

Steve Petra & PetraPuppets
IT'S ALIVE!: How Our Organs Work
Teacher's Guide

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Introduction

The objective of our show IT'S ALIVE! is to give kids a clear and memorable picture of what goes on in the major systems inside their bodies. Our goal is to heighten their awareness of how their actions, habits, and decisions effect their health. With older grades this includes substance abuse themes as specified by the school. The presentation for younger grades sticks with healthy body, healthy eating and exercise themes. Both versions of IT'S ALIVE! illustrate how although on the outside all of us are different, on the inside we are all exactly the same.

The purpose of this Teacher's Guide is to provide teachers with information on the topics covered in the show and to suggest questions and activities they may wish to use in the classroom after the presentation.

Body Organs/Systems featured in IT'S ALIVE!

Who's in Charge: The Brain and Nervous System

How the brain and nerves work. The most important jobs of the brain - breathing, heart rate, learning and motor skills. How the brain controls and communicates with the other parts of the body.

Guts At Work: The Digestive System

The parts of the digestive tract - the mouth, esophagus, stomach, small intestine and large intestine. How food is broken down so the body can turn it into energy.

Give Me Some Air: The Lungs, Breathing, Nose and Windpipe

The parts of the lungs - nose, windpipe (trachea), lungs. How your lungs get oxygen out of the air and into your blood, and how they clear out the carbon dioxide and waste.

Pump It Up: The Heart and Blood Vessels

How the four chambers of the heart work as a double pump bringing blood to and from every cell in the body.

Questions After the Show

The Brain

Which part of the body learns to skate board? (the brain does the learning and coordinates the actions of the rest of the body).

The brain is the boss. What connects it to the other parts of the body to give them instructions? (the nerves).

What is the brain telling the body to do while you're sleeping? (breathe, heart beat, continue digesting, dream).

In what part of the body do you find nerves? (every part).

Who has the larger brain, a whale or a human? (a whale).

Who's brain is more complex? (the human brain, we have a larger cerebrum).

Which side of the body does the right side of the brain control? (left).

Which side of the body does the left side of the brain control? (right).

Name a muscle that you can control (arm and leg muscles) and name one that you can't (heart).

How does school exercise your brain? (reading, writing, remembering and homework. Hard brain work helps you become mentally stronger).

The Digestive System

What does digest mean? (to break down, make smaller).

As soon as the food is in your mouth, digestion begins with what fluid? (saliva).

What makes the food go down your food tube (esophagus), gravity or muscles? (muscles).

What keeps the acid in your stomach from burning a hole in it? (mucus).

Which part of the digestive system does the food reach first, the small intestine or the large intestine? (the small intestine).

Which one is longer? (the small intestine).

What part of the digestive system absorbs the nutrients from the food you eat? (the small intestine).

If you were a piece of food in today's lunch, what parts of the body would you visit and in what order? (mouth, esophagus or food tube, stomach, small intestine, large intestine).

The Lungs

Can you forget to breathe? (No. The brain tells the lungs to breathe).

What organs of the body bring oxygen to the blood? (lungs).

What stops dirt and germs in the air we breathe from getting into our lungs? (mucus and nose hair).

What's the smallest part of the lungs where the oxygen is passed to the blood? (alveoli. We have six million of them).

We breathe in to get oxygen, what do we breathe out? (carbon dioxide, that's what's left after the cells use the oxygen).

What's the best thing you can do to help your lungs do their job? (not smoke).

Questions After the Show continued

The Heart

What organ moves the blood around your body? (the heart).

The heart works like a: a) drum, b) computer, or c) pump? (a pump).

When did your heart first start pumping? (before you were born).

How many pumps does the heart contain? (two, the left side and the right side).

How big is your heart? (about the size of your fist).

What other organ works with the heart to bring oxygen to the body? (lungs).

What are the pipes called that bring the blood to the body? (veins and arteries, blood vessels).

When does your heart not have to work? (it's always working).

The heart is a muscle. Does it need exercise like your other muscles? (yes).

Healthy Drink

What is 70% of your body made of? (water).

What is the most important drink in the world? (water).

What does your body use water for? (digestion, regulating body temperature, carrying nutrients and oxygen to cells, removing poisons and waste, protecting tissues and organs like a cushion).

If you could have only food or only water for two months, which one would keep you alive? (water. We can exist without food for two months or more but we can only live a few days without water).

Does an adult lose more water from their body by breathing or sweating? (breathing. 2-4 cups of water is lost from breathing, 2 cups is lost from sweating).

Healthy Food

Cars use gasoline for fuel to make energy, what does your body use for fuel to make energy? (food).

Which of these foods do most kids need to eat more of: a) fruits and vegetables, b) steak, c) french fries, or d) candy. (a. fruits and vegetables).

Name some fruits and vegetables.

Why is exercise important? It: a) makes you sweaty and smelly, b) gives you huge muscles that bust out of your clothes, c) helps your body and mind be healthy and grow.

(c).

Questions After the Show

Substance Abuse

Please note: The show can cover, or not cover any combination of these two topics as specified by the individual school. We do not indoctrinate, show illegal substances, or use scare tactics. The topics are kept strictly on an informative - but fun - level.

Smoking

Smoking affects which body parts? (brain, lungs, heart).

Does smoking help your body relax? (no, it raises your blood pressure and increases your heart rate).

Is it easy to give up smoking? (no, it's very difficult to stop, it's addictive, best never to start).

Who catches more colds, smokers or non smokers? (smokers. Kids who smoke get more colds than those who don't. They also have smaller lungs and weaker hearts).

Which of the following things does smoking do for you: a) makes you smell bad, b) gives you premature wrinkles, c) stains your teeth, d) gives you bad breath (all of the above).

Here are some of the chemicals found in cigarette smoke, where else are they found: ammonia (floor cleaner), arsenic (rat poison), carbon monoxide (car exhaust), butane (lighter fluid), tar (on your driveway). Sounds appetizing doesn't it?

Alcohol

True or false

Alcohol takes a long time to digest and get into your blood. (False. After just one sip of a drink containing alcohol, a little of it soaks through the skin of your mouth, throat and stomach).

Wine coolers contain mostly fruit juice. (False. They contain the same amount of alcohol as a bottle of beer or a shot of whiskey).

It's OK for kids to drink just a little alcohol. (False. Kid's livers and brains are still growing. Their livers' are too small and cannot clean the alcohol out of the blood - it goes right to the brain).

Alcohol can help you think. (False. Alcohol slows the brain down, you forget things and start to make bad decisions. The more you drink the slower the brain goes. That makes the heart and lungs go slower. If you drink enough you can pass out, go into a coma or die).

Vocabulary

Some words we use in the show:

alveoli
artery
atrium
blood vessel
brain
brain stem
bronchial tube
carbon dioxide
cerebellum
cerebrum
digest
esophagus
heart
intestine
lung
mucus
oxygen
peristalsis
saliva
spinal chord
stomach
trachea
vein
ventricle

About Us

Steve Petra trained at the National Theatre of Puppet Arts and at Jim Henson Productions in Manhattan, and has been a professional puppeteer since 1990 performing his own scripts, songs and music. Before that time he worked as a professional musician. He now specializes in educational assembly programs. When he's not doing shows, Steve is working on TV and DVD projects.

We combine educational material with puppetry, illusions, props, sound effects, music and humor to keep students engaged. This is live theatre on their level. Many students have never seen a ventriloquist show and are fascinated. Our goal is to leave them with an interest in these theatre arts as well as in the subject matter presented.

PetraPuppets is Steve and Jeanie Petruzzella. Steve performs the shows. Jeanie does all booking, fliers, teacher's guides, the web site and collaborates on the shows. She'll be happy to take your calls.

Steve has performed at Puppeteers of America festivals and at Puppet Guild of Long Island events. He's a member of The Puppeteers of America, UNIMA, the Puppet Guild of Long Island and The International Ventriloquists Association.

Steve would love to hear from your students and will answer their mail.
Please encourage them to write with their questions or comments.

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About Puppetry

Puppetry is an art form.

There has been puppetry as long as there have been people who wanted to communicate and express themselves.

The earliest societies used puppetry in religious rituals in the form of articulated masks employing moving parts, usually a mouth. The voices were often provided by people employing the art of ventriloquism: speaking without their lips appearing to move. Over time the masks were worn on top of the head, then in front of the body for ease of manipulation. Later, various types of articulated statues were used, first referred to in 5th century B.C. Egypt.

Over the centuries India, Java, Bali, Japan, China, Turkey, Africa, Eastern and Western Europe all developed distinctive forms of puppetry according to their culture, environment and the puppet building materials available to them.

These are the types of puppets we use in our shows:

Hand

Mouth

Rod

Mouth and Rod

Two Dimensional (flat)

Humanette

Puppet performance requires many skills:

Ventriloquism, script writing; designing and building puppets, sets, backdrops, props, stages and costumes which involves drawing, painting, carving, sculpting, and sewing; song and incidental music writing, instrumental and vocal performing; technical knowledge of sound and lighting; performance skills such as creating and executing character voices, characterization, acting and puppet manipulation.

Puppetry is theatre, and is used as are other forms of theatre, to teach, edify, inspire, entertain and challenge the audience.