

My body

Learning together about My Body

Welcome to the unit we call My Body. This unit is part of our programme of learning called Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) education. When we do our RSHP education we focus on the needs of each and every learner in the classroom. We want to develop their communication, cognitive, physical and self-help and independence skills.

The unit on My Body is important because children and young people need to learn the names of parts of their body and how to look after their body. Learners will be supported to learn about what we call bodily autonomy. This is an important idea for all children and young people to be taught and to understand. Bodily autonomy is the idea that your body is your body, that it belongs to you, or as a child might say that they are the boss of their body.

In this unit learners will also consider body image and self-esteem. When a person has a disability this can have a negative influence on their experience, attitudes, and feelings about their own body. Our children and young people see little positive representation of people who look like them and if they are online they may be exposed to 'the perfect body' and possibly sexualised images. While understanding of what they see and the impact it has on them individually will vary it is important to take opportunities when they learn about their body to consider how we help them develop a positive self-image.

It is important for learners that there is a close relationship between school (or college) and home when it comes to learning about their body. This will help make sure everyone works together to promote independence, personal safety and wellbeing. While we can plan some of this learning a lot of learning also happens in what people sometimes call 'teachable moments', so in situations such as washing and dressing where we can help our children to reflect on and understand things about their own body.

It is perhaps helpful to say a bit about why we use the correct words for the private parts of our body. We use these words because they help to remove any embarrassment or shame about these body parts. Also, knowing these words can help children and young people to explain if they are unwell or have a worry. Knowing these words helps to protect our children because they also learn that these parts of the body are private – we will be doing a lot of learning about private and public in this and in other units. We encourage parents and carers to use the same words at home that we use in school. We do understand that families often have informal body-part words that they use, but we ask that parents and carers take on board the need to use the same words as school. It is also the case that having more than one name for private body parts will be too complicated for some learners, and we risk confusion and undermining our shared efforts to protect them.

With the right level of support and resources children and young people who take part in activities as part of the My Body unit will learn:

- The correct names for external parts of their body, including male and female genitalia (their private parts).
- To identify the private parts of their body.
- That underwear covers the parts of the body that are private.
- That they are unique individuals.
- That their body belongs to them – the concept of bodily autonomy.
- Which adults will help them to look after their body.
- That there are things we do to look after our body: be active, eat well, maintain personal hygiene.

You will find the unit on My Body here <https://rshp.scot/complex-asn-draft/>