SAMPLE ANSWERS TO STUDENT QUESTIONS

Questions about Puberty

What are wet dreams?
Some people with penises have “wet dreams” or nocturnal emissions. These happen when a penis ejaculates (releases semen) while the person is sleeping. After a wet dream, the person’s sheets or underwear may be a little wet. This is a normal part of puberty.

What is circumcision?
Some penises are circumcised for religious or cultural reasons. It is an operation that removes the foreskin from the head of the penis. The foreskin is the loose skin that covers the tip of the penis. Circumcision is usually done when the baby is a newborn.

How big can a penis get?
The size of an adult penis varies from one person to the next. On average, a penis is 3–4 inches in length when soft, and 4–6 inches in length when erect.

What is the importance of pubic hair?
Hair, no matter where it is on the body, helps to protect our bodies and regulate our body temperature.

What does semen taste like?
Semen is a sticky bodily fluid that contains sperm, proteins, salts, and sugar that helps to nourish the sperm and provides mobility. If someone is tasting semen, then they are putting them self at risk for orally contracting an STI. Protection against STIs during oral sex includes using a flavored external condom on a penis or a flavored dental dam on a vagina or anus.

When will breasts develop?
Breast development is a common concern. There is no set time for when breasts will start to grow and develop. Breasts start to increase in size somewhere between the ages of 9 and 15. Do your best to be patient with your body and not compare yourself with others. Everyone goes through puberty at exactly the right time for their body.

Is it okay to have one breast larger than the other?
Some people have one breast that is a bit larger than the other because it is growing a little bit quicker. It usually isn’t very noticeable. Often breasts will even out by the time puberty is over. Sometimes they don’t. Either way is normal.
Questions about Menstruation

Why do people who get periods have to wear pads?
People who have periods use sanitary pads or napkins to absorb menstrual blood so that their clothing does not get stained. As people get older, they may decide to use tampons.

Does it hurt when you have your period?
Some people feel uncomfortable before and during their periods. They may feel bloated, tired, moody, a little bit "down," or may have breast tenderness before or during menstruation. During menstruation, some people may have menstrual cramps. It helps to take a warm bath, do gentle exercises, use a heating pad, or take pain medication to help the pain go away.

Once you have your period, will you menstruate for the rest of your life?
A person with a uterus stops menstruating (called “menopause”) during their forties or fifties.

How should you act when you have your period?
When you are menstruating, you do not have to act any different than usual. You can play sports, dance, exercise, and bathe like usual. If tampons are used, you can even swim. You should feel free to do whatever you want to do. Menstruation is a normal part of life for people with a uterus.

What can't you do when you have your period?
When you are menstruating, you can do anything you want to do. You can play sports, dance, exercise, and bathe like usual. If tampons are used, you can even swim. Menstruation is a normal and healthy part of life. You can and should carry on with your normal activities. However, some people with a uterus do experience cramping and heavy bleeding that can make them feel very uncomfortable. If the symptoms you experience prevent you from doing exercise and joining in with your friends, you may want to discuss this with a parent, trusted adult, or doctor.

Can tampons get stuck?
It is extremely unlikely for a tampon to get stuck in the vagina. Tampons are attached to a string a few inches in length that hangs through the vaginal opening once inserted. A tampon cannot enter the cervix, which is rather hard and normally only has a pinhole-sized opening for the blood from the uterus to flow through into the vagina. The tampon is removed from the vagina by pulling gently on the attached string. If a tampon does get stuck, it is important to see a doctor immediately.

What is yeast or a yeast infection?
Yeast is a fungus that is normally found in the vagina and sometimes in the penis. Yeast can overgrow and cause a yeast infection. Sometimes this can happen when people use
antibiotics, birth control pills, perfumed products (e.g., bubble baths, soaps, douches, or powders), vaginal contraceptives, foams, jellies, or creams. When a person has a yeast infection in their vagina, they can pass it on to their partner. For people with a vagina, symptoms can include a clumpy white discharge from the vagina and itching and redness around the vagina. For people with a penis, symptoms include genital itching and a mild rash on the penis. Yeast infections are easily treated with medication.

Is something wrong if it’s been 4 months since my last period?
Although the average menstrual cycle is 28 days long, it is not uncommon for adolescents with a uterus to have irregular periods. Some adolescents have periods spaced several months apart whereas others have periods spaced 2 or 3 weeks apart. If it has been a while since your last period, see your doctor because sometimes it is a sign that there may be a problem.

Questions about Human Sexual Response

What is an erection?
An erection occurs when the tissues of the penis fill with blood making it larger and harder. An erection can occur as a result of some type of physical, mental, or visual stimulation, or for no reason at all.

What is masturbation?
Masturbation is when a person touches their own genitals to create a pleasurable feeling. Some people choose to masturbate while others choose not to.

Is it okay to masturbate? If I masturbate too much, can it hurt me?
Masturbation is when a person touches their own genitals to create a pleasurable feeling. Masturbation is natural and can be a part of a person’s normal sexual development, it is considered medically safe, and it cannot spread STIs. Whether or not somebody chooses to masturbate is a personal choice that may be based on family values or religious beliefs. Masturbation may be considered a problem if a person is masturbating so much that it interferes with the development of healthy relationships, if it is done in public, or if it causes harm to the genitals or surrounding skin. Masturbation should be performed alone and privately.

What is porn?
The word “porn” is short for “pornography” and refers to videos or pictures of naked bodies or sexual acts that are meant to make a person sexually excited. This doesn’t include anatomical drawings or diagrams meant to be used for instruction. If you ever see something online or someone shows you something that you are uncomfortable with or have questions about, you should talk to a trusted adult such as parents/guardians, teachers, school nurses and counselors, your doctor, or clergy.
How real is porn?
Although it can be normal to be curious about sexuality and sexual images, it is important to remember that pornography is fantasy. It’s a staged sex scene between two actors. Just like action movies don’t show real life, pornography doesn’t always show realistic bodies, situations, or healthy, safe, and consensual relationships. It also doesn’t show love and intimacy, how to use a condom, or how to talk to your partner about their sexual history, getting tested for STIs/HIV, or consent.

What if someone shows me something (like porn) that makes me uncomfortable?
No one should be showing or sharing something like porn with you without your consent. You shouldn’t share it either, unless it’s to talk to a trusted adult about your questions or concerns. Even if the other kids want to see it, sharing porn with someone under 18 is illegal. It’s also illegal to watch if the actors are under 18. Porn is intended to be watched by consenting adults aged 18 or older, and it shouldn’t be marketed towards people under 18. If you see something online that makes you uncomfortable, or if someone shares something like that with you, talk to a trusted adult. That could be someone like your parent/guardian, a trusted teacher, counselor, school nurse, or a clergy member.

Can urine come out the same time as sperm?
If a person with a penis has a healthy reproductive system, urine and sperm will not come out of the penis at the same time. There is a valve that closes off the flow of urine into the urethra when a penis is about to ejaculate.

What is a hymen?
The hymen is a fold of tissue across the opening of the vagina that is usually present at birth. The hymen protects the vaginal opening from fluids entering the body during fetal development and birth. The hymen can easily be broken before adulthood at any time, for example while riding a bike or during exercise.

Why do people get "horny"?
People can get "horny" or sexually aroused when there is some form of sexual stimulation. This can happen by sight, touch, smell, thought, or fantasy and is a normal part of human sexual development.

What happens when a person has an orgasm?
When a person with a vagina has an orgasm, their breathing becomes fast and heavy, their pulse races, and the vaginal muscles contract rapidly for a brief period of time. This is followed by a release of tension. A similar response occurs when a person with a penis has an orgasm, which is usually accompanied by ejaculation of semen through the urethral opening.

What does sex mean?
Sex can be any number of activities between people wanting to become sexually
intimate with each other. Sex often involves contact between the penis, vagina, anus, mouth, or other body parts. The type of sex that can cause a pregnancy is unprotected contact between a penis and vagina, usually when the penis is inserted into the vagina and the penis ejaculates. Unprotected sexual contact involving the penis, vagina, anus, mouth, or the skin around the genitals can lead to the transmission of a sexually transmitted infection (STI) if one of the partners has an STI already.

**Does sex hurt?**
Sexual intercourse (i.e., penis inserted into the vagina or anus) may be uncomfortable the first time, but usually does not hurt. The vagina can expand a great deal when giving birth to a baby, so if the person with the vagina is sexually aroused, the vagina can accommodate a penis. If penis-vagina sex hurts, it could be that either of the partners is not fully sexually aroused or ready for this interaction, and the sexual activity should stop. Or perhaps the condom requires additional water-based lubricant. For penis-anus sex, extra water-based lubricant should always be used in addition to a condom since the anus does not produce much lubrication on its own.

**Questions about Pregnancy**

**Where does a baby come from?**
A baby is made when a male’s reproductive cell, the sperm, joins with or fertilizes a female’s reproductive cell, the ova or egg. These cells will then multiply in the uterus until they develop into a baby that is ready to be born.

**Does the egg have a shell?**
No, the egg or ova does not have a shell, but it does have two layers that the sperm must pass through to fertilize it.

**How long does it take for a baby to get ready to be born?**
It usually takes 40 weeks, or about 9 calendar months, for a baby to be born.

**How can you tell if the baby will be female or male?**
The only way to tell if a baby will be a biological female or male before it is born is if the mother has a test which is ordered by the doctor. One test, called an ultrasound, takes a picture of the fetus in the mother’s uterus. By looking at the picture, the doctor can usually tell if the baby has penis or not. Another test, called amniocentesis, tests for the chromosomes of the baby by taking a sample of the amniotic fluid, which can tell if the baby has XX chromosomes (“female”) or XY chromosomes (“male”). Some people have a blood test that can look at the baby’s DNA from the mother’s blood. This test would also be looking for XX and XY chromosomes.

**What decides if the baby will be a female or male?**
Both females and males have a reproductive cell. The female reproductive cell is the ova or egg, and the male reproductive cell is the sperm. Within each reproductive cell, there
are sex chromosomes. The egg only has one sex chromosome, the X chromosome. And the sperm sex chromosome is either an X (female gender) chromosome or a Y (male gender) chromosome. So it is the male's sperm that determines if a baby will be female or male. Therefore, if the sperm that joins with the egg also has an X chromosome, the baby will usually develop into a female. If the sperm that joins with the egg has a Y chromosome, the baby will usually develop into a male.

How does a baby come out of the body? Does it hurt?
When a baby is ready to be born, they usually come out of the vagina. If the baby is having problems coming out of the vagina, sometimes the doctor will do a surgery called a cesarean section (“C-section”) and take the baby out of the mother's abdomen through surgery. Most people consider the birth of the baby to be painful, but there are usually doctors and nurses around to help the person having the baby feel more comfortable and to provide medication to make it less painful.

Can you have a baby when you are 13 years old?
If a 13-year-old person with a uterus has started to ovulate and if they have unprotected penis-vagina sex, they can become pregnant and have a baby. Ovulation usually coincides with the beginning of the menstrual cycle.

How does milk get into your breasts?
When a person is pregnant, there are hormones that get the breasts ready to feed the baby after it is born. Once the baby is born, the hormones signal the breasts to start making milk. When the baby breastfeeds, the breasts are emptied and the hormones continue to signal the breasts to make more milk.

Questions about Birth Control

Can you get pregnant the first time you have sex?
Yes, you can get pregnant the first time you have penis-vagina sex, especially if a condom or birth control is not used. It is important to protect yourself from pregnancy, HIV, and STIs by using a condom every time you have intercourse.

Is it okay to use more than one or two methods of birth control?
Yes, it is okay to use more than one or two methods of birth control to prevent a pregnancy, depending on what the methods are. For example, it is recommended that a condom be used in addition to a hormonal contraceptive such as the birth control pill. Doubling up in this manner not only provides extra protection against pregnancy, but it also provides good protection from HIV and STI transmission as well. Two condoms should never be used at the same time (“doubling up”), and external and internal condoms should not be used together, since they can stick to each other causing one or both of the condoms to move or tear.
How do you ask your family doctor for the Pill?
Before you visit the doctor, prepare yourself by writing down your questions and concerns. Asking a parent or a friend to go with you might also be helpful and decrease your stress. If you are nervous about going to your family doctor, you can go to a family planning clinic instead for confidential counseling.

**Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)**

**Can you tell if you have an STI or if you need a check-up?**
Most times a person can have an STI and not know it because they have few or no symptoms. Other times people have symptoms such as: discharge from the penis, different or heavier discharge from the vagina, burning or pain when peeing, itchiness or sores on or around the genitals or anus, or swollen glands in the groin. If you have any of these symptoms, you should be seen by a doctor for a physical exam and STI testing as soon as possible. If you have had unprotected sex, or think you may have been infected with an STI even though you do not have any symptoms, it's a good idea to talk to a doctor or visit a clinic. If you are sexually active, it is important to be seen by a physician at least once a year for a complete HIV/STI examination. Remember, a person can spread an STI without knowing it. The only way to protect yourself from getting an STI is by not having sex at all and by not sharing needles for injection drug use, piercing, or tattooing. If you do have sex, use a condom every time as it will provide some protection.

**Are there different STIs for females and males?**
All people can get the same STIs despite different body parts, but the symptoms of an STI may be different.

**Can you get an STI if you've never had sex?**
Most STIs are transmitted by having vaginal, oral, or anal sex. However, some STIs are spread through infected blood on needles or syringes (hepatitis B or HIV) or during genital skin-to-skin contact, pregnancy, or childbirth (herpes, HIV, syphilis).

**What is AIDS?**
AIDS or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome is a very serious disease caused by a virus. HIV or Human Immunodeficiency Virus is the virus that causes AIDS. A person gets AIDS when the HIV has damaged their body's defenses or immune system, which fights off germs. Once these defenses have been damaged, bacteria and viruses may enter the body making the person very sick. When this happens, the person is diagnosed with AIDS. People with HIV (HIV+) can taking medications called antiretrovirals that can help keep the virus count low in their body, causing them to live normal lives and greatly decrease the chance they might transmit the virus to someone else. People who do not have HIV (HIV-) can take medications called PrEP or PEP to help them not contract HIV from a person if they come into contact with the virus. These medications are extremely
effective in preventing HIV contraction if taken regularly.

**How do people get AIDS?**
People can get HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), the virus that causes AIDS, if they are in contact with certain body fluids from a person who has the virus. Body fluids that spread HIV are blood, semen (the whitish liquid that comes out of a penis and carries sperm), pre-ejaculate fluid (i.e., pre-cum), vaginal secretions (liquids produced inside the vagina), and breast milk. These infected fluids get into another person when a person has vaginal or anal sex with someone who is infected with HIV; uses needles and syringes that have been used by a person infected with the virus (for tattooing, body piercing, or intravenous drug use); or is accidentally in contact with someone’s blood that is infected with HIV. Also, a mother who has HIV can transmit the virus to her unborn child or to her baby during vaginal childbirth or when breastfeeding.

**Questions about Sexual Orientation**

**What are homosexuals?**
A homosexual is someone who is physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same gender. Because this term has been used in a negative way, the terms lesbian and gay are more acceptable. A heterosexual person is someone who is physically and emotionally attracted to people of the opposite gender. Heterosexuals are also referred to as “straight.” Whether a person identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, pansexual, straight, or anything else does not mean that they are having sex. It simply describes who they are attracted to.

**I think I might be gay. What should I do?**
It’s normal for people to question their sexuality. If you think you might be gay but are unsure, you might find it helpful to talk to somebody about your feelings. Consider talking to your parents or a counselor at school. Talking to someone may help you feel supported, less alone, and more sure about your feelings. Resources are also available on our district’s Student Support website: [www.sandiegounified.org/Support](http://www.sandiegounified.org/Support).

**How do gay or lesbian people have sex?**
Gay or lesbian people, just like heterosexual people, express love and affection in many different ways. Sexual behavior is a personal decision that both individuals should agree upon.

**Miscellaneous**

Any question regarding sex with animals:
This is a class about human sexuality. We will not be covering the reproductive systems of other animals. If you would like more information on this topic, you can do some research in the library or talk to your parent or trusted adult.