

UNIT

20

REACHING THE AGE OF ADOLESCENCE



Learning Objectives



After the completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- ◆ understand the body changes that take place during adolescence.
- ◆ differentiate the secondary sexual characteristics of boys and girls.
- ◆ know about the role of hormones in reproduction.
- ◆ explain the reproductive phases of life in human.
- ◆ understand the nutritional needs of adolescents.

Introduction

Growing up is a natural process that takes place in all living organisms. All living organisms grow up to maturity which is the ability to respond to a particular environment. Maturity along with experiences produces a progressive series of changes in an organism. These series of changes are called development. Different phases of human development are called developmental stages. Human developmental stages include infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, middle age and old age. Among all these stages, adolescence is the most crucial and significant period in an individual's life. It is the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. This period starts at the age of about 13 and ends at the age of 19 (commonly known as teenage). Almost all of you would have entered this period now. In this lesson you are going to study about the changes that take place in you (which are normal) as you enter the age of adolescence. You will also study about the reproductive phases of human life, reproductive health, nutritional needs of adolescents and personal hygiene during adolescence.

20.1 Adolescence and Puberty

The term adolescence is derived from the Latin word 'adolescere' meaning 'to grow' or 'grow to maturity'. During this period changes occur in height, weight, sex organs, muscle mass as well as in brain structure and function. Biologically it is a physical transition marked by the onset of puberty and termination of physical growth in an individual.

20.1.1 Puberty

Puberty is a period of few years in which rapid physical, physiological and psychological changes occur resulting in sexual maturity. We can predict the sequence of physical changes that will take place but the age of beginning of puberty varies from individual to individual. The average age for the onset of puberty is 10 - 11 for girls and 12 - 13 for boys. But, factors like genetic and biological influences, life events, socio-economic status, nutrition and diet and the amount of body fat also affect the onset and progression of puberty.