

- a relationship with family
- b the nature of adolescence
- c physical changes
- d mental changes

Adolescence

- 1 Adolescence is the stage of human development after childhood. It is a time of transition – when a young person changes from being a dependent child to an independent adult. It occurs during the teenage years from approximately thirteen to nineteen. Adolescence is an exciting time of discovery and new things, but it can also be stressful and confusing. It is not only teenagers who may be confused – their parents may be too. Their sweet little boy or girl seems to be a different person!
- 2 The start of adolescence is marked by physical changes. These are caused by changes in hormones, the chemical substances produced by your body. Firstly, there is a noticeable increase in weight and height. This is known as a growth spurt. Typically, girls begin their growth spurt much earlier than boys, even as young as 10 years of age. Boys' growth spurt occurs between 12 and 17 years. The other major physical change is the onset of puberty. Boys' voices 'break' and become lower and deeper.
- 3 The hormonal changes going on in adolescents cause mental changes too, particularly in the way that teenagers see themselves. Adolescents tend to think they are very important. They think about themselves a lot, so they believe – often mistakenly – that everyone is looking at them and making judgements. They become self-conscious and are easily embarrassed, for example by acne, ugly red spots which appear on the face or neck during the teenage years.
- 4 As young people move from childhood to adulthood, they start thinking about the world outside their families. On the one hand, they want to be independent and make their own decisions. They don't want to be told what to do. On the other hand, they still need the security offered by their families. They are not yet ready to face life on their own. Friends are extremely important to teenagers. But if a teenager doesn't get on with his or her family, this can lead to serious family conflict.

