My changing body

Year: Y3

Subjects and Issues

Growing and changing Personal hygiene
Puberty Relationships education Periods
Menstruation Relationships Body changes
National Curriculum science - relationships elements

Please note from September 2026 pupils should be taught the correct names of body parts, including the penis, vulva, vagina, testicles, scrotum, nipples. Pupils should understand that all of these parts of the body are private and have skills to understand and express their own boundaries around these body parts. The RHSE guidance does not specify when pupils should be taught this content; that is a decision for the school.

Before the lesson

NB: the **Science National Curriculum** statement associated with this lesson is from the Y5 Programme of Study. However, it is not uncommon for menstruation to begin before that age. Girls can start their periods as young as 8 years old, so it is strongly recommended that children learn about periods from Y3/P4. You are best placed to decide whether to introduce the lesson at this age or leave for Y4/P5, alongside the SCARF lesson that follows on from it, entitled *Preparing for changes at puberty.*

In its update 2025 guidance, the DfE acknowledges that whilst the average age of the onset of menstruation is twelve, periods can start at eight, so covering this topic before girls' periods start will help them understand what to expect and avoid distress.

Teachers have reported to us that they have successfully delivered this lesson towards the end of Y3/P4, rather than earlier in the year.

Please also note that the Growing and Changing Glossary - including changes at puberty will be useful to have available for possible guidance/reference, when teaching this lesson.

Using a Question Box

Note also: the nature of this subject may prompt lots of questions from children in your class (in particular the girls). There may be some children who don't feel confident to ask a question that they have, given the sensitive nature of the subject. To help with this, consider using a Question Box so that children can ask questions anonymously and be sure that their concerns are addressed in this safe way. See the film (in Resources needed area) on how to use the Question Box.

Introduction

Start by reviewing the class agreement or develop one if not already developed, see suggested ground rules/ class agreement.

Ask the children to think about how kittens are born (come from their mummy's tummy/womb, between 1-8 born at the same time.) Explain that adult female cats will have a special place in their bodies called a womb or uterus. This is where the kittens grow before they are ready to be born.

Explain that humans are like kittens. They are both mammals.

Mammals grow babies inside the mother until they are ready to be born. Babies are made from two seeds; an egg from the female and a sperm from the male. Female humans normally release one egg (maybe two to create non–identical twins; identical twins occur when a sperm fertilises an egg and then the fertilised egg splits in half to create two identical babies.) Male humans can release up to 300 million sperm, but only one will fertilise the egg.

Explain that we are going to learn about eggs and what happens to them when the egg from a

female *doesn't* meet a sperm to make a baby. *If a child does ask how the sperm meets the egg, you have the option of explaining that this is covered in Year 5 or 6, depending on your planned programme, or that it would be a question best asked at home. Should you signpost children to ask a question at home, ensure you let the parent or carer know, and signpost them to our relationships and puberty parent support page). Avoid using euphemisms like a 'special cuddle' as this can confuse children whose families use the phrase 'special cuddle' to refer to an actual cuddle when greeting relatives, for example, and can undermine safeguarding work.*

Activity 1 - Puberty changes

Start by asking the children what they remember from lessons about their bodies in Year 2. (That the girls' and boys' bodies are different, that we have private parts of the body).

What parts of the body are private? [penis, testicles, scrotum, vulva, vagina, nipples, anus; recap which parts males have, which females have, which ones both have]

Emphasise that nobody should ask to see or touch these parts of the body [unless we give permission, e.g. to see a doctor]

These parts are private, but remember, your whole body belongs to you.

Can they remember why boys' and girls' bodies are different? (So that if a person wants to, they can create a baby when they are older.)

Next, ask:

- Can anyone tell us what else happens to the body before someone can create a baby? (Girls: breasts develop, hips widen, periods start, get taller, get bigger, may get spots, greasy hair, more body hair, genitals mature. Boys: get taller, get bigger, may get spots, greasy hair, have more body hair including facial hair, the voice deepens, genitals mature.)
- Can anyone tell us what this change is called? (Puberty.)

- Can anyone remember what parts of the body are needed to create a baby? (Testicles/Sperm and Ovaries/Eggs.)
- What are the testicles for? (From puberty they make and store the sperm that helps make a baby)
- Where do girls store their eggs? (They have something similar called ovaries which store the eggs but they are kept inside their body between the hips above the womb. Girls are born with their eggs already in the ovaries, but they are only released once they start puberty.)

Explain to the children that when a boy reaches puberty; ***anytime from the age of 9, but usually around 10-12 years old,*** their testicles start to make and store sperm. ***Testicles*** are held outside the body in a sack of skin called the ***scrotum.*** Sometimes the ***sperm*** leaves the body at night via the ***penis***. This is often called a ***wet dream*** and is totally normal if you have them and totally normal if you don't. It is common to experience ***involuntary erections***, also called a spontaneous erection. This occurs when the penis becomes hard and points away from the body, known as an ***erection***. These erections are totally normal and can happen at any age, though they are more frequent in adolescents and young adults. They often occur during sleep and it is not uncommon for people to wake up with an erection too.

When a girl reaches puberty, ***anytime from the age of eight, though most commonly at about the age of 12,*** she can start releasing eggs. These eggs are released inside her. Distribute the *Female internal reproductive organs and Male internal reproductive organs* Activity sheets (see Resources needed area).

Using the labelled IWB resource (see Resources needed area) ask the children to label their activity sheets using the IWB as a guide. (NB: the IWB resource contains a second slide showing the male internal reproductive organs. It will be useful to use this if questions about boys' internal reproductive organs arise, particularly to explain how the testicles are linked to the penis by a tube which the sperm uses to leave the body.)

NB: use the Puberty Glossary for reference if necessary.

Activity 2 - Menstrual Cycle

Using the image on the IWB explain that inside every female are ***ovaries*** that contain tiny eggs (the word Ovum is Latin for egg) and that about once a month, when a female has reached puberty she releases one egg from an ovary. This egg travels along the ***fallopian tube*** towards the ***uterus (womb)***.

In preparation for the egg, the ***lining of the uterus*** thickens. But if the egg is not fertilized inside the female's body (it doesn't meet the male seed - the ***sperm)*** the lining isn't needed and so the woman/girl passes this lining, in the form of blood, along with the tiny egg, out through her ***vagina***. The vagina is inside the body, like a pathway. Blood comes from the uterus, through the vagina, and out into the pants area - the ***vulva.***

This monthly 'bleed' is called a period and lasts approximately 3 – 7 days.

Reassure the children that the amount of blood in total is small – only about 3-5 tablespoons. Explain that this is all perfectly normal and shows that a girl's body is getting ready for adulthood and will enable her to have a baby if she wants to.

You can show the clip of menstruation from the Kidshealth website to illustrate this cycle: **view this film here.**

Distribute the *Menstruation cycle* Activity sheet and ask the children to cut out the 4 pictures, then glue them onto a blank piece of paper in the right order. (The correct order is B, D, A, C.) You can use the *Menstruation Cycle* image to demonstrate this.

Ask whether anyone can explain what a girl or woman could use to protect her clothes when she is having a period? (Period/menstruation pads, tampons or maybe even menstruation cups. You can use the Puberty Glossary to explain pads and tampons. Menstruation cups are plastic devices that women can place inside

their vagina to collect period blood. See Mooncup.com for more information. It needs to be emptied regularly, just the same as changing a pad or tampon on a regular basis for safety reasons associated with toxic shock syndrome.)

Use the images of Period Products on the IWB or bring examples to show the children. You may find it useful to know that the DfE is running a **Period Product scheme** where you can order a range of period products and have them delivered free of charge. The *labelled side view of the female reproductive system* resource can be useful to show that girls have three holes and that period products, such as tampons and menstrual cups, go in a separate hole from the one that the wee comes out of.

Explain the need for extra care to be taken by girls at this time of the month - regular changing of pads (or other items used to protect clothing) every 4-6 hours, and to change underwear regularly.

Explain, too, that the hormones (chemicals) which cause the changes at puberty also make a person's sweat glands more active. This means that the person needs to wash more regularly.

Teacher guidance: you may find it useful to have some responses ready if the children ask some tricky questions during this lesson, or you may choose to raise these questions as part of the lesson. For example:

What is the white stuff that can appear in girl's pants? That is called vaginal discharge, and can be a clear, white or off-white fluid that comes from your vagina. It's made of cells and bacteria. Discharge helps keep your vagina clean and healthy. It also helps protect against infection. Vaginal discharge is natural and normal. It is often a sign that puberty has started.

How does someone know if their periods will start soon? Everyone is different and some people can start as young as eight years old whereas others may not start till their 14 or 15. Signs that puberty has started and periods may be next to start, are; breast buds

developing, vaginal discharge being produced, hair appearing under the arms or around the vulva, hips getting wider, and putting on weight as the body gets getting bigger and taller.

Summing up

Summarise by explaining that both wet dreams and periods are a normal part of growing up and show that the body is working as it should; that is's getting ready for being an adult. It is nothing to be ashamed of and we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for sperm, eggs and periods. Also recognising that some children may be IVF babies.

Extension (optional)

Children could go home and talk to their parents about what they remember about when they first started puberty, and how they felt.

Adapting lessons for learners with additional needs

Teachers will need to consider the individual needs of children in their class in order to ensure the activities are inclusive. Advice from specialist teachers or the school SENDco may be helpful. Examples might include:

- It would be particularly useful for children with SEND to have physical self-care/puberty product objects that they can look at and be shown how they are designed to be used.
- Dependent on the level of need, it may be useful to build in time each day with pupils to practice using different products, e.g. brushing teeth, combing hair, and using deodorant.
- Using the Widgit symbols provided in this booklet provided by the NSPCC may be useful for some learners to access the learning, particularly as part of pre-teaching or overlearning opportunities

Our additional Signposting and Support page provides further guidance on adapting SCARF lessons to meet the needs of learners with additional needs.

Did you know?

Our specially trained educators can deliver RSE workshops that include the topics covered in this lesson. The advantages include providing staff with the opportunity to observe someone, which gives them the confidence and skills to deliver RSE going forward. Contact your local team to check the availability of these workshops for your school.

Version History

Wed, 08 Apr 2026

- Simplified side-view of female reproductive organs added

Thu, 02 Apr 2026

- Wording updated to include explanation of all private parts – more detailed explanation of scrotum, vagina and vulva.
- Vocabulary updated to include scrotum, vulva, nipples, anus, involuntary erections

Sun, 29 Mar 2026

- Recommendation added from RSHE guidance 2025 about teaching about menstruation from eight years old
- Teacher guidance related to answering or prompting further questions added

Mon, 11 Aug 2025

- Wording updated to provide guidance if children ask questions about sexual intercourse

Thu, 31 Jul 2025

- Extra ideas added for learners with additional needs

Learning Outcomes

Children will be able to:

- Recognise that babies come from the joining of an egg and sperm;
- Explain what happens when an egg doesn't meet a sperm;
- Understand that for girls, periods are a normal part of puberty.

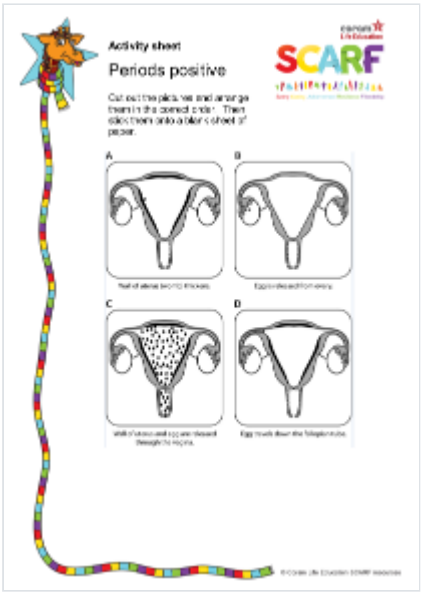
Key Vocabulary

egg
sperm
puberty
fallopian tube
ovary
uterus (womb)
lining
vagina
period/menstruation pad
period
tampon
menstruation cup
breasts
genitals
testicles
womb
wet dreams
penis
mammals
fertilise
birth
hips
periods
spots
sweat
pubic hair
cervix
menstrual cycle
menstruation

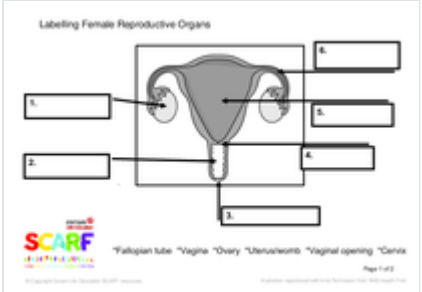
If using the film clips, the following words are also used:
fertilised egg
pregnant
erection
vulva
nipples
scrotum
anus
involuntary erections
ovaries

Resources needed

Scissors, glue and blank A4 sheets (to stick correct order for periods Activity sheet onto) - enough for one per child

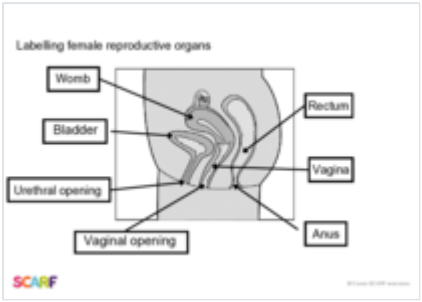


Menstrual cycle - Activity sheet - enough for one each



Female and Male Internal Reproductive Organs Y3
Unlabelled Activity Sheet.pdf

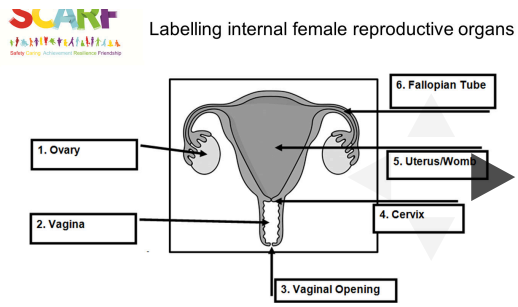
Menstruation Cycle — can be printed or shown on IWB



Basic Female Reproductive Organs Side View — can be printed or shown on IWB

14 Using a question box

Whiteboards



Labelling female and male internal organs

DfE Relationships Education and Health Education statutory requirements

- Relationships Education Being safe 7. How to report concerns or abuse, and the vocabulary and confidence needed to do so.
- Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing (Health Education) Changing adolescent body 1. Key facts about puberty and the changing adolescent body, particularly from age 9 through to age 11, including physical and emotional changes.
- Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing (Health Education) Changing adolescent body 2. About menstrual wellbeing including the key facts about the menstrual cycle.

DfE Relationships Education and Health Education statutory requirements (2025)

- Being Safe 7. How to ask for advice or help for themselves or others, and to keep trying until they are heard. Where to get advice e.g. family, school and/or other sources.
- Caring friendships 4. The characteristics of friendships that lead to happiness and security, including mutual respect, honesty, trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, trust, sharing interests and experiences, and support with problems and difficulties.

- Developing bodies 1. About growth and other ways the body can change and develop, particularly during adolescence. This topic should include the human lifecycle, and puberty should be discussed as a stage in this process.
- Developing bodies 2. The correct names of body parts, including the penis, vulva, vagina, testicles, scrotum, nipples. Pupils should understand that all of these parts of the body are private and have skills to understand and express their own boundaries around these body parts.
- Developing bodies 3. The facts about the menstrual cycle, including physical and emotional changes, whilst the average age of the onset of menstruation is twelve, periods can start at eight, so covering this topic before girls' periods start will help them understand what to expect and avoid distress.

PSHE Association Learning Opportunities

- H30 . To identify the external genitalia and internal reproductive organs in males and females and how the process of puberty relates to human reproduction.
- H31 . About the physical and emotional changes that happen when approaching and during puberty (including menstruation, key facts about the menstrual cycle and menstrual wellbeing, erections and wet dreams).
- H32 . About how hygiene routines change during the time of puberty, the importance of keeping clean and how to maintain personal hygiene.
- H33 . About the processes of reproduction and birth as part of the human life cycle; how babies are conceived and born (and that there are ways to prevent a baby being made); how babies need to be cared for.
- H34 . About where to get more information, help and advice about growing and changing, especially about puberty.