What happens when?

Boys usually start puberty between nine and 14 years of age. Boys usually start puberty about six months after girls.

Puberty happens in stages. A person may have early signs of puberty then may not show another sign for months, even years. All the physical changes can happen within a year and a half or up to five years or more. The rate a person develops in their teen years doesn’t necessarily affect how they will look as an adult. The tallest boy now could be one of the shortest men later, or he may still be tall. Puberty changes generally occur in a certain order, but the order can also be different.

**Somewhere around 9 to 12**
- Hormones are switched on with no sign of physical changes.

**Then from about 12 (can be from 9 to 15)**
- The testicles become larger. This is the first sign of puberty starting.
  It’s common for one testicle to be bigger than the other.
- The scrotum becomes lower and darkens in colour.
- Pubic hair begins to grow at the base of the penis.
- Hair growth begins under the arm and on the legs.

**Then from around 13 (can be from 11 to 16)**
- The penis, scrotum and testicles grow bigger. This usually occurs after the first fine pubic hairs have grown.
- Pubic hair continues to grow, and becomes darker, curlier and thicker.
- There is a growth spurt (this can be as much as eight centimetres in one year).
- The sweat and oil glands become more active. This may result in acne.
- Body odour becomes stronger.
- Sperm production may begin and about a year after the penis starts growing, he may have his first ejaculation.
- Erections occur more often.
- The Adam’s apple (the larynx) increases in size and the voice cracks and deepens.
Then from around 14 (can be from 11 to 17)

- Height increases, muscles develop and become larger, changing the body shape. The arms and legs often grow before the shoulders and body. More muscle tissue grows.
- The breasts/nipples can swell and become tender (this disappears within a year).
- Facial hair begins to grow.
- The penis and testicles continue to grow.
- The shape of the jaw and the shape around the eyes starts to change.

Then from around 16 (and onwards into early twenties)

- Adult height is reached for some, while others may reach their full height in their early twenties.
- The penis and testicles are fully developed.
- Hair growth begins to thicken on the face and body. Chest hair begins to grow. (Some males may not grow much chest hair.)