

Pregnancy and birth

Learning objective

Through research, students develop an understanding of the physical, emotional and social changes that occur as a result of pregnancy and birth. Students create a poster or movie to demonstrate their understanding.

Take Home Messages

- Sexual activity can result in conception, pregnancy and the birth of a baby.
- Conception occurs when a sperm fertilises an ovum.
- Healthy and unhealthy behaviours can affect the growth of an unborn baby.
- Conception, pregnancy and birth require a level of social and emotional readiness for all people involved.

Note: Revise the learning activities - [Reproductive systems](#) (Year 5) and [Menstruation and conception](#) (Year 7).

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Materials

- Items to represent the size of a foetus as it develops - salt, pea, kidney bean, lime, avocado, rockmelon, 30cm ruler, pillow (approx. 55cm for last trimester)
- Teaching Resource: Stages of pregnancy
- Teaching Resource: Pregnancy card sort [one set per group]

Before You Get Started

- It is important that the social and emotional readiness of pregnancy and birth is discussed throughout this activity. Students require the understanding that being pregnant and having a baby is a major life transition and can impact significantly on a person's existing lifestyle

(physically, socially and emotionally).

- This activity is concerned with conception through sexual intercourse but it's important to inform students that there are families where other methods such as in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) are better and more appropriate. It is also important to recognise that there are families where the young person is adopted or fostered and/or where the parents are of the same sex.
- The topic of pregnancy and birth may be an exciting and interesting topic for some, but be mindful that some students may feel embarrassed, uncomfortable or worried about how their bodies may change. Increase the comfort of students through introducing this topic with excitement and fun. Providing popcorn (or something similar) for students to share can reduce their anxiety levels.
- Students may have questions that they feel uncomfortable to ask. Providing a [question box](#) for students to place their questions in anonymously will ensure their questions are answered in a safe environment.
- The WA Department of Health has developed a free resource for parents: [Talk Soon. Talk Often. A Guide for Parents Talking to their Kids About Sex](#). It is recommended that teachers communicate to parents and explain the topics that will be covered such as healthy relationships, puberty, hygiene, emotions, resilience, etc. and that you are not teaching their child to have 'sex'.
- Puberty kits: The use of a puberty kit can be a useful tool in the classroom. Check with your school's public health nurse to see if there are any kits readily available or that can be made up to use.
- If you are using an educational video, students can often be distracted if the videos are obviously out of date, as evidenced by the clothes, hairstyles and quality of the video, although this could be used to add humour to the experience. Ensure that any multimedia used is current, relevant, appropriate and sufficient time is allocated for a discussion afterwards.
- Many teachers ask the question of whether or not they should separate the boys and the girls for such classes. Research shows that there is no significant difference for either strategy. You may choose to separate your class by gender, keep them all together or mix strategies by separating your class for certain activities. If you do choose to separate the sexes, ensure that both groups receive the same information. It is just as important for students to learn about their changing bodies as it is for them to learn what the other sex is going through in order to promote compassion. Remember when making this decision that all students need to overcome any potential discomfort in order to be able to effectively communicate sexual matters in relationships when they are older.
- Provide students with a copy of the booklet [Girls and Boys in Puberty](#) to take home and read.
- Refer to the Guide: [Pregnancy and young people](#) for further content information related to this activity.

Learning Activities

Whole Class

This activity provides a practical and visual learning opportunity for students to develop an understanding of foetal development. It provides the foundation for later discussion regarding the importance of maintaining a healthy baby prior to and after birth, and subsequently the social and emotional impact pregnancy and birth can have on a person.

1. Revise the learning activities [Reproductive systems](#) (Year 5) and [Menstruation and conception](#) (Year 7). Use the Background Notes on [Pregnancy and birth: A brief overview of biology and physiology](#) to review the process of conception.
2. Using the [KWL](#) template, ask students to complete the first two columns on their own: What they Know and what they Want to know about pregnancy and birth.
3. Show students the items that represent the size of the foetus as it develops (listed in materials) without explaining the reason why you are showing them.

- Ask students to suggest reasons that the objects have been shown.
 - Show students the Teaching Resource: Stages of pregnancy (projected on a screen and/or handouts).
 - Go through each image and relate each stage back to a relevant object (e.g. at 4 weeks a foetus is the size of a grain of salt). Emphasise that even though the foetus is small, vital changes are happening. The foetus is vulnerable to alcohol and other drugs even during the first weeks.
4. In pairs or small groups, students sort Teaching Resource: Pregnancy card sort into 2 groups:
 1. Increases chances of having a healthy baby; and
 2. Decreases chances of having a healthy baby.
 5. When complete, clarify any misunderstandings (e.g. What is folate? Why should some raw foods be avoided?)

Independent or Small Group

This activity provides students with the opportunity to extend their understanding of the biological aspect of pregnancy and birth to explore the social and emotional impacts on a person's life.

1. Students research the social and emotional impact of being pregnant and having a baby, e.g. may have to give up study/work, loneliness while caring for the baby at home, feeling worried about looking after a baby. Ensure the students have a clear understanding of the concepts social and emotional first.
2. Students create a poster, PowerPoint or iMovie that highlights the social and emotional impacts of being pregnant and giving birth to a baby. The project could be titled 'Strengths, skills and support I would need to be a parent'.

3-2-1 Reflection

1. Students present their poster, PowerPoint or iMovie to the rest of the class.
2. Students complete the 'what I have Learnt' component of their KWL chart.
3. Highlight that being pregnant and having a baby is a lifelong commitment and requires a lifestyle change for all people involved.