



## UNDERSTANDING YOUR PHYSICAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

**DID YOU KNOW?** Athletes follow a predictable pattern of physical growth but the rate at which you go through this growth varies by individual.

### CONSIDER...

- You typically grow about 2.5 in/yr and gain about 5 lb/yr.
- Your growth spurt occurs during puberty/adolescence.
- This means that someone the same age as you can vary by as much as 5 biological years, meaning with two 11-year-old swimmers, one may be 10 and the other 15, biologically.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?** Be aware of your growth cycle so you understand what is happening to your body as you develop.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Performance can be influenced by rate of maturity, which is out of your control! Some young athletes, therefore, may have a performance advantage over others.

### CONSIDER...

- If you are an early maturer, you may have a physical size advantage and may perform better than late maturers. Early maturers experience more early success due to a physical growth advantage and not necessarily enhanced skills or abilities.
- If you are a late maturer, you may experience frustration because of being physically "behind" someone that's the same age as you.
- Late maturers often catch up to or exceed the performance of early maturers by the mid-teen years, but only if you stay in the sport. Some athletes drop out because of a lack of early performance success.

- Early maturers can maintain early gains by develop good technique and take on new challenges.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?** Early maturers keep success in perspective as late maturers will often catch up. All athletes are encouraged to recognize individual improvement and avoid comparing athletic performances.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Gender differences in physical growth and in the timing of the growth spurt contribute to the overall difference in the height and body shapes of females and males.

**CONSIDER...**

- Girls reach peak growth spurts around age 12 and boys around age 14.
- Hormonal differences in males and females cause body composition changes in adolescence, changes which are out of your control but which may impact performance (positively and negatively).

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?** Understand gender differences and make sure you understand the basics of the developmental process. Allow time to get comfortable (physically and emotionally) with changes in your body. It's normal and YOU ARE normal! It takes time to adapt to growth changes so expect it to take some time for you to be able to take advantage of these changes.