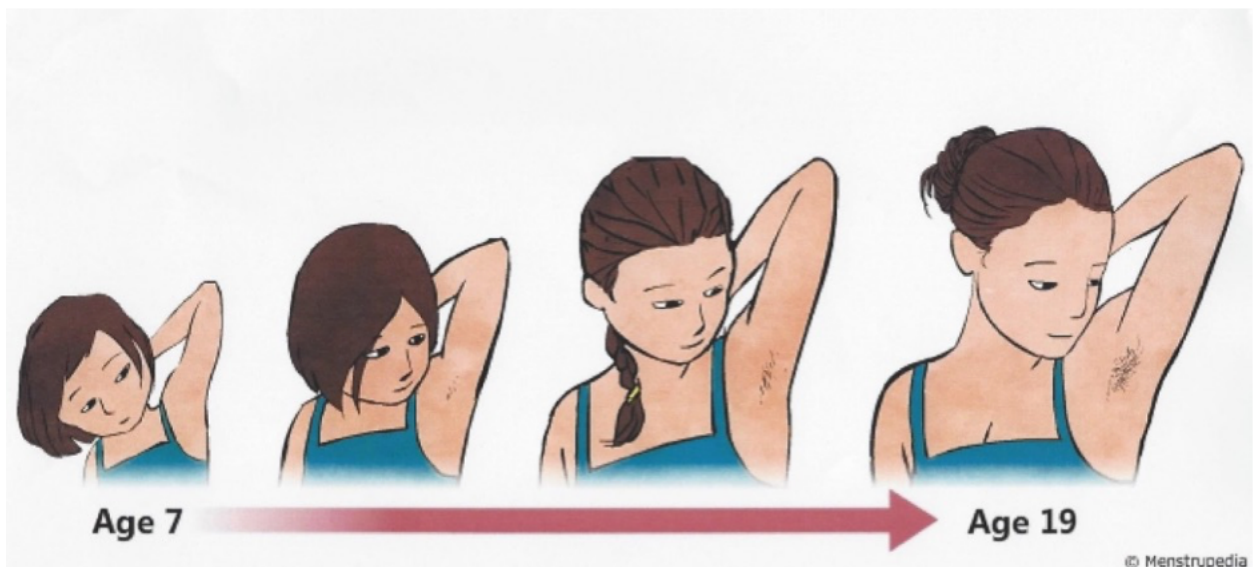
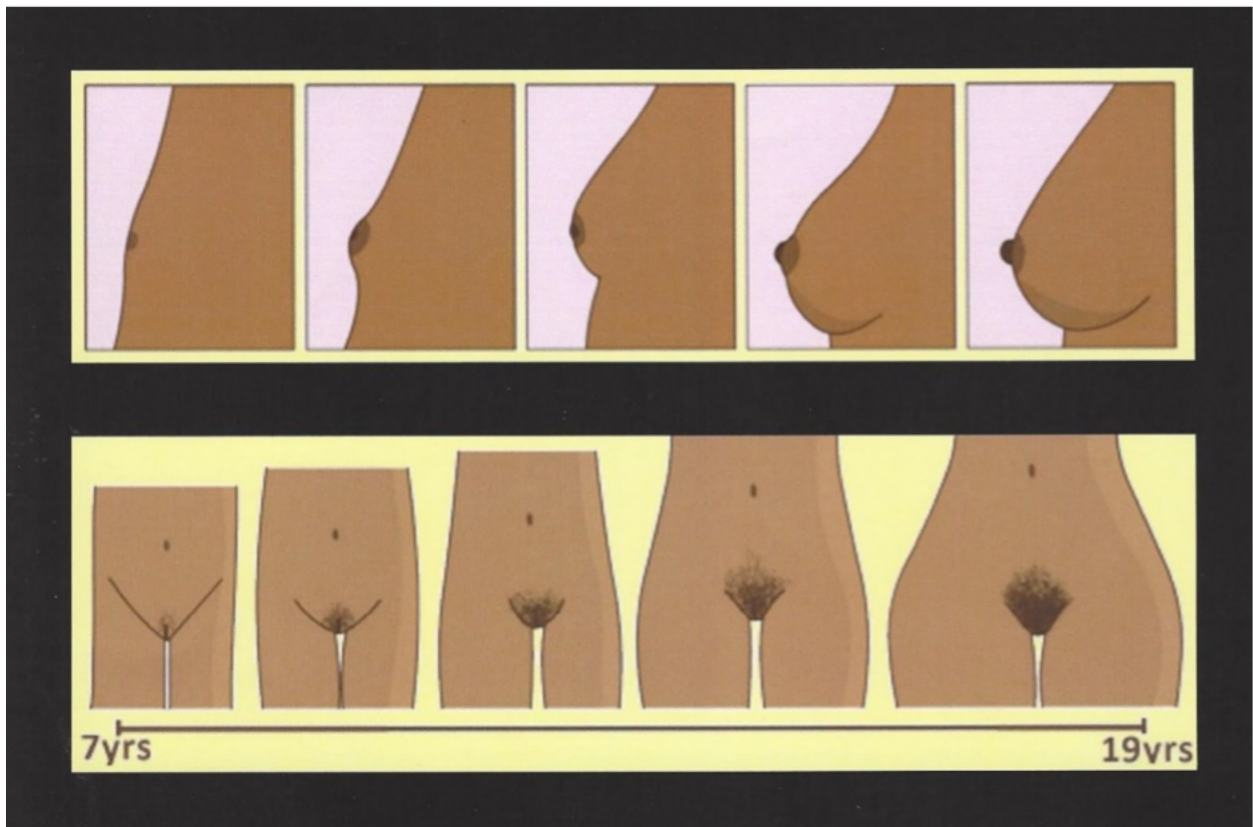
Diagram: Three Stages of Womanhood Timeline

Handout: Changes in Puberty



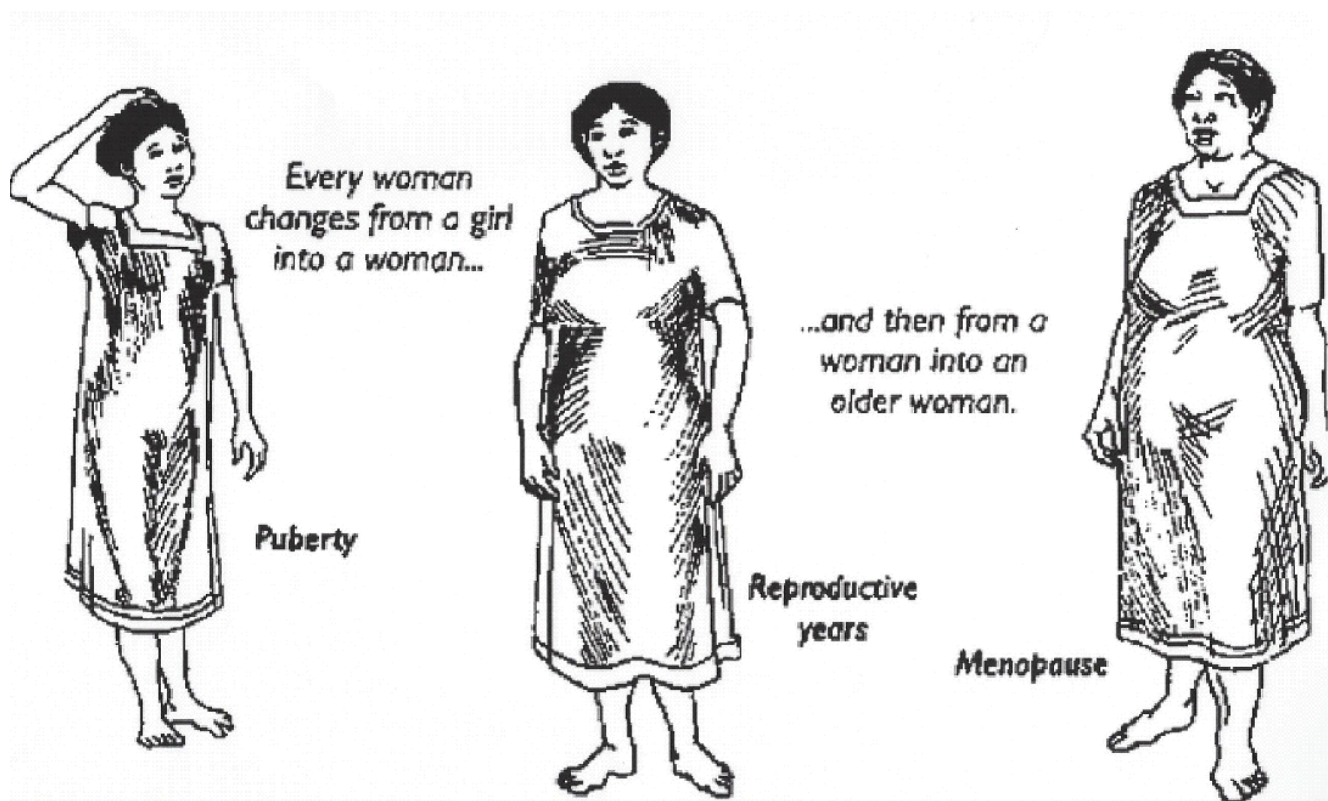
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CHANGES IN PUBERTY



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THREE STAGES OF WOMANHOOD



BODY SHAPE CHANGES IN MENOPAUSE



Menopause is thought to play a role in many women's midlife transition from a pear-shaped body to a more apple-shaped body.