



# MY BODY, MY SELF

FOR GIRLS

**LYNDA MADARAS  
AND AREA MADARAS**

NEWMARKET PRESS



NEW YORK



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## OTHER BOOKS BY LYNDA MADARAS

*Ready, Set, Grow!*

A "WHAT'S HAPPENING TO MY BODY?" BOOK FOR YOUNGER GIRLS

*On Your Mark, Get Set, Grow!*

A "WHAT'S HAPPENING TO MY BODY?" BOOK FOR YOUNGER BOYS

*My Feelings, My Self for Girls*  
AND AREA MADARAS

*The "What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Girls*  
WITH AREA MADARAS

*The "What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Boys*  
WITH AREA MADARAS

*My Body, My Self for Boys*  
AND AREA MADARAS

*Lynda Madaras Talks to Teens About AIDS: An Essential Guide  
for Parents, Teachers, and Young People*

*Womancare: A Gynecological Guide to Your Body*  
WITH JANE PATTERSON, M.D.

*Woman Doctor: The Education of Jane Patterson, M.D.*  
WITH JANE PATTERSON, M.D.

*Great Expectations*  
WITH LEIGH ADAMS

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*The Alphabet Connection*  
WITH PAM PALEWICZ-ROUSSEAU

*Child's Play*





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*We'd like to thank three women who helped us put this book together—*

**DOE COOVER**, *the world's greatest literary agent,*  
**EARTHA SEWELL**, *a wonderful sexuality educator,*  
*and JILL GANON, a terrific writer*

*And we'd like to dedicate this book to them and their children—*

**MOLLY, TOM, SETH, AND MILES**

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## PREFACE



### **Hi, I'm Lynda Madaras and I'm Area Madaras.**

We're the mother-and-daughter team who put this book together (with a lot of help from our friends). We have also written another book called *The "What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Girls* that explains the physical and emotional changes a girl goes through during her preteen and teen years, when her body changes from a child's to a woman's body. This time of changing is known as puberty, and the book explains how and why puberty happens and answers the many questions that have come up in Lynda's sex education classes over the years.

This book is a companion to our other book, though you don't need *The "What's Happening to My Body?" Book* to use this one. This book covers many of the same topics covered in that book, though not in as much detail. The big difference between the two books is that this is an interactive book, with exercises, quizzes, and other activities that will help you learn about the changes that take place in your body during puberty.

Like *The "What's Happening to My Body?" Book*, this book owes a great deal to the many girls and boys who have been students in Lynda's classes at Sequoyah School over the years and to the families who have attended our puberty and sexuality workshops. Much of the material in this book was developed and refined with their help. Indeed, without their kind patience when exercises and activities didn't work out as planned and their enthusiasm when they did, this book would not have been written.

We hope that you (and the friends and family members you'll recruit for some of the activities) will enjoy the activities and exercises in the book and that it will answer some of the questions you'll have as you enter this new stage of your life.

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LYNDA MADARAS  
AND AREA MADARAS

## WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU?

**You're going through puberty!** During the preteen and teen years, girls go through a series of physical and emotional changes as their bodies develop from children's bodies into women's bodies. This time of changing is called puberty.

This book is about you and the changes that take place in your body during your puberty years. It explains how, when, and why puberty happens and is filled with quizzes, exercises, and other activities for you to do. Throughout the book, you'll be asked to record your thoughts and feelings and to write about what's happening to you. In fact, before you're through, this book will not only be *about* you, it will be *by* you as well!

We hope that you'll have fun with the book, that you'll learn a thing or two, and that you'll come back to it from time to time as you move through puberty. We hope, too, that you'll hang on to this book, and that if you one day have a daughter or another special young woman in your life, you'll give her this special puberty book written by and about you!

**P.S.** If this book is yours, you're free to write in it, doodle on it, or scribble all over it. But if it's a library book, you'll need to do the exercises and writing on separate sheets of paper or in a notebook.

### **SINCE THIS BOOK IS ALL ABOUT YOU, LET'S START WITH YOU:**

I am \_\_\_\_\_ years and \_\_\_\_\_ months old.

I am \_\_\_\_\_ feet and \_\_\_\_\_ inches tall.

I weigh \_\_\_\_\_ pounds.

I go to school at \_\_\_\_\_.

I am in the \_\_\_\_\_ grade.

I live with \_\_\_\_\_.

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**When I'm alone I like to \_\_\_\_\_.**

**When I'm with my friends we like to \_\_\_\_\_.**

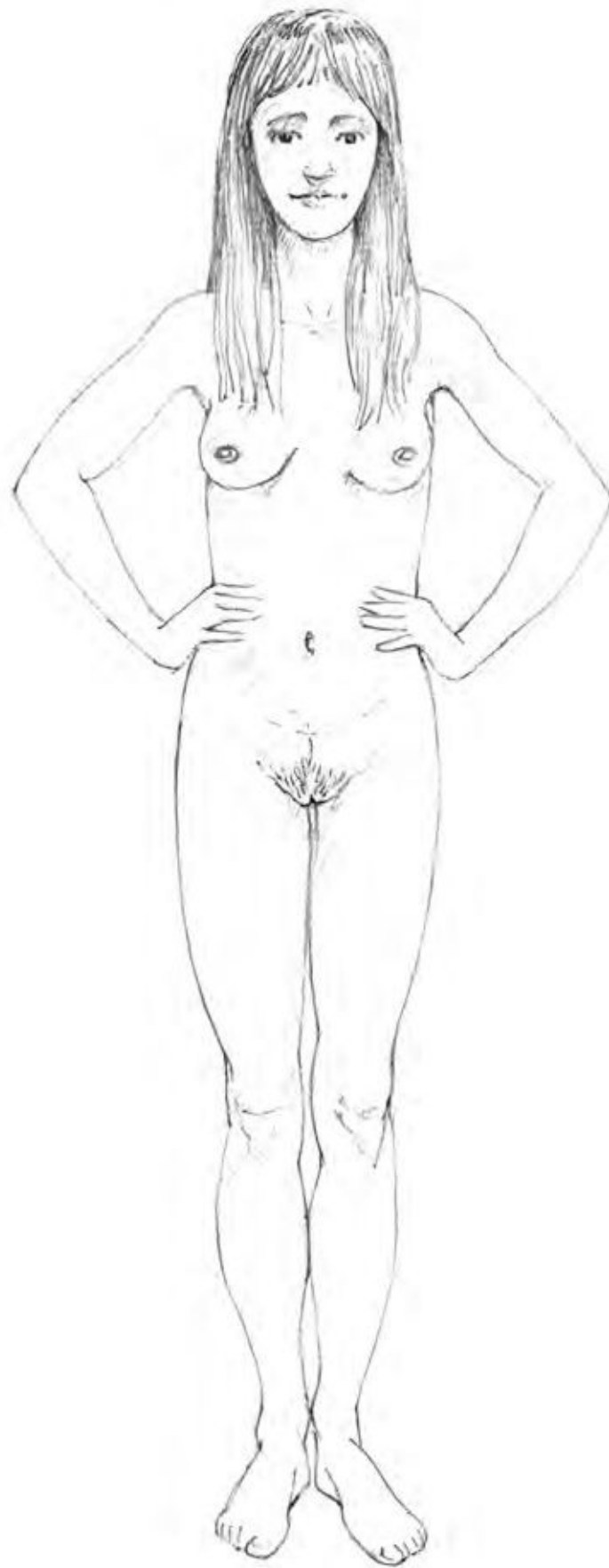
**My best friend and I talk about \_\_\_\_\_.**

**An adult I can really talk to is \_\_\_\_\_.**

**One thing I really like about myself is \_\_\_\_\_.**

## **PUBERTY CHANGES**

- | Growth spurt causes rapid increase in height—you grow taller at a faster rate than ever before.
- | Oil glands in scalp become more active—your hair may be oily, and you may need to wash it more often.
- | Nipples and surrounding skin get darker in color.
- | Breasts enlarge—they may be tender or sore.
- | Hips broaden—your waist seems smaller in comparison.
- | Curly pubic hairs grow on the vulva (the area between your legs).<sup>1</sup>
- | Hair on legs also may increase and may be darker in color.



- | Growth spurt affects feet first, causing rapid growth. You may find that you outgrow your shoes before they're hardly worn.
- | Skin produces more oils—you may develop pimples.
- | Hair grows under arms.
- | Underarm perspiration (sweat) glands are more active—you develop an adult body odor.



| Hair on arms may increase and may be darker in color.

| During puberty, you may notice an increase in vaginal discharge, and you will also have your first menstrual period. To find out more about these changes, turn to the next page.

## Vaginal Discharge

*I have noticed a clear and also a milky white discharge from my vagina. Could you tell me what this means? I'm wondering if this is normal.*

During puberty, you may start to have a small amount of a clear milky white fluid, or discharge, from the walls of the vagina that may leave a slight yellowish stain on your underpants as it dries. This fluid is called vaginal discharge, and it is completely normal, another sign that your body is maturing.

Vaginal discharge helps to keep your vagina clean and healthy. As we'll explain in Part 5, the discharge is made up of fluids and cells shed from the walls of the vagina. Just as the skin on the surface of our bodies is constantly shedding old cells, the skin of the vagina also sheds cells. The body makes fluids to wash away these cells and cleanse the vagina. As you go through puberty, the shedding of old cells from the vaginal walls speeds up. More fluid is made, and a girl may notice more discharge from her vaginal opening.

Many girls first notice this discharge a year or two before their first menstrual period. Others don't notice it until after they've started menstruating, and some never have much discharge at all. Those who do notice the discharge may find that there's more discharge on some days than others and that the color and consistency of the discharge change at certain times. You'll learn more about this in Part 5, but for now let's talk about what many girls consider the biggest, most dramatic puberty change—the Big M, menstruation.

## Menstruation

*My mom told me about menstruating. I am excited, but scared too. We learned about menstruating periods at school, too. But could you tell me exactly when mine will come?*

During puberty, girls begin menstruating. When a girl menstruates, a bloody (but harmless) fluid called the menstrual flow dribbles out of the vaginal opening. The menstrual flow lasts for a period of two to seven days. Grown women usually have a menstrual period about once a month. But as you'll learn in Part 5, girls who have just begun menstruating may have their period more or less often than this.

No one can say exactly when a girl will have her first menstrual period, but in Part 6, we'll learn

giving you some clues that will help you make an educated guess as to when you can expect to begin menstruating.

Hearing about menstruation and the other puberty changes all at once can be scary and a bit overwhelming, but these changes don't happen overnight. Puberty happens slowly and gradually, over a period of months and years, so you'll have plenty of time to get used to these changes. And remember, billions of human beings have managed to make it through puberty. You will too!

You may have already noticed some puberty changes in your body. In fact, you may be so far along that your body practically looks like an adult woman's. Or you may not have noticed many (or any) of these changes yet. Since this book is about you, let's see where you are. Get out your pencil and take a look at the puberty checklist on the next page.

## CHECK IT OUT



**I have noticed the following changes in my body (check all the ones that apply):**

- ? My feet seem to be growing very fast.
- ? I have begun to grow taller at a faster rate than ever before.
- ? There are curly pubic hairs growing on my vulva.
- ? My breasts have started to develop.
- ? The skin around my nipples is getting darker in color.
- ? I perspire (sweat) more.
- ? My body's odor has begun to change.
- ? I have noticed vaginal discharge on my underpants.
- ? There is more hair on my arms and legs and/or it is darker in color.
- ? My skin and hair are more oily.

? I have more pimples.

? My hips are getting wider and my body shape is changing.

? Hair is growing under my arms (in the armpits).

? I have begun to menstruate.

**CAN YOU GUESS HOW OLD THESE GIRLS ARE?**



**Anna is \_\_\_\_\_ years old.**



**Katie is \_\_\_\_\_ years old.**



Jessie is \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

**Answer:** They're all the same age—twelve years old.

As you can see, girls of the same age are often at different stages of development. We each have our own personal timetable of growth and development. Some of us develop early, others a little later. Some girls begin to grow pubic hair and develop breasts while they're still in grade school. For others, these changes don't happen until their teen years. For most girls, though, these changes happen between the ages of eight and a half and eleven.

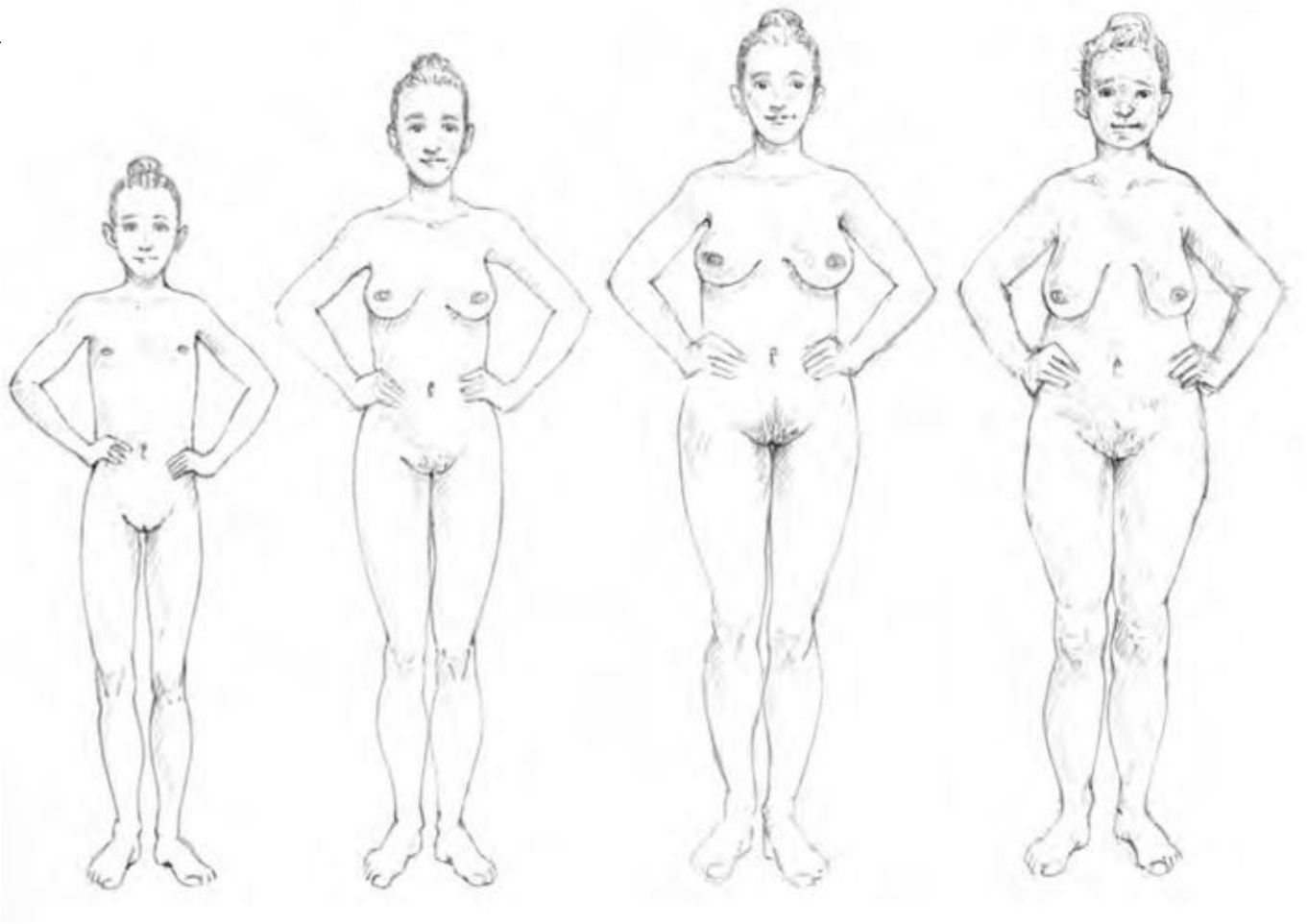
Remember, though, you may not be like most girls. Being different—starting to develop earlier or later—from the other girls your age isn't always easy. Maybe it will help you to remember:

- | You're normal! You may be developing at a different time, but you're still perfectly normal.
- | You won't be ahead—or behind—forever. The other girls will soon catch up to you, or you'll catch up to them.
- | No matter where you are in your development, you're unique, one of a kind. In the whole universe, there's not another one like you. Feel special!

## **STAGES OF THE FEMALE LIFE CYCLE**

When you think in terms of your whole life, being fast or slow to develop really doesn't matter much. After all, we all end up in the same place—grown up! (And then you'll wonder what all the fuss was about!)

The illustration below explains the stages of the female life cycle (of which puberty is only one).



**Childhood:** This stage begins at birth and continues until puberty begins.

**Puberty:** The transition stage between childhood and adulthood, when a girl's body matures and she begins menstruating.

**Reproductive Years:** During this mature, or adult, stage, a woman is capable of reproducing (having a baby).

**Menopause:** Menopause begins when a woman stops having her monthly menstrual periods and is no longer capable of having a baby.

## THOUGHTS & FEELINGS ON GROWING UP

**“It’s a ‘Hey, whoopie, I’m finally growing up!’ kind of feeling.”**

—NADINE, AGE 13

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**“I was really jazzed about it. Then, two seconds later, I had this really scary feeling—‘Oh, no, I’m not ready for this.’ ”**

—*NYGIE, AGE 11*

**“I’m not sure I’m exactly looking forward to all these things . . . ‘Puberty is beginning to sound like some kind of disease.’ ”**

—*JENNIE, AGE 11*

**“I didn’t start developing until I was seventeen. I thought there was something horribly wrong, like maybe I was really a man instead of a woman.”**

—*VANESSA, AGE 21*

**“I started developing when I was eleven . . . I was glad, but I was ‘embarrassed, especially at school.’ ”**

—*JILL, AGE 15*

**“I started developing, and no one else was. I used to wrap one of those bandages, the kind you put on a sprained ankle, around my chest to make me flat. I kept my coat on as much as I could and wore baggy clothes all the time. Now that I’m older, I can laugh about it, but back then it wasn’t funny at all.”**

—*ANGELA, AGE 22*

**“Now all of a sudden I’m supposed to be all grown up . . . but I’m not ready to have all these responsibilities. Sometimes I just want to stay a little kid.”**

—*YVONNE, AGE 14*

**“I was afraid I was going to have to be all grown up instead of being a tomboy and climbing trees. But, really, it turned out that I did just the same things I always did.”**

—*KERRI, AGE 13*

**“I wish I was further along. My mom says, ‘Be patient,’ but I can’t**

## What About YOU?

You’ve heard what these girls and women have to say; now it’s your turn. On the next page, you’ll find a freewriting exercise with space for you to write your own thoughts and feelings.

### **Freewriting (How To)**

Just write whatever comes into your head. It doesn’t necessarily have to make sense, and you don’t have to worry about spelling and punctuation. (It’s called freewriting because it’s free of the usual rules about writing.) There is, however, one rule: Once you’ve started writing, don’t stop until you reach the end of the page.

If you get stuck, don’t know how you feel, can’t think of anything to say, write just that—“I’m stuck,” or “I can’t think of anything to say.” Write it over and over if you have to, just so long as you keep writing, without stopping until you’ve filled all the blank space.

## How Do YOU Feel?

What are your feelings about growing up and the way your body is—or soon will be—changing? Are you excited, scared, or both? How far along are you? Do you wish you were further along? How do you feel about the changes you’ve noticed so far? Are you excited about the changes to come or would you rather just forget the whole thing? If you’re already well into puberty, do you remember what you felt like before? Do you feel different now? What questions do you still have? What are you feeling right now?

Use the space below to freewrite your thoughts and feelings about puberty, your changing body, and growing up.





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