

# Sexuality in adolescence

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# Overview

- Effects of puberty on sexual development
- Review of developmental tasks
- Sexual behaviors in numbers
- Psychosocial factors related to sexual development

# Biological markers of puberty



- Phase of adrenarche: emissions of androgens from adrenal cortex
  - In girls at age 6 (years), in boys at age 8 (years)
- Growth of primary and secondary sexual characteristics
  - Breast, penis, scrotum growth, pubic hair growth (after the start of breast growth at age 10), testes growth (at age 12)
- Growth spurt (in girls at age 11, in boys at age 14)
- Changes in the proportion of muscle mass and fat
  - Boys: 1,5 x muscle mass than in girls, girls: 2 x body fat than boys
- enlargement of circulatory and respiratory system

# Psychological aspects of puberty

- Girls:

- Increase of negative emotions (anger, sadness) (due to luteinizing hormone)

- rapidity of pubertal changes – effects on mood

- Fast changes → more problems
- Slower pace → more time for adjustment → better wellbeing

- Boys:

- Higher amount of testosterone → less mood problems but more behavioral problems
  - Association with the approaching the ideal of male beauty



# Earlier puberty and consequences

- Girls:
  - Poor academic career, poor mental health (lower self-esteem, suicidal ideations), problem behavior (drug, earlier sexual debut, conflicts with parents)
  - Reasons:
    - No longer group belongingness
    - deviation from female beauty
    - Greater peer pressure with regards to dating and sexuality
- Boys?

# Review of developmental tasks I



- 11 – 14 years
- Context: parental surveillance, same-sex peer, media effects
  - Recognition of one-self as sexual being (sexually attracted to others, sexually attractive for others, mindful about reproductive capacity)
  - Beginning of the development of sexual fantasies
  - Differentiation of sexual activities in girls and boys
    - Application of gender roles in sexual activities
    - Double standard (traditional sexual scripts – Gagnon & Simon, 1973)
    - Homosocial norms stemming from same-sex peer norms
    - Reinforcement of gender roles due to media



# Review of developmental tasks II

- 15 – 18 years
- Same-sex group, mixed-sex group, less strong parental authority, stronger media consumption?
- Sexual acts are more embedded in non-sexual social relationships
  - More open to heterosocial norms
  - Sexual experiences with several peers
  - Maturation of the development of sexual fantasies
  - Consolidated understanding of gender differences in sexual roles and activities
    - E.g. differences in a good or bad girl

# Review of developmental tasks III

- 18 + (emerging adulthood)
- Partner selection
- More active sexual life
- Men learn to love, women learn to have sex
- Legitimization of sexual activities (experimentation)
- Stabilization of sexual identity/orientation

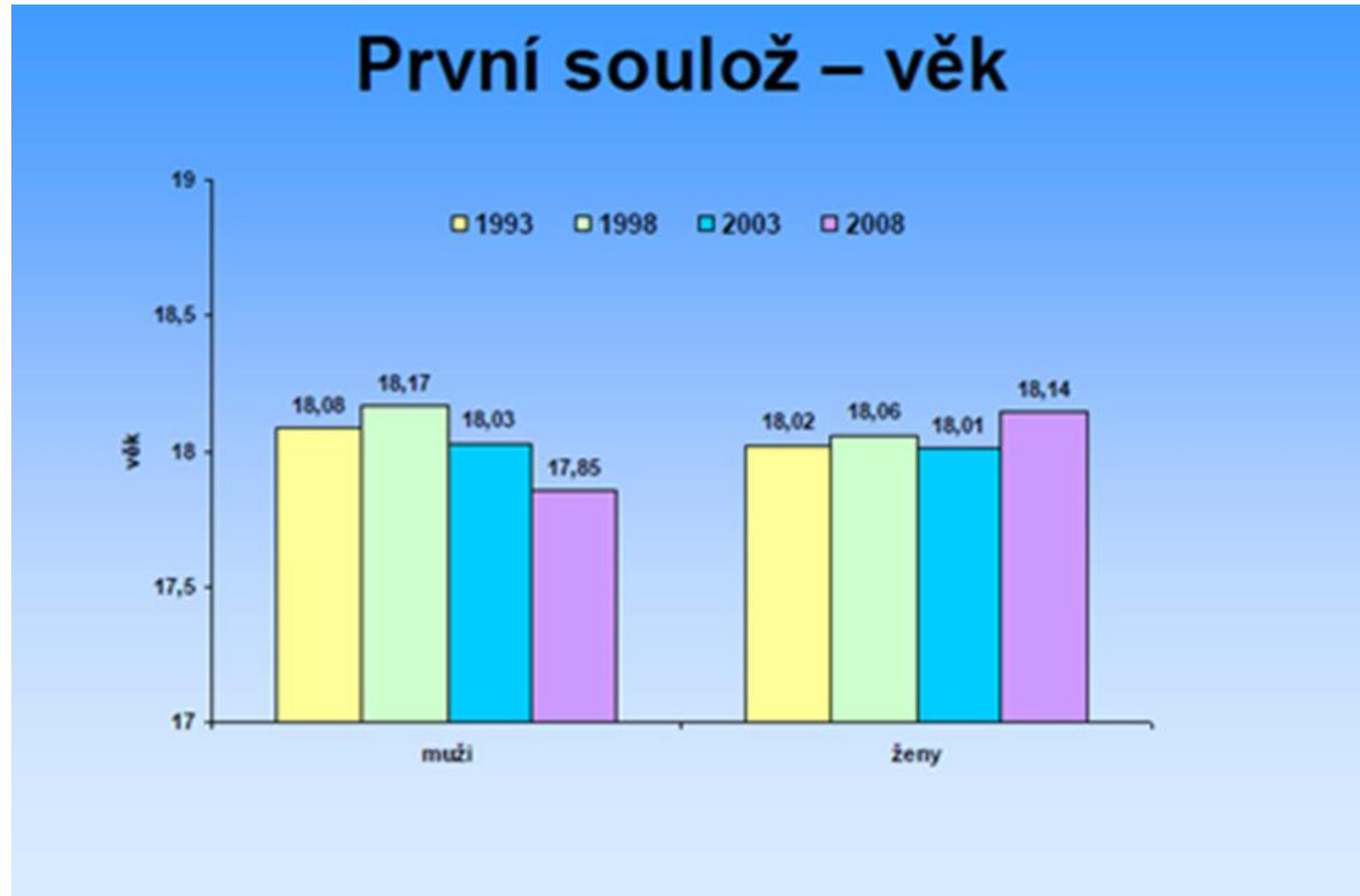


# Sexual behaviors

- Sexual fantasies
  - The most common (72 %)
  - Function:
    - learning one's own sexual needs/desires
    - prediction of one's own sexual responses
- Masturbation
  - 1/3 girls and 2/3 boys masturbate at age 13-15
  - BUT at age 19: 21% women and 90% men
  - Not really substitute activity – more common among sexual active individuals
- Partner sex
  - The most common sexual script: kissing – necking – petting – vaginal/sexual intercourse
    - Not always universal

# Age of sexual debut (vaginal intercourse)

- CZ (Weiss, 2012)



# Age of sexual debut (Bozon & Kontula, 1998)

**Table 2.1** Age at first intercourse by gender and generation (median and interquartile range of ages, in years)

Generations (by year of birth)	GR	Austria <sup>1</sup> 1990		Belgium 1993		Denmark <sup>2</sup> 1993		Finland 1992		France ACNSF 1992		Germany West 1990								
		BE	DK	FI	FR	DE	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women								
1922- 1931)	G1	Median						18,8 (148)	20,7 (187)	18,0 (140)	21,1 (100)	20,2 (125)	20,9 (168)							
		Q5-Q1	17,3	22,8	20,4	20,9	18,4	19,0	4,3	18,8	6,0	20,7	3,8	18,0	5,7	21,1	6,5	20,2	7,0	20,9
1932- 1941)	G2	Median	17,3 (54)	22,8 (57)	20,4 (245)	20,9 (252)	18,4 (232)	19,0 (295)	18,7 (134)	20,0 (149)	18,4 (200)	20,6 (161)	19,0 (203)	19,7 (237)						
		Q5-Q1	2,7	5,1	4,5	3,9	3,5	3,2	3,0	4,7	3,8	3,4	3,3	3,3						
1942- 1951)	G3	Median	17,5 (213)	20,6 (250)	19,0 (305)	20,0 (408)	18,2 (269)	18,3 (351)	18,2 (227)	19,0 (299)	18,1 (432)	19,3 (341)	18,4 (263)	18,6 (325)						
		Q5-Q1	2,8	5,7	4,1	3,7	2,6	2,3	3,6	3,2	3,6	3,2	3,3	2,9						
1952- 1961)	G4	Median	17,5 (299)	19,5 (322)	18,5 (411)	18,8 (509)	17,8 (328)	17,7 (390)	18,0 (256)	17,7 (246)	17,6 (679)	18,3 (560)	18,0 (302)	17,5 (454)						
		Q5-Q1	2,3	3,4	3,8	3,3	2,8	2,3	3,2	2,7	2,3	2,7	3,1	2,3						
1962-6)	G5	Median	17,6 (136)	19,2 (163)	18,0 (199)	18,6 (240)	17,1 (179)	16,8 (199)	17,3 (123)	17,8 (189)	17,4 (302)	18,2 (386)	17,7 (265)	17,6 (241)						
		Q5-Q1	2,5	3,9	4,3	4,1	3,7	2,6	2,7	3,3	2,5	2,4	3,2	2,5						
1967- 1971)	G6	Median	17,5 (152)	19,0 (155)	18,1 (216)	18,7 (229)	17,5 (178)	17,0 (206)	18,0 (113)	18,0 (121)	17,7 (539)	18,3 (471)	17,7 (182)	17,7 (198)						
		Q5-Q1	3,2	3,1	3,3	3,3	3,1	2,5	2,3	2,4	2,4	3,1	3,2	3,0						
1972-3)	G7	Median	17,5	19,0	17,4 (105)	18,0 (90)	17,4 (164)	16,7 (202)	18,0* (46)	16,6* (40)	17,0 (150)	18,1 (159)	17,7	17,7						
		Q5-Q1			2,3	3,3	-	2,4	-	-	-	-								

*Notes:*  
 Q5-Q1 is the difference in years between the 5th quartile and the 1st quartile of the distribution of ages at first intercourse. It is a measure of dispersion.  
 \*N in the cell is between 15 and 50  
<sup>1</sup>Austria: G2 = 1940-1  
<sup>2</sup>Denmark: the generation boundaries are different: G2 (1930-9), G3 (1940-9), G4 (1950-9), G5 (1960-9), G6 (1965-9), G7 (1970-1)

# Age of sexual debut (Bozon & Kontula, 1998)

Table 2.1 (cont.)

Generations (by year of birth)	GB	Great Britain 1991		IS	Ireland <sup>1</sup> 1992		NL	Netherlands <sup>2</sup> 1989		NO	Norway 1992		PT	Portugal <sup>3</sup> 1991		CH	Switzerland <sup>4</sup> 1992		
		Men	Women		Men	Women		Men	Women		Men	Women		Men	Women		Men	Women	
1922- 1931)	G3	Median																	
		Q3-Q1	19,1	20,9	17,8	18,7	21,2	21,6	19,3	19,5	16,4	24,3							
1932- 1941)	G2	Median	19,1 (314)	20,9 (1980)	17,8* (93)	18,7* (99)	21,2* (28)	21,6* (30)	19,3 (256)	19,5 (271)	16,4* (29)	24,3* (99)				19,2	19,5		
		Q3-Q1	4,2	3,8	3,2	3,9	4,0	4,4	4,2	4,1	3,2	4,7							
1942- 1951)	G1	Median	18,3 (1924)	19,3 (2380)	17,3 (85)	18,0 (100)	19,1 (94)	19,3 (102)	18,8 (882)	18,8 (106)	16,8 (187)	21,9 (334)	19,2 (279)	19,5 (229)					
		Q3-Q1	4,3	3,6	4,3	2,4	4,2	3,6	3,9	3,6	3,4	4,6	4,1	2,8					
1952- 1961)	G4	Median	17,5 (2268)	18,2 (3031)	16,9 (143)	17,2 (145)	18,2 (158)	18,4 (195)	18,3 (584)	17,7 (718)	16,5 (379)	20,3 (394)	18,5 (495)	18,7 (474)					
		Q3-Q1	3,9	2,9	2,4	2,7	3,6	2,1	4,0	3,0	2,9	4,1	3,2	2,1					
1962-6)	G5	Median	17,2 (1292)	17,9 (1629)	16,8 (67)	17,1 (87)	17,8 (73)	17,8 (93)	18,1 (308)	17,3 (392)	16,8 (142)	19,8 (187)	18,7 (217)	18,5 (214)					
		Q3-Q1	2,9	2,8	2,0	2,0	4,1	2,7	4,3	3,0	3,1	4,4	3,8	3,8					
1967- 1971)	G6	Median	17,1 (864)	17,4 (1125)	16,8 (50)	16,9 (78)	18,3 (32)	18,3 (74)	18,3 (311)	17,6 (396)	17,1 (254)	19,9 (234)	18,1 (227)	18,4 (233)					
		Q3-Q1	2,9	2,8	3,0	2,2	-	3,4	4,0	2,9	3,1	-	3,7	2,7					
1972-3)	G7	Median	17,0 (268)	17,3 (358)	16,4* (89)	16,3 (63)	18,3	18,3	18,1 (125)	17,3 (143)	16,2 (66)	>19 (58)	18,2 (128)	18,4 (123)					
		Q3-Q1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,1	-	-	-					
			17,0	17,3	16,4	16,3			18,1	17,5	16,2	19,0	18,2	18,44					

# Psychosocial factors related to sexual development

- Biological characteristics: early puberty + menarché at a lower age – earlier sexual debut (Crockett et al., 2003)
- Psychological characteristics:
  - Depression in younger girls → earlier sexual debut
  - No association between self-esteem and earlier sexual debut
  - Problem behavior: criminal or unethical behavior → earlier sexual debut
  - Risk behavior = more sexual experiences
  - Attitudes: stronger religiosity – less sexual experiences
  - Academic achievement – better grades, academic ambitions – delayed sexual debut

# Psychosocial factors related to sexual development

- Social factors

- Quality of relationships between parents and children
- Quality of communication between parents and children
- Monitoring children
- Family structure
  - single-parent household = earlier sexual debut
  - Older siblings
  - Lower social-economic status of the family

# Psychosocial factors related to sexual development

- Social factors
  - Peers
    - Evaluate and approve the selection of a romantic partner
    - collective = facilitate/inhibit following sexual norms
  - Peer effects (Brown, 1999; Connolly & Goldberg, 1999)
    - **Initiation** phase (11–13): interest in the opposite sex
    - **Status phase** (14–16): romantic relationships within peer groups
    - **Affection** phase (17-20): reorientation towards the dyad
  - Romantic partner
    - Sex primary within romantic relationships

# Psychosocial factors related to sexual development

- Social factors
  - Poverty in their living environment
  - Media as a superpeer!



# Summary

- Greater knowledge about effects of puberty on girls
  - More risks for girls
- Early sexual debut = riskier for girls
- Exploration of sexuality = riskier for girls (due to double standard)
- Sexually active teens = wider repertoire of sexual activities
- The age of sexual debut decreases but not necessarily valid for our generation
- The strongest peer pressure related to sexuality in mid-adolescence
- Family and poverty: strong social factors in sexual development
- Media