

Puberty

TITLE
02



Puberty

This unit aims to enhance the learners' understanding that they are growing up and that their body will change as this happens. They will learn that these changes take place in a time called puberty, that these changes are normal and happen to everyone.

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 recognise that how my body changes can affect how I feel about myself and how I may behave. HWB 2-47a</p> <p>I can describe the physical and emotional changes during puberty, understand why they are taking place and the importance of personal hygiene. HWB 2-48a</p>	<p>With the appropriate level of support and resources children and young people learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ They are growing up. ▶ Their body changes asw they grow from a boy to a man/from a girl to a woman. ▶ That changes are a good thing. ▶ That changes happen to all boys and girls. ▶ That this time of change is called puberty. ▶ To indicate to an adult if upset. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ I show awareness that people change from babies through to older people (we grow up). ▶ I can identify what changes will happen/are happening to me as I grow up (puberty). ▶ I can share my feelings about the changes that happen to me.

Links to other themes

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

- ▶ My Body
- ▶ Personal Hygiene
- ▶ Relationships

Why this learning matters

Children and young people need to learn about their body, and the changes that come with puberty, to promote independence and good physical and mental health and wellbeing. Children and young people with complex additional support needs usually grow up and go through puberty like every other child, but some may go through puberty early, some may have puberty delayed, and sometimes medication can impact on timing and experience of puberty. This all means that it is important to know every child as an individual.

With open discussion about our body and a positive focus on the changes that come with puberty we can ensure that children and young people are prepared for puberty. It is important that learning begins before the obvious signs of puberty. Learning will help avoid stress or distress that can come with not understanding these natural processes and changes as they happen.

Learning as part of this unit sits alongside learning in the unit called **Relationships** where young people are supported to think about feelings and attraction to others

Activities, ideas and supports for learning

There are 3 sections:

1. I am growing up
2. My body is changing
3. Menstruation

I am growing up/We all grow up (Supporting PowerPoint available)

The PowerPoint provided has a series slides with images, several slides illustrate each of the 6 stages of life. Focus on each slide, the word associated with the images, and one stage at a time, to build awareness and understanding. The slide set starts with the key message: *I am growing up. We all grow up.*

I am growing up. We all grow up.

- ▶ Baby
- ▶ Toddler
- ▶ Child
- ▶ Teenager
- ▶ Adult
- ▶ Old person

I am growing up/Card sort (Supporting download available)

Print and laminate as many of the images as you want to work with. There are several things you can do with learners.

- ▶ Have children/young people identify/sort photographs from a particular stage: *Let's find all the babies... Let's find all the teenagers just like you...*
- ▶ Use the print outs (one image from each stage or more) to create the timeline of the 6 stages of life. Depending on the learner, begin with baby/babies and move through to the stage the learner is currently at as a child or teenager. As awareness and understanding grows, sequence the cards from baby to old person. You can connect a stage with familiar people: *I am an adult.*
- ▶ With this activity, and with the PowerPoint, some learners might be able to have conversations about stages of life: *What do babies like? What can a toddler do? etc.*



This is me growing up

Use photos of the learner to build a very personal timeline and sort photographs of them, from baby through to their current life stage. It is worth remembering that there may be a need for some sensitivity to circumstances: this might not be possible as some families may not have these photographs, or they might be unavailable if a child/young person is not living with their birth family or is living in a residential setting.

Life cycles/Looking after plants and animals

If you want to extend learning and your learners would benefit from accessing Early or First Level RSHP material that explores *life cycles* along with *looking after plants and animals* please do take a look at these Activity Plans and supporting material:

- ▶ [Early Level - RSHP](#)
- ▶ [First Level - RSHP](#)

2. My body is changing

In these activities we use the wording: I am growing up. My body is changing. This is a good thing. You can choose to introduce and use the word puberty with learners. Content can be used to learn about body changes for girls and boys. You may have questions about whether your learners have the cognitive ability to learn about the changes to the body of a child of the opposite sex, but it is important that you also provide such opportunities. The purpose of these materials is to support awareness and understanding of the physical changes that can be distressing or confusing for some learners.

Our appearance changes

We are seeking to support learners to show an awareness that people change in relation to their appearance. Have some fun with this, looking at how we can change our appearance by wearing wigs, hats, glasses... *You look different? How come?*

You can use these observations and questions in relation to the earlier activity using the images of children growing to adulthood, or with the child's own photographs. You can identify key features that remain very similar, and those physical aspects or characteristics that change as children grow. I can see it's you growing up, look at your brown eyes in all the pictures? Your smile?... But you are changing. *You are taller... Your hands are bigger.... You could do class grow charts – height, foot size etc.*

My body is changing

(Supporting PowerPoint and download available)

The focus here is on external (visible) body changes that come with growing up/puberty. The slides and downloadable images allow you to describe and support the learner to identify changes. Please make changes to the slides, and to how you talk about body changes, when you are aware that a syndrome/genetic condition impacts on the young person's body, for example on penis size:

I am growing up. My body is changing.

- ▶ *Image of teenager and adult male. Slides show changes to: pubic hair, body hair, hair on my face, underarm hair, spots on my face, my penis will get bigger, my testicles will get bigger.*
- ▶ *Image of teenager and adult female. Slides show changes to: pubic hair, body hair, underarm hair, spots on my face, my hips will get broader, my breasts will get bigger.*
- ▶ **My body is changing. This is a good thing.**

For more on hair growth and removal see the unit on **Personal Hygiene**.

Erections/Arousal

To support the learner to understand erections or arousal we have provided a script which you can develop as a PowerPoint or social story. You can use images from whatever communication system the young person uses, or you can draw on images from our image bank: [IMAGES - RSHP](#) The script provided is intended as a very straightforward attempt at information giving and reassurance. In other units we address ways to support learning around behaviours such as touching/rubbing genitals as self-soothing or masturbation.

It may be necessary to build understanding of the language/concepts used here in advance of using the scripts. For example to make sure young men understand hard and soft. Or young women understand slippery and wet.

Erections (Boys/Young Men)

- ▶ **I am growing up. My body is changing.**
- ▶ **My penis can get hard. This is called an erection.**
- ▶ **My penis can get hard. This is normal.**
- ▶ **After a while my penis will be soft again.**

Arousal (Girls/Young Women)

- ▶ **I am growing up. My body is changing.**
- ▶ **My vulva can become wet and slippery. This is normal.**

Wet dreams

Again, some basic content to inform and reassure. You can use images from whatever communication system the young person uses, or you can draw on images from our image bank: [IMAGES - RSHP](#) In conversation with parents and carers you can agree additional messages, for example explaining that the child can tell their parent, or they can remove soiled sheets from their bed and put them beside the washing machine.

For boys: Wet dreams

- ▶ **I am growing up. My body is changing.**
- ▶ **My penis can get hard. This is called an erection.**
- ▶ **My penis can get hard. This is normal.**
- ▶ **When I am asleep semen can come out of my penis. This is a wet dream. This is normal.**



For girls: Wet dreams

- ▶ **I am growing up. My body is changing.**
- ▶ **When I am asleep my vulva can become wet and slippery.**
- ▶ **This is a wet dream. This is normal.**

There is more on the RSHP resource at Second Level if you are looking for further content to extend learning on erections or wet dreams: [Second Level - RSHP](#)



3. Menstruation

(Supporting PowerPoint available)

There are a number of additional resources that we point to in the unit folder that might be helpful in your work with girls – social stories, animations, books. The PowerPoint we provide offers the most basic content to inform and reassure. Alongside this information there will of course need to be practical support and an ongoing dialogue with every girl about managing their periods. Slides are provided that give the option of referencing sanitary towels or period pants, use/delete and of course supplement the slide set as appropriate for your use. As with all supporting PowerPoints do create what suits and supports your learners. .

Menstruation

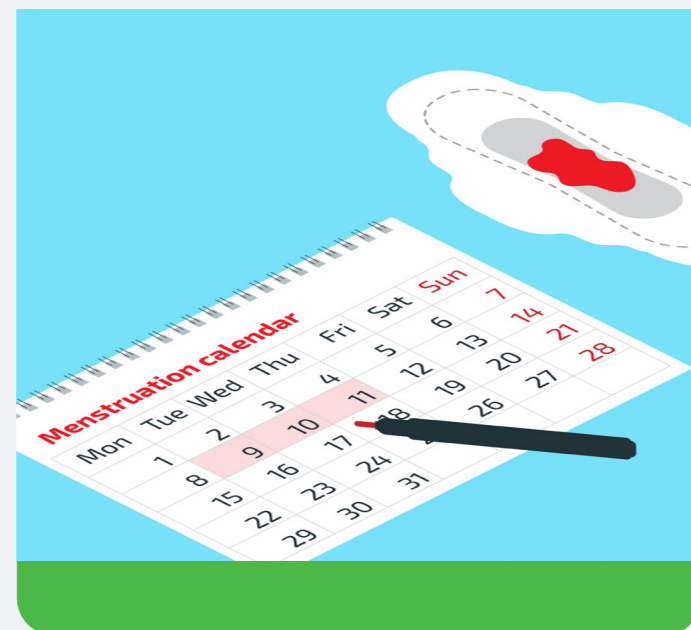
- ▶ **I am growing up. My body is changing.**
- ▶ **I will have my period. This is a good thing.**
- ▶ **With my period I will have some blood come out of my vagina. This is normal. This happens for 2 to 7 days.**
- ▶ **I will wear a sanitary towel in my pants.**
- ▶ **I will wear period pants.**
- ▶ **I can talk about my periods if I am upset.**

Menstruation box

Learning about menstruation can happen at any time, before they start of course, but also in those teachable moments when a girl is managing their period. A menstruation box - it can be designed and decorated with an individual girl, or for the girls in your group/class - can hold all the items needed to learn about, practice and manage periods.

In creating your menstruation box think about what is relevant to the girl/girls: pants, different sanitary towels, wings /no wings, day/night, different absorbencies, period pants, a doll to practice on.

It is important for the girl to be able to touch or smell relevant products. It can also help to introduce some red fluid to represent blood flow and how the sanitary products work. You can use black currant squash or tomato juice but be careful not to use too much, an average blood flow might be around about 2 – 3 tablespoons (of 14ml) or 6 teaspoons (of 5ml) over several days. Of course some girls/women will have heavier or lighter period flow. As well as touching/practicing with the products girls can be supported to think about putting used products in a bin and washing hands. A set of picture instructions could be posted in school and at home to help remind the young woman of the process.



Comfort box

For the days when a girl is feeling poorly create a box of items that help comfort and sooth – items like a wheat bag that can be warmed up for a sore tummy. Build content with the girl and make it available to her when it is needed. When she understands the box is available to her she may communicate the need for it. You can also work across home and school to support the girl to communicate how she is feeling, working with whatever tools you have for day to day communication. Remember also that exercise/physical movement can help and so provide the girl with space and support as required.

Observation, awareness and keeping a diary

All girls and young women experience different symptoms and severities surrounding their periods, and it's no different for girls and young women with learning disabilities. It is important to use what we sense or observe when it comes to hormonal changes/moods. Family and staff who know each girl well will know when their behaviour changes, perhaps they are quieter, more withdrawn, in pain or discomfort, more agitated or upset. Periods may be irregular, but together family and school could keep a diary so that it is possible to think about a girl's menstrual cycle, this will help the familiar adults around the child to prepare and respond, supporting her emotionally and practically.

Extending learning

In the identification of which CfE Experiences and Outcomes are of relevance to our learners with complex needs we have drawn on those at Second Level. This is not because we expect our learners to be learning at that Level for say Literacy or Numeracy, but because they remind us that much of what we do needs to be age as well as developmentally appropriate. If your learners would benefit from extending learning beyond what is described in this booklet please do refer to other RSHP material at Second Level for some useful material you might want to adapt.

▶ [Second Level - RSHP](#)

▶ [Second Level - RSHP](#)



And finally....

I can indicate to an adult if I am upset

Children/young people may be upset about aspects of learning about body changes or puberty. As they learn we want them to understand and remember who they can find support from. The My Circle exercise described in the unit called Personal Space and Boundaries can support children and young people to identify who they can tell 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.

