



## Family Planning Victoria Podcast Transcript – Doing ‘it’

### ‘Sperm Production’ or What is sperm?

- Anne: [00:01](#) This podcast contains discussion about adult topics. Use your judgment if there are little ears around.
- Anne: [00:08](#) Hello, and welcome to Doing 'IT'. This is a podcast from the Family Planning Victoria Education team. We've called our podcast Doing 'IT', because it's something that students often ask, how to do it. And parents and carers often ask how to do it, as in having really important conversations about sex and sexuality with their young people.
- Anne: [00:28](#) My name is Anne, and I'm one of the Family Planning Victoria School's educators. In our first series of episodes, we're discussing puberty. We're going to talk through some of the changes, and explain how we discuss puberty in class. In this episode, we're going to talk about sperm production.
- Anne: [00:48](#) Sperm production is one of those things that start happening in puberty. If a person is born with testicles, then they're likely to get bigger at the start of puberty, along with the penis. This is in preparation for making sperm. Sperm production will start some time during puberty. If ejaculation happens, and that sticky, white liquid comes out of the penis, called semen, it's assumed that sperm production has started, and will keep happening through that person's life. The only way of really knowing if there's sperm in that liquid is by either trying to have a baby, or getting the semen tested.

- Anne: [01:23](#) When we talk about sperm production in this podcast, we're going to talk about what is typical for boys and men. It's important to say at the start that not every man produces sperm, and some transgender women do. Intersex bodies can be different also, so this information might not be relevant for all.
- Anne: [01:41](#) I'll be talking to Family Planning Victoria educator Rael, about all those typical boy changes to do with erections, sperm production, and also wet dreams. I'm going to just ask Rael questions that students usually ask in class. So Rael, thank you for talking to me.
- Rael: [01:58](#) Pleasure.
- Anne: [02:00](#) My first question, which is a really common one is, what is an erection?
- Rael: [02:06](#) Well, an erection is the penis filling up with blood, and becoming hard and stiff, and standing up away from the body. That's what it is.
- Anne: [02:14](#) Yep. That's what it is. And what makes an erection happen?
- Rael: [02:18](#) Well, erections happen throughout a male's life. So it can happen to babies, it happens to boys, teenagers, men. And we don't know exactly why they're happening in children, but during puberty, it's the body practicing. It's usually the surge of hormones that occurs during puberty. They can come from sexy thoughts, they can come from no thoughts at all, kind of the body's practicing erections. They also occur at night time.
- Anne: [02:47](#) So I've heard those night ones are kind of a man's body checking that his heart is working.
- Rael: [02:53](#) Yeah, I've heard that as well. Yeah, I've heard of as well.
- Anne: [02:56](#) So it's kind of a body check, and it's a really normal body response.
- Rael: [02:59](#) Absolutely. And it happens that boys are starting produce semen and sperm, and the body can emit that at nighttime. There may be a bit of a buildup, and they can be coming from sexy dreams, or dreams about maths tests, or no dreams at all. So they will wake up, having had a nighttime emission, or a nocturnal emission, and a little bit of semen will have come out with an ejaculate. There's been no stimulation of the penis. It

just occurs. And then teenagers just have erections for apparently no reason.

- Anne: [03:37](#) No reason. And sometimes boys worry that if ... Those two things always go together. That an erection happens and sperm will always come out, and that's not true.
- Rael: [03:47](#) No. I mean, outside of nocturnal emissions, or wet dreams, the penis needs to be stimulated, needs to be rubbed.
- Anne: [03:54](#) Have you heard any words that young people would use for erections? What do they use in class?
- Rael: [03:59](#) I think we might have all heard them, but stiffy, hard-on, boner.
- Anne: [04:04](#) Boner. That's the most common one, and I've heard young people ask, "Is there a bone?"
- Rael: [04:08](#) No. I think it's probably 'cause it might feel like there's a bone there, but there's definitely no bone, or it wouldn't be bendy when they're not stiff.
- Anne: [04:16](#) That's right. Okay. Next question. What is sperm?
- Rael: [04:21](#) Sperm's the male sex cell. So that's the other half of what's required to make a baby. So the female produces an egg, and the male produces a sperm, and when they get together, you have the start of an embryo leading to a baby.
- Anne: [04:40](#) And in picture books, often sperm are characterized like a little animal, like a little tadpole with eyes and glasses.
- Rael: [04:48](#) Smiley face.
- Anne: [04:49](#) Smiley face. And so young people often think it's a little animal.
- Rael: [04:54](#) Yeah, absolutely. It's actually the smallest cell in the human body, to then go meet the biggest cell in the human body. It carries the DNA and the chromosomes. It doesn't need any eyes. It's got a long tail to help it swim, absolutely.
- Anne: [05:09](#) And we might explain it like it's like a blood cell, or a skin cell, or a hair cell.
- Rael: [05:14](#) But it's an active cell.

- Anne: [05:15](#) It's an active one, and we can't see it 'cause it's too small.
- Rael: [05:18](#) Absolutely. Unless you've got a very powerful microscope.
- Anne: [05:22](#) When a boy starts puberty, at some point he will start sperm production, which is going to be some time probably from 10-15 years old, somewhere in there. When that happens, how many sperm does he start making?
- Rael: [05:40](#) Just millions. Millions every day. He makes millions every day, and billions throughout his life. And it doesn't stop. It's a 24 hour factory.
- Anne: [05:48](#) Yep. So once it starts, it just keeps happening all the time. So, does the sperm have to come out of his body? If he's making it all the time, does it have to come out?
- Rael: [05:56](#) No, the body reabsorbs it while it's still within the epididymis of the ... would rest on top of the testicles, which is a series of hollowed-out tubes. That's where they mature, but if they aren't released, then they will just be reabsorbed into the body.
- Anne: [06:14](#) Yep. So that's really interesting for young people to know, that it doesn't have to come out of his body. And we absorb cells in our body all the time. If semen does come out of his body, can you see the sperm swimming around in it?
- Rael: [06:31](#) Sperm makes its way up from the testicles, and goes past the prostate and the seminal glands, and it's there that it mixes with the fluid that these glands have made, and it's that semen that one sees when a male ejaculates. The ejaculate, and then the sperm is within that. That provides food for the sperm, actually, for their journey. But the sperm's just too small to be seen, so it's in there, in the fluid. And the fluid is a creamy, white kind of colour.
- Anne: [07:02](#) Yep. So you talked a little bit already about wet dreams, and it might happen, it might not. Might be from a dream, might not be. But it's kind of the boy practicing for getting the sperm out of his body, or the semen out of his body. So is it the same as peeing the bed?
- Rael: [07:16](#) It's a much smaller amount than peeing the bed, it's one teaspoon, thereabouts, half a teaspoon to a teaspoon. And he might not even ... Their pyjamas might not even be wet. By the time they wake up, if it happens in the middle of the night, it might dry overnight. They might wake up with the orgasm that's

accompanied with a wet dream, and that might wake them up, startle them, and they might choose to then change their pyjamas. It wouldn't generally get through to sheets, but just a spare pair of pyjamas nearby that they can change into.

- Rael: [07:51](#) And boys can then be encouraged to be hygienic, clean themselves in the morning, put their pyjamas in the washing basket, or put on a load of washing. So it is a good opportunity to talk about self-maintenance, and developing good house habits.
- Anne: [08:10](#) And often when we talk about wet dreams in class, and we've already talked about periods a bit, boys kind of think, "Well is there anything like a pad that you can use for a wet dream?"
- Rael: [08:20](#) Because wet dreams are unpredictable, and-
- Anne: [08:24](#) And they might not happen at all.
- Rael: [08:25](#) They might not happen for some people, they happen regularly, for some people not at all, some people will occasionally. And the amount of emission's not enough to warrant wearing anything, or protecting a whole bed. It's just a small amount that gets onto some pyjamas, so it's not anything that the kids need to worry about. And we try and reassure them with that, that just their underwear or their pyjamas is enough to contain what comes out.
- Anne: [08:52](#) Yep. And do girls have wet dreams?
- Rael: [08:55](#) Girls do have wet dreams, but they don't have an ejaculate like a male does. So, girls will still have sexy dreams, or not have sexy dreams, but their vagina will lubricate at night-time, and I just read that the clitoris can stiffen and get excited up to eight times a night as well, so their bodies are obviously practicing in the same way the boys are.
- Anne: [09:18](#) In the same way, yeah. But they might not notice at all.
- Rael: [09:21](#) Because they don't have an emission, they're not going to notice it.
- Anne: [09:23](#) Yep.

- Rael: [09:23](#) Another thing you can do with controlling wet dreams. It's not like you can try and dream about football, or not think about sexy stuff before you sleep. There's no control over that.
- Anne: [09:36](#) Does it happen to grownups?
- Rael: [09:36](#) It can happen in grownups. It probably happens a lot less frequently.
- Anne: [09:40](#) And is it okay if a boy has a wet dream, and semen goes on his pyjamas or on his bed, does he have to talk about that with his grownup at home?
- Rael: [09:50](#) It might explain the extra pyjamas that he's going through, but is ... And hopefully, everyone has a good open relationship with their parents. But yeah, some people will feel embarrassed about it. We would encourage that people learn to do their own washing, and then they can just hide the pyjamas amongst their normal load of washing that they might put on at the weekend. They don't have to, but ...
- Anne: [10:11](#) Yeah. Lots of boys want to keep it really private, and some are really happy to talk about it with a grownup. Does that grownup have to be a man, if they do want to talk about it?
- Rael: [10:20](#) Absolutely not, no. I mean, everyone through life finds some people that they feel comfortable talking to about certain topics, and other people, they feel more comfortable with other topics.
- Anne: [10:30](#) So do grownups need to bring this up at home, or how would an adult talk about this with their young person?
- Rael: [10:37](#) I think certainly it's beneficial if an adult lets a young person know that they know about wet dreams, and it's likely that their son is going to have a wet dream, and that helps the child to relax, in that they know that their parents know. They can help them manage, like supply pyjamas. They know that what's happened to them is normal, that everyone's been through it.
- Anne: [11:04](#) The main thing we want to get across in a class is that there's nothing wrong with his body.
- Rael: [11:08](#) Absolutely.

- Anne: [11:09](#) If it happened to a boy, and he saw semen on his pyjamas, and he didn't know what it was, he might think he was really sick.
- Rael: [11:16](#) Oh, could be something like that, or think he's wetting the bed and not understand why. So, it's just important that parents let their kids know that they know what's happening, that it's going to happen, and everyone's been through it. And that they're there to support them. So, I think that's a really important message. By having that conversation with the kids, you're letting them know that you're open and available, to support them through what can be an embarrassing time, or a difficult time. And that embarrassment gets taken away if it's talked about. Embarrassment ... Well hopefully it's at least reduced.
- Anne: [11:54](#) Hopefully. Awesome. Thank you, Rael.
- Rael: [11:55](#) Thank you. Pleasure.
- Anne: [11:56](#) Awesome.
- Anne: [11:58](#) Thanks for that Rael. Hopefully that was helpful for just a bit of insight into how we talk about sperm production, and erections, and wet dreams in a class. Here's a quick summary.
- Anne: [12:08](#) It's a really good idea to talk about puberty, and sperm production, wet dreams, before it's likely to happen. A boy might think there was something wrong if he didn't know about it.
- Anne: [12:18](#) Teach children how to use the washing machine.
- Anne: [12:22](#) Understand that erections are a normal body response. They don't only happen because of sexy ideas.
- Anne: [12:29](#) Provide resources about puberty in preference to searching erections and wet dreams on the internet.
- Anne: [12:35](#) Some resources to help this discussion along are Puberty Boy by Geoff Price. Secret Boys' Business by Fay Angelo, Rose Stewart and Heather Pritchard. Amaze.org have a YouTube channel, and they have a really great video that we use in class to explain wet dreams.
- Anne: [12:54](#) For more information about Family Planning Victoria, you can go to our website, [fpv.org.au](http://fpv.org.au). Also follow us on Instagram,

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