



Belfast Health and
Social Care Trust

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Children's Community Nurse for Learning Disability Children with Disabilities Service



Puberty and Adolescence Advice for Girls

When to start? Early!!

How to talk to your child about puberty

This can be a complex process for parents and children and can be even more complex when a child has a learning disability and/or Autism.

Discuss it at a quiet time when the young person is calm

Think about your language

Use visuals to support learning e.g social story on the body changing

Although children with learning disabilities go through puberty in the same way, it may be early for some and prolonged for others

Mood swings during puberty

As puberty can be very difficult, mood swings can start to occur. All emotions begin to develop and there are many psychological effects too, for example:

- Low self esteem
- Aggression
- Depression
- Anxiety

Some of behaviours can spark new reactions

We may need to change our ways as our children develop

This is because...

New behaviours may develop. You may notice more stimming or other self-comforting behaviours. We may need to adapt our approach.

Personal Hygiene

- Make a "keeping clean" chart or visual timetable
- Break tasks into small steps so that showering for example, includes a checklist for washing all body parts
- Your child may not like certain scents/ consistencies. Allow them to help with the shopping and pick their own toiletries
- Try different routines—your child may like the feel of a certain cloth and dislike the feel of the shower spray on their head.



Menstruation

In the super market point out sanitary wear on shelves, buy a few different types and let her explore different kinds.

Encourage the steps of wearing a pad to changing it and putting it in the bin

Put red food colouring in her underwear to show what blood might look like when the period starts.

For sensory issues :

- Put the sanitary towel in the gusset of the pants
- Wear two pairs of pants with a pad in between
- Having an extra cloth covering the pad

Inappropriate behaviours



Children who have trouble with impulse control may be too aggressive in social situations, others may have trouble putting off sexual urges in public situations.

Children with poor social skills may read the social situation or social cues inaccurately, which may lead to expressing sexual desires inappropriately or they may avoid sexual activity or feelings altogether

Keeping communication open with your child is important during this challenging time. Also remember that this is a normal part of life and all the feelings are completely normal. Try to strike a healthy balance between giving privacy and knowing when your child needs help or guidance.

How to deal with these behaviour

Complete behaviour diaries, to try and understand the purpose of the behaviours.

Social stories and comic strip conversations can help discover how a child viewed the situation and to describe what to do in a social situation

Circle concepts can demonstrate socially appropriate behaviour in different locations and contexts

Ask at your child's school, as they may be aware of groups in your area that may be able to help.

Private and public places

Give some guidelines as to the difference between public and private..e.g. bedroom is private

Let children know who they can talk to about puberty.
Talking to parents, etc.

Start to knock before entering rooms to show the difference between public and private

