

My body

TITLE
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My body

This unit aims to enhance the learner’s understanding of their body (including correct names of parts of their body) and how to look after their body, introducing the role of physical activity, healthy diet and personal hygiene (which is covered further in a separate unit). Learners are supported to learn that their body belongs to them (bodily autonomy) while acknowledging that adults might also provide support that helps them to look after their body. The intention is that learning about one’s body can have a positive impact on body image and self-esteem.

The activities are suggestions only as there remains the need to carefully plan and personalise learning experiences. When you know a learner well you will be aware of how they communicate whether that be with behaviour, body language, speech or vocalisation or

using aids such as photographs, symbols or signs or other technology available to them. You can adapt or extend what is suggested to suit your learner’s age, cognitive ability and specific needs.



| Links to Curriculum for Excellence | Learning intentions | Success criteria |
|---|--|---|
| <p>I am aware of my growing body and I am learning the correct names for its different parts and how they work. HWB 0-47b</p> <p>I recognise that we have similarities and differences but are all unique. HWB 0-47a</p> <p>I am learning what I can do to look after my body and who can help me. HWB 0-48a</p> | <p>With the appropriate level of support and resources children and young people learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ The correct names for external parts of their body, including male and female genitalia.▶ To identify the private parts of their body.▶ That underwear covers the parts of the body that are private.▶ They are unique individuals.▶ Their body belongs to them – the concept of bodily autonomy.▶ Which adults will help them to look after their body.▶ There are things we do to look after our body: be active, eat well, maintain personal hygiene. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ I can identify parts of my body when named.▶ I know that some parts of my body need to stay covered.▶ I can identify what is the same and what is different between my body and other people’s bodies.▶ I am aware of my whole body and its separate parts.▶ I can identify which adults help me look after my body.▶ I can identify things I can do to look after my body: movement, eating, drinking, washing. |

Links to other themes

Learning within these other thematic units will support learning on this theme:

- ▶ Consent
- ▶ Personal Hygiene
- ▶ Personal Space and Boundaries
- ▶ Puberty

Why this learning matters

Children and young people need to learn about their body to promote independence, good physical health and wellbeing and personal safety. With open discussion about our body and a positive focus on what we do to be active, eat well and maintain personal hygiene we can build the idea of bodily autonomy and help ensure the protection of the children and young people from harm. With safeguarding in mind this unit, as with others, will support learning on private parts of the body.

Activities, ideas and supports for learning

There are 5 sections:

1. My body
2. I am unique
3. Body image
4. Bodily autonomy
5. Looking after my body

1. My body

These activities are about building awareness of the different parts of our body and that parts of our body have names. Firstly though a few words about the words we use.

As learners may struggle to grasp that a part of their body could have different names the naming of body parts, particularly those body parts children and young people will learn are private/are covered by their underwear, means that home and school need to use the same words, and to do so from an early age. This common terminology should also cover any other body functions that need to be considered in both home and school environments and any language around personal care.

Names for parts of my body (Supporting material PP/downloads available)

Naming external parts of the body is something we can do with all children from an early age, with time to re-visit regularly so that we embed awareness and understanding. This can be done when providing intimate care as you explain what is happening, or when showering/bathing.

Accompanying this unit you will also find some props to support learning. In the PowerPoint and downloads you will find:

- ▶ **Body images and labels to allow children and young people to first learn external body parts (you can select how many to cover and over how long):** head, hair, eyes, nose, mouth, ears, arms, hands, fingers, stomach, back, shoulders, legs, knees, feet, toes.
- ▶ **Then private body parts – the parts covered by our underwear – can be introduced. For boys:** nipples, penis, testicles, bottom. **For girls:** nipples, vulva, breasts, bottom. The private parts props also allow the child/young person to place their pants/vest on to cover these areas.

Some learners may understand the association between the name and the part of their body and be able to match these. Other learners may need more support, prompts or direction to name, label or identify parts of the body. Some learners may benefit from using the labels (or just naming without reading) using a doll/model.



For learners who benefit from a more sensory approach, the naming of body parts can be accompanied with use of those senses, *for example and to be developed to suit your learners, when saying/communicating*¹:

- ▶ **I have a body:** Use a hand held fan or battery fan to blow air over arms, legs, body, face and neck.
- ▶ **I have eyes:** Look at their eyes in a close hand held mirror, or at the eyes on a doll.
- ▶ **I have ears:** Listen to sounds of crumpling paper or recorded sounds of bird song or of the sea.
- ▶ **I have a mouth:** Give learners a taste of something you know they like.
- ▶ **I have a nose:** Place a pleasant smell/pine oil on to a cotton wool ball for learners to smell.

Clothes box game

Put lots of different clothes in a box- hat, gloves, pants, bra, vest, socks- and ask learners to pick them out and say which body part they cover. Sometimes you can have several boxes and make a game out of it to see who can find the bra first, take it to the teacher, and say which body part it covers.

Matching games

You can use the flashcards from Able2Learn to create matching/snap games.

Songs and sing-a-long

Have some fun with songs and rhymes about the body. The first option could be a good signifier for indicating times when you are learning about the body. Whenever you use a YouTube film set it up in advance, check it is what you intend, and skip adverts.

- ▶ **Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZanHgPprl-0>
- ▶ **Hokey Cokey (You put your left arm in...)**
<https://youtu.be/ulsFONO-qZg>

¹ Adapted from material produced by Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment, Northern Ireland

2. Same and different/ I am unique

These activities will support children and young people to learn that they and other people are individual and unique and that we also share some things in common with others. Same and different will be taught through the maths curriculum for pre-Early Level learners and so can be used here.

I am me/I am unique

The word unique may be too complex for learners, but you can still use it in context and it is a strong word for adults to recognise applies to all the children and young people in your setting. You could have this definition displayed somewhere prominent and refer to it whenever you can. You could decorate the definition with images of many different people with a range of ethnicity, sex, disability, size and body shape, age etc:

- **Unique. This means one of a kind. Every human being is special and different, we are all unique. You are unique!**

Me in the mirror

Have learners sit with, or be assisted to look in a mirror. This could be a small mirror so they see their face and then move to a full body mirror. Hand-held or static mirrors can be used. Magnifying mirrors are good for looking closely at a part of the body.

- **Having learned names for parts of their body, or with support if this is not yet achieved, children and young people can be asked to touch named parts of their body, and name parts of their body themselves.**
- **Time can be spent just looking for some time at a part of the body, how it moves, talk about what you see.**
- **If working with others, comparisons can be made, similarities in features recognised and differences acknowledged: Who has the longest hair? Are our eyes the same colour?**

- **For some learners you may be able to extend the sharing and while sitting together you can identify similarities and differences we cannot see – things they like to eat, their favourite colour...**

Fingerprints/footprints

Fingerprints and footprints – if your learners are comfortable with the process – can be used to explore that when it comes to our body we are all unique – there are things that are different. It helps to enlarge the fingerprints so that you can see this. You can label and display the prints or have fun guessing which print belongs to whom? These short films explain how to do this and more about fingerprints.

- **Hand and foot print in the classroom [Hand and footprint art in the preschool classroom – Teach Preschool](#)**
- **See your own fingerprints https://youtu.be/cZKGpg_ftw 3 minutes 42**
- **How to do a kids fingerprints activity [How to Do a Kids' Forensics Fingerprint Activity \(cubscoutideas.com\)](#)**



Everyone has their own smell

Our smell is unique to us. We can smell parts of our body – our hands, under our arms, our feet. We can smell our clothes after we have worn them. Perhaps a young person uses a deodorant that is distinctive. Using smell, at any of those unplanned teachable moments, you can talk to the child or young person about this unique aspect of who they are.

Portraits and an exhibition

Perhaps an arts specialist in your setting can help you undertake this project – the creative process can use traditional arts materials or be done digitally.

Having identified things about themselves – physical characteristics and perhaps those they cannot see – children and young people can create a self-portrait. They can be asked to capture both physical traits and also extend to think about representing other things about themselves, for example colours can represent their personality, maybe they want to be portrayed with their pet. You can explore what do they think makes them different? Or like other children? Portraits can be printed large and framed. Create a gallery, make invitations for guests and have an ‘opening’ with healthy drinks and snacks.

I can/I like it when/I don't like it when

Our uniqueness can be understood as things we can do, like to do and indeed don't like. If children and young people create a self-portrait they can develop this into a larger piece. It could be a poster or even an exhibition about themselves, capturing and communicating more about what they can do, like or dislike. Where the child/young person is unlikely to express strong ideas of like or dislike then identify preferences. When new staff or visitors come, learners can introduce themselves using their portraits and posters.

This activity would also be a time to ask, explore and record who the child/young person can talk to if they are upset. I can talk to....

'Hot seat' question time/Get to know me

Ask the children/young people to think of questions they could ask other members of the group or class in order to learn more about them. Remind everyone that questions should always be polite and kind. Adults can model the process, perhaps starting with a couple of questions based on things you know about individuals in the group. Do you have a pet? Do you play football? What's your favourite food? Adults in the room can play the game so that children/young people can ask them questions and get to know them too.

3. Body image

When a person has a disability this can have a negative influence on their psychological experience, attitudes, and feelings about their own body. The children and young people in your group or class will be faced with little positive representation of people who look like them and may be exposed to idealised and sexualised images across media. While understanding of what they see and the impact it has on them individually will vary it is important to take opportunities when learning about their body to consider how we foster a positive self-image. More than that, we need to ensure there are representations of people with disabilities in the learning space.

Our bodies are different (Supporting PowerPoint available)

The PowerPoint provided presents some key messages about body image and body confidence. Slides could be used one at a time, building conversations and understanding over time. The statements could be used if young people are sharing things they see on social media, perhaps commenting on how someone looks different to them, or makes them feel less positive about themselves. You can take every opportunity to explore with learners what they like about themselves, what they have achieved, what you admire and love about them. Help them to articulate how they see their body size, shape, overall appearance. To support all of these kinds of discussions the slides say:

- ▶ All our bodies are different, and that's a good thing.
- ▶ How our bodies look is only one part of who we are.
- ▶ Body image is the way we think and feel about the size, shape and overall appearance of our bodies.
- ▶ A positive body image means that you like how you look and feel positive about your body.

In this class....

Earlier we suggested a poster that displayed the word unique. An addition could be a class portrait framed with a banner that says:

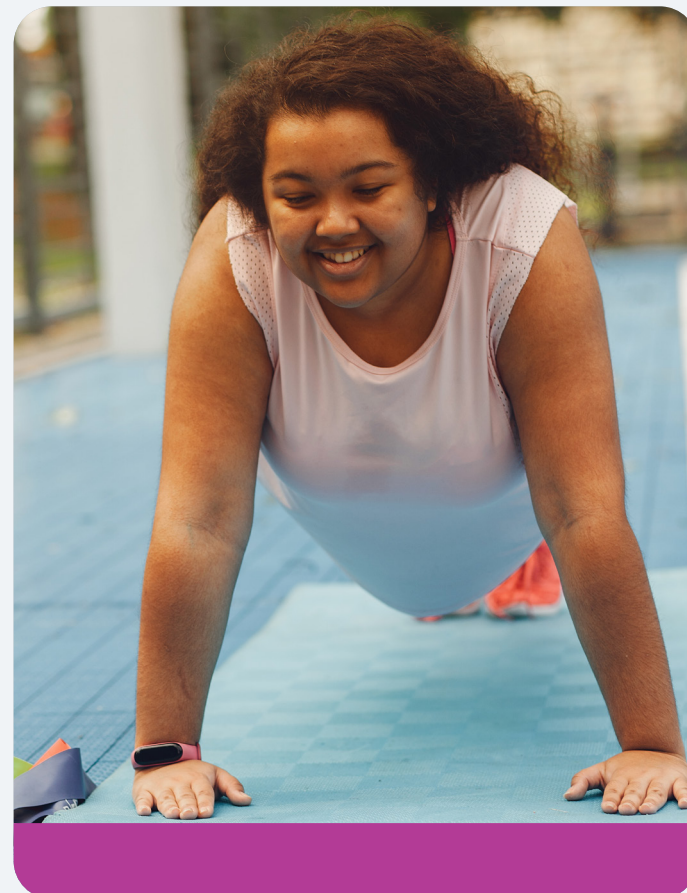
- ▶ ***In this class, we are all individuals, different, unique and special.***

Me-time

The children/young people might enjoy some pampering – foot or hand massages, new hairstyles, nail painting. Remember to include girls and boys in activities.

Positive representations

Finally, have you considered how you might use images (with permission of course) of your learners and of other children, young people and adults with physical and learning disabilities to decorate and brighten up your environment? Think about ways that you can expose your learners to positive images of disability – think about big bold photographs, perhaps a mural, that show children, young people and adults with disabilities as successful, confident and contributing in whatever environment they find themselves.



4. Bodily autonomy

Bodily autonomy is the right for a person to control what happens to their body without external influence or coercion. This is an important concept for all children and young people whether it is something they explicitly understand or not. Bodily autonomy is the idea that your body is your body, that it belongs to you, or in the vernacular of children and young people, that they are the boss of their body.

Personal care

Across the units in this resource we acknowledge that children and young people with disabilities can require different levels of personal care. We understand that this means that they can have different experiences and understandings of privacy and bodily autonomy. With that in mind we want to emphasise communication and the importance of efforts to ensure a child or young person's consent and understanding in interactions. Good practice includes personal care taking place in a private space, with a trusted adult, wearing gloves and talking through the process. This is summed up here in an excerpt from a publication from the National Children's Bureau/ Mencap/Sex Education Forum, it refers to a specific member of the team but applies to all:

“Privacy can be experienced by the pupil in how the teaching assistant supports individual personal care, they can narrate their actions e.g. ‘I am closing the curtain to make this space private, I am helping you because I am your key worker, I am cleaning your vulva/penis in private’ so topics such as public/private, accurate naming of body parts and safeguarding are all experienced by the pupil, contextualised and repeated daily. Pupils with profound and multiple learning disabilities are exposed to greater incidences of personal touch and although they may not comprehend the difference it is our responsibility to ensure that we foster an environment of respect, safe routine and transparency when undertaking personal care routines – so that they can develop an understanding of appropriate practices. Changes of behaviour during intimate routines can be an indicator of negative experiences’.”

FROM RSE FOR PUPILS WITH SEND – SHORT GUIDE | SEXEDUCATIONFORUM.ORG.UK

One person/one body/my body

For some learners the concept of being one person, with one body that is their body will be a place to start to support learning about bodily autonomy. In other parts of the curriculum you might be working on numbers, and the concepts of one, two, three etc. You may use approaches like... holding and talking about one ball, one item of food, show me one finger, encouraging choice of one thing.

The idea of one body can be supported by activities such as using a full mirror mentioned earlier. Recognising one's body as one/my body can be further developed by running the learner's hands around their whole body to feel the whole person, or use a brush on the whole body to create one feeling across the body. You could use a fan or hairdryer (on a cool setting) to blow over the whole body, including the child or young person's back or shoulders.

How do I say?

(Supporting PowerPoint available)

There are likely to be a range of different ways in your group or class when it comes to communicating agreement or preferences. This activity can be about using verbal and non-verbal/body language to communicate, in fact if learners have capacity to do both this should be explicit. It can be used to acknowledge that sometimes we communicate in very similar ways, sometimes in ways unique to us, and that it is good to understand each other in this regard.

To get the activity going start with hello and goodbye, this gives the opportunity to think about different means of communication, who each is used for, how enthusiastic or otherwise a person might be (for example a very excited hello for friends when they meet). Then move on to yes, no and whether they like something or not.

The questions are in the PowerPoint. You could enhance the PowerPoint with photographs of the children/young people actually expressing themselves either verbally or with body language. Learners could also do a bit of research around the school and at home: how do other people say hello, goodbye, yes, no etc.



- ▶ How do I say, "Hello"?
- ▶ How do I say, "Goodbye"?
- ▶ How do I say, "Yes"?
- ▶ How do I say, "No"?
- ▶ How do I say, "I like that"?
- ▶ How do I say, "I don't like that"?

As you model the activity it is okay to exaggerate a bit and have some fun too. As children/young people respond with how they communicate, have them share with others, so spotlight examples.

You can explore how the children/young people feel when they communicate a particular feeling/opinion. For example, is it difficult to say no sometimes or to some people?

Boss of my body

This song is great fun and might lead to a fair bit of singing or dancing along. The song could be used as a signifier that you are learning about the theme 'My Body'. The lyrics refer to that 'uh oh' feeling and of course to the idea of being 'boss' of their body. As with all YouTube clips or material on any such platform, cue the clip to go to ensure it is what you intend, and skip adverts. Boss of My Body

<https://youtu.be/zAALZxa6NCw> (2 minutes 33)

People who help and look after us (Supporting PowerPoint available)

In the unit Personal Space and Boundaries there is a description of the activity called My Circle in which children/young people develop a visual representation and understanding of familiar people and what role they play in their life. This includes adults who provide personal support or personal care.

Other opportunities to support a group/class to think about people who help and look after them can be created. One idea would be to have a theme/project exploring people who help and look after us. The group could discuss and identify who helps over three strands of activities:

- ▶ Who helps me at home? Draw pictures of houses and home life or use photographs. Acknowledging the diversity of home lives, identifying who helps and how, capture who the children/young people themselves also help and how – maybe they assist a younger sibling, a parent, carer or grandparent.

- ▶ Then think about Who helps me at school? Children/young people could use a tablet to take photographs of staff in the centre/school (with their permission) and make visits to them (in the office, in the school canteen etc) in situ to investigate more and ask questions.
- ▶ A third element could be Who helps people when... so thinking about specific circumstances such as someone is sick or hurt, has a sore tooth, they are lost, something isn't working... Children/young people can explore circumstances where they need help immediately or may be upset, but they can also discuss who helps in a preventative way, for example why we go to the dentist regularly. The PowerPoint slides provided offer some visual prompts – you could add/adapt to incorporate photographs of people children/young people meet and know. You could encourage stories from children/young people about visits to the doctor, dentist or hospital – perhaps they or their parent/carers could take some photographs on an iPad/tablet to share when they make such a visit.



5. Looking after my body

This unit on the theme of My Body sits within our resource supporting your Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood curriculum delivery. However other important elements of the Health and Wellbeing curricular area connect with this learning, so for example everything you do on Food and Health and Physical Wellbeing/Physical Education/Physical Activity will impact on how learners understand their body, how to look after their body and learn that their body belongs to them (bodily autonomy). To complement the work you plan on these other Health and Wellbeing curricular areas the activity suggested here can be delivered within your programme focusing on My Body.

My body belongs to me. I look after my body (Supporting PowerPoint available)

The key messages are in the PowerPoint. Using slides 2, 3 and 4, children and young people can explore what each means to them, what is it they do/can do. We suggest that when working with learners, additional slides can be inserted with words or photographs or drawings of the things they eat, or do to be active, or do to ensure good personal hygiene.



1. My body belongs to me. I look after my body

- ▶ Insert slides with photographs of the individual learner or the group.

2. I look after my body when I eat well.

- ▶ Insert photographs of what children and young people drink and eat. Have some discussion of what they consider to be healthy, how much they eat of particular things (introducing or developing learning about ideas of enough/too much). Remember to liaise with home so that you capture more than school meals.
- ▶ Have small portions of foods that young people enjoy, to smell and taste.

3. I look after my body when I am active.

- ▶ Insert photographs of the activities children and young people take part in – this could be in or out of school.

4. I look after my body when I am clean. This is my personal hygiene.

- ▶ Talk about what hygiene practices and norms you have – washing your hands, brushing your teeth, showers etc.
- ▶ Have shower gels, soaps, anti-perspirants, toothpastes to share and smell.
- ▶ Insert photographs of any activities that children/young people do in school.

The topic of Personal Hygiene is covered in more detail in a dedicated unit in this resource. Some ideas from that unit can be used in the context of a programme of work around My Body, or wait until you are dedicating some time to the detail of that work.

The group PowerPoint could be used as a presentation to parents and carers.

And finally....

I can indicate to an adult if I am upset

Children/young people may be upset about aspects of their body, how their body changes as they grow. The My Circle exercise described in the unit called Personal Space and Boundaries can support children and young people to identify who they can speak to if they are upset. Of course it is also the responsibility of adults who provide education and care to know the learner well and to be aware of changes in behaviours that might communicate worry or distress.

Learner evaluation

Learners should be asked to show a preference as to whether they like or dislike the activities that are part of their RSHP learning. It may be possible to tell if the child/young person is enjoying their participation as it happens, this is facilitated when the adult knows the learner well and is able to interpret reactions. Whether at school or at home you may have already worked on developing an object of reference or signifier for when you want to know a child/young person's opinion. Learner evaluation will help you to make learning more enjoyable, relevant and useful for the learner.