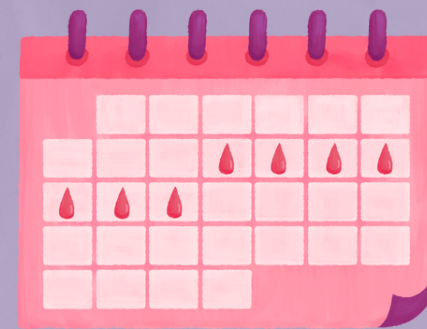


RSHE: PUBERTY



How can we support children
to prepare for puberty?



Katie GM 2024

PUBERTY VS ADOLESCENCE

PUBERTY

This refers to the physical changes in the body that make a person able to sexually reproduce.

ADOLESCENCE

This is the period of emotional and social transition between childhood and adulthood.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR COMPLEX LEARNERS?

This difference is important to keep in mind. Pupils with complex learning needs often experience delayed development of social and emotional skills. However, they will most likely undergo the physical changes of puberty within the typical time frame, which can be as early as 8 years of age. Therefore, they may experience the sensations of a physically mature body without the social, emotional or psychological maturity to understand these sensations.



ADVICE FOR PARENTS TO SUPPORT PUBERTY AND BODY CHANGES

Use the correct language for body parts and bodily functions. Our children are all going to grow up to be adults one day and need to be taught proper terms for a mature subject.

Start early with teaching privacy. With siblings and carers often around, privacy is difficult to find, but is absolutely appropriate at a certain point in life. Help your child learn when that is and how to safely obtain it.

Start practicing early. The sooner you and your child can develop a routine, the sooner he or she will get used to it. Teaching skills early makes it easier to incorporate them into everyday life.

Model appropriate hygiene behaviour. Let your child watch you when you shave, put on deodorant or any other activities that maintain good hygiene if you feel it's suitable.



HOW CAN WE SUPPORT STUDENTS IN SCHOOL?

As puberty begins, there are many new challenges for children to understand. Many children with ASD and complex needs struggle with the changes in self-care and hygiene routines that is necessary for managing puberty.

Use appropriate and correct terminology as not to confuse the child.
State scientific facts.

Not to be taught earlier than year 4 unless necessary to do so in order to safeguard pupils
(Draft RSHE statutory guidance 2023)

Use appropriate resources and visuals for their developmental stage.

Incorporate general hygiene topics into your PSHE / Life Skills sessions.





USING SOCIAL STORIES



How do social stories help?
Social stories present information in a literal, 'concrete' way, which may improve a person's understanding of a previously difficult or ambiguous situation or activity. The presentation and content can be adapted to meet different people's needs.

2. Gather information

Collect information about the situation you want to describe in your social story. Where does the situation occur? Who is it with? How does it begin and end? How long does it last? What actually happens in the situation and why? If it is for a situation where a particular outcome is not guaranteed, use words like 'sometimes' and 'usually' in the story.

1. Picture the goal

Consider the social story's purpose.

Now think about what the child needs to understand to achieve this goal.

3. Tailor the text

A social story needs to have a title, introduction, body and conclusion. It should use gentle and supportive language. It should answer six questions: where, when, who, what, how and why? It should be made up of descriptive sentences, and may also have coaching sentences. A descriptive sentence accurately describes the context, whereas a coaching sentence gently guides behaviour.



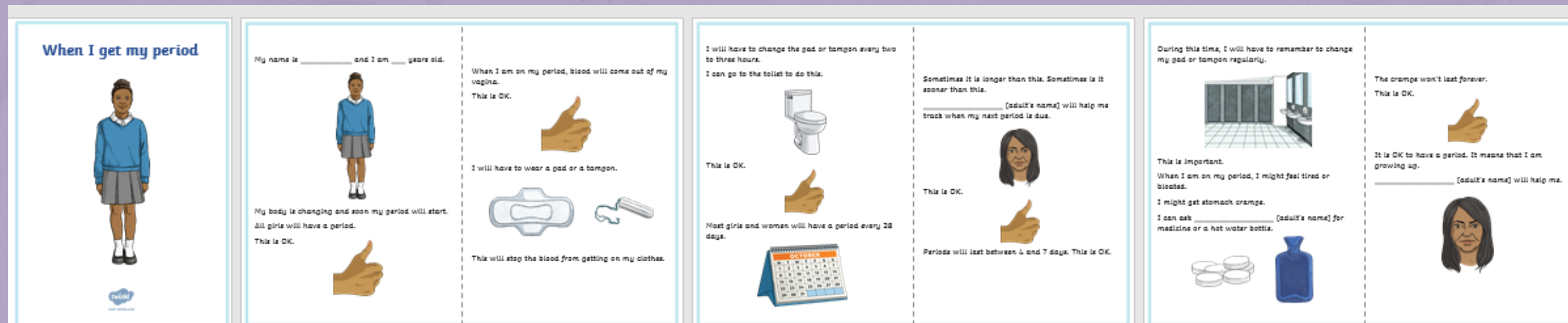
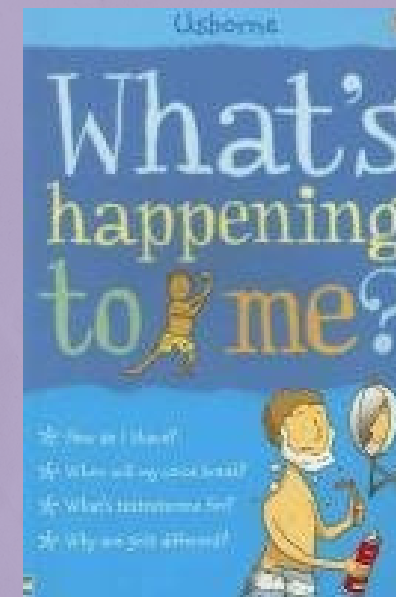
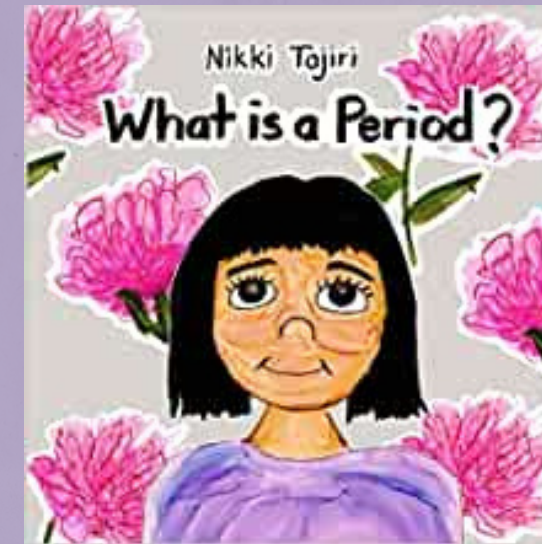


USING SOCIAL STORIES



Topics for relevant social stories

- wearing deodorant
- wearing a bra
- shaving
- changing menstruation products
- Public vs private behaviours rules
- expressing pain during periods
- mood changes



RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

- Draft statutory RSHE guidance (DFE 2024)
- Social stories and comic strip conversations (autism.org.uk)
- Topics - Lady Talk Matters
- 5 ways to get ready for statutory RSE | sexeducationforum.org.uk
- RSE for disabled pupils and pupils with SEN - SEF.pdf (sexeducationforum.org.uk)
- Puberty and Adolescence Resource.pdf (autismspeakS.org)
- Resources - BeyondAutism
- Autistic children: preparing for periods | Raising Children Network
- Free Social Stories About Puberty | And Next Comes L - Hyperlexia Resources
- Living Well With Autism - Puberty Educational Resources and Social Stories
- Menstruation Social Stories (happylearners.info)

