

Puberty

Puberty can be a confusing time for everyone experiencing it. However, with some extra planning time and access to resources, those facing it are less likely to feel confused or worried about what is happening.

When does puberty start?

Puberty starts at around 10 – 11 for girls and 11 – 13 for boys but you can start to notice changes from as early as 8 for girls and 9 for boys.

What can you do to support your child in advance of this?

Depending on the age of your child there are a few different things you can do.

For children that have yet to start puberty, you can talk about the differences in bodies for adults and children. Underarm hair and beards are good examples of things that are different but perfectly normal. You can also teach them about public and private spaces and what you can do in these areas. For example, it is okay to be naked in the shower at home but it is not ok to be naked in school.

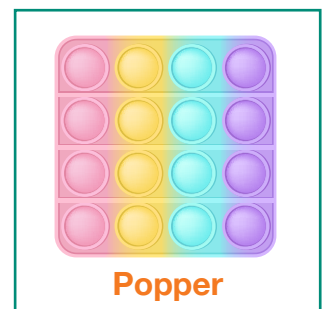
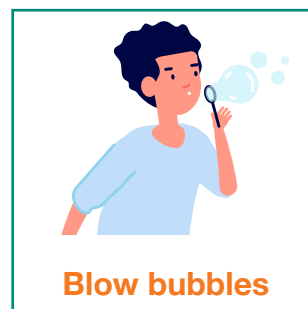
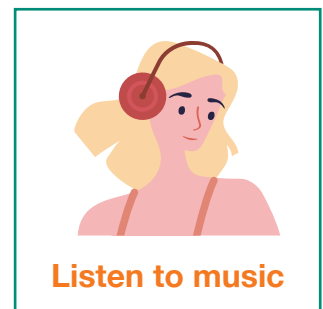
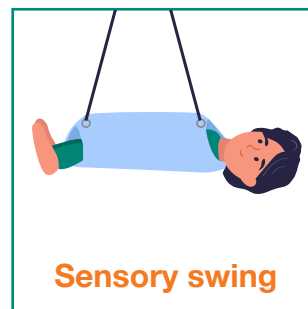
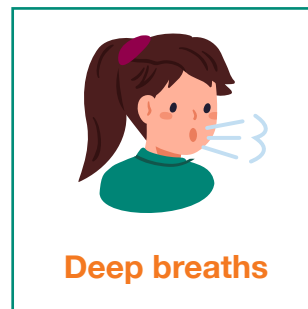
Once they have started to show some signs of changing you can explain about puberty and what changes will specifically be happening to their bodies using the correct language (for example breasts developing, hair in the pubic area).

How can I teach my child about puberty?

Visual stories and visual aids are a great way of showing your child what the changes could look like which will take away the worries around it. For an example of what a social story looks like, see our resources page on our website.

You could show your child a photograph of you when you were a child and explain that you went through puberty too. Make sure you are using clear sentences that factually describe the changes. For example, you could say to your daughter, 'You will start to have periods. A period is where blood will come out of your vagina...'. With menstruation, it is better to teach your child in advance about the products you will be helping them use as there can be sensory issues that you may need to work on.

As well as the physical changes that their bodies go through, they will also experience emotional changes as they transition from a child to an adult. Using visuals to show different activities they can engage in when they are feeling sad or angry is a great way to show them that these emotional changes are just a part of normal life.



Hygiene

Where you can, show your child what is the appropriate hygiene routine they need to do (e.g., shaving). This will help to take the mystery out of it. As their bodies change, it is good practice to make sure they are cleaning themselves properly in the shower and to be as independent in this as possible.

Washing Hands Turn tap on	
Put soap on hands	
Wash hands	
Rinse hands	
Dry hands	

Consent

When a child is going through puberty it is a good idea to strengthen their understanding of consent. That means telling them when it is ok to touch other people (e.g., hugs for family, high five for friends) and that it is not ok for other people to touch their private parts.

If you have any worries or concerns, then please speak to your school or doctor.

For tips and information about teaching consent and assent, see our **Supporting safe interactions** factsheet.