Growing up and changing bodies

Year: Y5

Subjects and Issues

Body parts Feelings FGM
Growing and changing Hygiene
Personal hygiene Puberty
Dental hygiene/teeth & oral health
Relationships education Periods Menstruation
Body changes Emotions
National Curriculum science - relationships elements
Female genital mutilation (FGM)
Sex (protected characteristic)

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.

Ensure a safe and familiar location and if possible gather pupils' own questions about puberty (or body changes as they grow older) before the session to help involve them and to maximise the value of the session. Review the class agreement or develop one if not already developed. Look at suggested ground rules/ class agreement.

Introduction

Thank pupils in advance for any questions that they might have and explain that as many as possible will be answered within the session.

'Puberty' - what do you think it means? In pairs, discuss what you think it might say in a dictionary.

Gather ideas and clarify that 'puberty' is the word given to the time in a person's life when their body begins to change from a child's body to an adult's body one that is capable of reproduction. Clarify that changes include physical changes, emotional changes, and psychological changes.

Explain that male and female bodies have differences, and things in common. We'll learn about both kinds of bodies today. This is important for all pupils – to have an awareness and understanding of what all the changes bodies go through during puberty, to help them be respectful and supportive of those around them.

Emphasise that everyone is unique. Not everyone starts puberty at the same age, some earlier than others and some go through puberty faster than others. Girls often start before boys. Can anyone remember when these changes can start happening? (Any time from 8 for girls and 9 for boys, but the average age is 11 for girls, and 12 for boys). Explain that chemicals produced in the body called hormones cause puberty, it is natural and part of growing into an adult. You may find it useful to show this video to the class to introduce this topic:

Taking care of your body during puberty

Today we are going to have a chance to talk together about the different changes that happen when a person reaches puberty.

Activity 1

Provide groups with a bag of objects (alternatively use the IWB slide provided - see Resources needed area) to discuss in small groups of three or four. Ask the pupils to discuss how the objects might be linked with puberty and what a person might use them for. Allow a few minutes for the pupils to discuss the items.

Ask pupils to return objects to the bag then go through the objects and discuss with pupils.

Ideas might include:

Deodorant: can be used by young adults – both male and female - as they might begin to sweat more. Although regular washing can help someone stay clean and smelling fresh, deodorants are used in addition to washing by some people to help them feel confident about this.

Soap or shower gel: like deodorant, regular washing can help someone feel confident about their body.

Tissues: During puberty, some people feel more emotional than before and can be caught unawares by emotions at times. Tissues and a supportive friend can be really helpful. Emotions usually settle down after puberty.

Washing Powder: To help people recognise that it is stale sweat that smells, it might be useful to source a small box of washing powder/tablets to help explain that as well as keeping their body clean and using deodorant, they'll also need to wash their clothes more often, and for girls to change their underwear twice a day - morning and night, or as needed, if wearing disposable pads.

Spot cream/facial wash: Some people find that hormone changes during puberty cause spots to appear more often than before. A few people can find this is a problem for them. A talk with a pharmacist or medical professional might be helpful and special creams and washes are developed to treat such conditions. After puberty, these problems usually go away.

Period products: period/menstruation pads, tampons are designed to help girls and women stay hygienic and confident during their monthly period – we will talk about this a bit more later. Other products, e.g. menstruation cups, reusable pads, and period pants are available which some girls and women use as they are reusable and considered more environmentally friendly. You might 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 for free.

Toothbrush and Toothpaste: puberty brings a lot of hormonal changes that can significantly affect oral health, especially in children aged 8 and up who are entering adolescence. Estrogen and testosterone levels rise, increasing blood flow to gum tissues. This heightened circulation can make gums more sensitive, swollen, and prone to bleeding, especially during brushing. The gums may also react more strongly to plaque and bacteria. Bad breath and gum tenderness may appear due to increased bacteria. So good hygiene habits matter even more. Regular brushing and dental checkups are important. Puberty and Oral Health

Hair growth: one of the body changes at puberty is that of hair growth. Some people choose to shave underarms etc. but some choose not to: everyone is different. This is an opportunity to emphasise autonomy and a person's right to make decisions about their own bodies. (NB: no image of a razor has been included in the IWB slide. This is to help prevent girls from feeling that it is the norm to start shaving as soon as they grow hair underarms and that they must do this).

Establish with the class that it is important that young people have a good understanding of how their bodies will change, to keep themeselves and each other safe, and to feel prepared for growing up. To help talk about the body changes special vocabulary is needed for the body - see our Puberty Glossary for support in explaining these changes.

Activity 2

Recap the names for the private parts of the male and female body:

Female:

- Vulva (External parts of female genitals which are visible. This includes the clitoris, two sets of labia - the inner and the outer - and the entrance to the vagina.)
- Vagina (Inside the body - the opening of the reproductive part of the girl's body (the passage

which leads to the womb. This is also where tampons and Mooncups or Menstrual cups are placed during menstruation.)
- Ovaries (Where eggs are stored)
- Eggs (Cell needed for reproduction)
- Womb (Space for baby to grow)
- Clitoris (A small, soft pea shaped bud which lies above the urinary opening and is protected by the clitoral hood. Very sensitive part of the body.)
- Labia (includes both the smaller lips/folds of skin that surround the entrance to the vagina and urinary opening (wee hole), and the outer lips/folds of skin that surround the inner lips)
- Breasts (These develop and grow during puberty. Breasts produce milk after childbirth, to feed a baby.)

Male:

- Penis (This is the shaft-shaped reproductive organ that hangs outside the male body. It helps transport urine (wee) and sperm away from the body.)
- Testicles (produce millions of sperm everyday once a boy starts puberty)
- Scrotum (sack of skin that holds the testicles outside the body)
- Sperm (cell needed for reproduction)

Both:

- Nipples (help a baby to drink milk from its mother's breasts. Boys and girls have nipples but only females grow breasts when they're older. Some babies are breastfed, some babies are bottle fed.)
- Anus (end of the digestive system, where poo comes from)
- Pubic Hair (Hair which starts to grow around the genitals during puberty..

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.

Activity 3

Discuss the way female bodies grow and change:

- Breasts develop to enable a female to feed a baby
- Hips widen
- Height increases
- Weight increases
- Vagina begins to self-clean, producing vaginal discharge
- Periods begin (usually within a year of the discharge appearing)
- Body hair grows around the genitalia and under the arms

Discuss the way male bodies grow and change:

- Height increases
- Weight increases
- Chest and shoulders grow bigger
- Body hair grows on the face, under armpits, and around the genitalia.
- Penis and testes grow in size
- Semen begins to be produced
- Involuntary erections and wet dreams may be experienced

You may find it useful to share both the *Female and the Male Puberty Changes* images here.

Again, emphasise that everyone is unique and special and that changes start at different times, progress at different rates and everyone's unique genetic code determines what a person will be like as an adult.

Activity 4

Remind pupils that there were some period/menstruation pads in the bag and explain that it is a chance now to talk about these.

Show a picture of the female reproductive parts. Explain that every female has ovaries that contain tiny eggs and that once a month an adult female releases one egg from their ovary and it 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 the lining isn't needed

and so the woman/girl passes the blood out through her vagina. This monthly 'bleed' is called a period and lasts approximately 3 – 7 days. Reassure the pupils that the amount of blood in total is only about 3-5 tablespoons. It may be helpful to emphasise the amazing ability of a female's body to support an unborn child as it develops in her body. The *Menstrual Cycle* image can be used to illustrate this.

Show pupils how period/menstruation pads can be placed in a pair of underwear. Show tampons.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.

If a girl had just started her periods, which form of protection might be easiest, to begin with? [Towels will allow the girl to see how much blood is passing and be aware of when a change might be needed].

Have you heard how a girl or woman might know her period is about to start? Headaches or stomach cramps may precede a period. Discuss vaginal discharge – how this might change over the month: usually creamy whitish colour/ texture – this is normal and a healthy sign the vagina is cleaning itself. If it goes stretchy/ slippery, this could be a sign of ovulation – the egg being released from the ovary. If it goes a yellow/ brownish colour, it could be a sign that period blood will soon appear.

Show a small bag containing period products (a range will enable them to discuss the product types available to choose from. Menstruation cups are a fairly recent product worn internally and washed for re-use. Environmental consideration and financial implications may encourage older girls towards these) – having some in a school bag ready will perhaps provide a feeling of preparedness for a young female. Discussions with a trusted adult, such as a parent, about different forms of protection might be something to advise at this point.

If someone started their period at school and didn't have any protection, who could they talk to?

Reassure young girls that there are staff (name these) available who could provide period products in an emergency.

Explain that periods may not be regular at first and that it can be useful to track when a period happens as it can help us predict when the next period will come. They usually happen every 28-35 days, although that can be different for different people . A quick and easy way to do this is to print off a yearly calendar and mark the first day of your period and how long it lasts with a pen. (It might be useful to print off a few so that those that want to can take one home - perhaps offering a more discreet time for them to collect one, if they'd rather not in front of the rest of the class). Then count on 28 days from when the first day of your last period started and that will give you a rough idea of when your next period might start, so you can plan ahead, such as taking pads or period pants on holiday. (Some children might mention period trackers that can be used on smartphones but women who tracked their menstrual cycle using smartphone apps have been warned about the privacy and safety risks of doing so.)

Explain how used protection should be disposed of.

When people experience changes such as those associated with puberty they might feel anxious. This is normal. Although it is normal to feel anxious, what could young people do to help themselves manage their anxieties?

Emphasise that every young person has the right to decide what happens to their body.

Who is the best person to decide what happens to your body?

Very occasionally, young people have things done to their bodies that are criminal (against the law) in this country. These crimes involve cuts made to female genitalia -the vulva- the external area around the opening to the vagina.

If you were concerned about yourself, or a young person you know, are there people you can think of who can help?

How can young people show respect to one another during such challenging times?

Summing up

Reassure the pupils that puberty brings changes but that they gradually occur, not all at the same time. Praise pupils for their mature approach to the session and check questions have been answered. Emphasise the right of a person to decide what happens to their own body. Reiterate people and places where help if needed can be sought.

Extension (optional)

See National Curriculum links for options for further discussion, according to your school's policy concerning RSE.

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

Thu, 02 Apr 2026

- Wording updated to include explanation of the names for private parts for male and female bodies
- Vocabulary updated to include penis, testicles, scrotum, nipples, vulva, vagina, clitoris, labia

Mon, 10 Nov 2025

- Lesson content updated to include oral health
- IWB images updated to include dental hygiene items

Tue, 12 Aug 2025

- Content added regarding period trackers and the benefits of a paper calendar with link provided

Thu, 31 Jul 2025

- Extra ideas added for learners with additional needs

Learning Outcomes

Children will be able to:

- Identify some products that they may need during puberty and why;
- Understand changes to the body during puberty, including those linked to oral health;

- Know what menstruation is and why it happens.

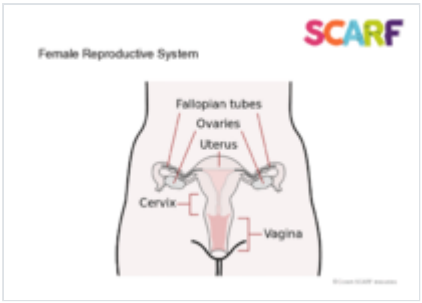
Key Vocabulary

puberty
genitalia
menstruation
semen
period
period/menstruation pad
tampon
managing feelings
oral health
penis
testicles
scrotum
vulva
vagina
clitoris
labia
nipples
vaginal discharge

Resources needed

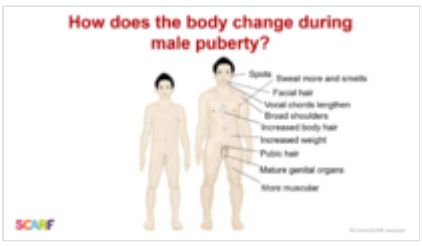
Bags containing items such as: deodorant, shower gel, tissues, period protection, spot cream/skin cleanser, toothpaste and toothbrush - or use the PPT images of these provided

Small bag containing period/menstruation pads to show the children, a pair of pants and possibly a disposal bag

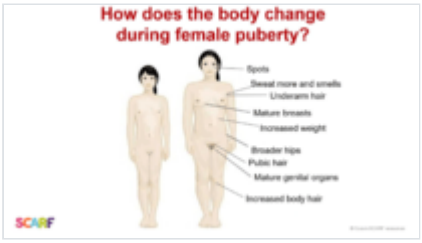


Growing up and changing bodies - Teacher resource to display on IWB

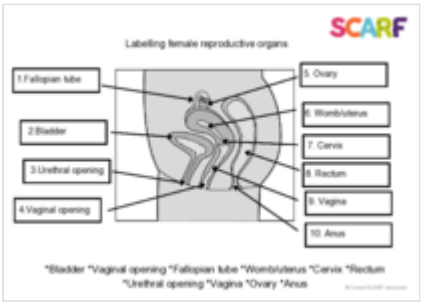
Menstruation Cycle — can be printed or shown on IWB



How does the body change during male puberty? — can be printed or shown on IWB



How does the body change during female puberty? — can be printed or shown on IWB



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

DfE Relationships Education and Health Education statutory requirements

- Relationships Education Families and people who care for me 6. How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed.
- Relationships Education Respectful relationships 8. The importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults.
- Relationships Education Being safe 2. About the concept of privacy and the implications of it for both children and adults; including that it is not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe.
- Relationships Education Being safe 3. That each person's body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe physical, and other, contact.
- 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 2. The concept of privacy and its implications for both children and adults; including that it is not always right to keep secrets if they relate to being safe.
- Being Safe 3. That each person’s body belongs to them, and the differences between appropriate and inappropriate or unsafe contact, including physical contact.

- **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.
- **Families and people who care for me** 6. How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed.
- **Health protection and prevention** 4. About dental health and the benefits of good oral hygiene, including brushing teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, cleaning between teeth, and regular check-ups at the dentist.
- **Online safety and awareness** 4. The importance of exercising caution about sharing any information about themselves online. Understanding the importance of privacy and location settings to protect information online.
- **Respectful, kind relationships** 8. The importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness. Pupils should have opportunities to think about how they foster their own self-esteem and build a strong sense of their own identity, including through developing skills and interests.

PSHE Association Learning Opportunities

- 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.
- H45 . That female genital mutilation (FGM) is against British law, what to do and whom to tell if they think they or someone they know might be at risk.
- R9 . How to recognise if family relationships are making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice.
- R22 . About privacy and personal boundaries; what is appropriate in friendships and wider relationships (including online).
- R25 . Recognise different types of physical contact; what is acceptable and unacceptable; strategies to respond to unwanted physical contact.
- R26 . About seeking and giving permission (consent) in different situations.
- R27 . About keeping something confidential or secret, when this should (e.g. a birthday surprise that others will find out about) or should not be agreed to, and when it is right to break a confidence or share a secret.

National Curriculum Links

- Science **Y5** **Animals including humans** (Non-statutory guidance) Pupils should draw a timeline to indicate stages in the growth and development of humans. They should learn about the changes experienced in puberty.