Did you know your school can get access to free period products?

The Department for Education have implemented a period product provision scheme which will ensure free products are available to students across state-maintained schools and colleges in England. To ensure your students have the support they need and access to free period products, get in touch with PHS who are supporting the scheme, by calling 01827 255500 (option 3) or drop an email to [periodproducts@phs.co.uk](mailto:periodproducts@phs.co.uk). Lil-Lets are thrilled to be also supporting this scheme and our period products make up a wide selection of the product offering too!

PUBERTY Puberty and Menstrual Care

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| **Time for session** | 50-60 minutes |
| **Suitable for:** | KS3: Year 7 |
| **Aim** | To understand the changes during puberty and what menstrual care involves |

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| **Outcomes:** | **By the end of this activity, participants will be able to:**   * Define what **puberty** means and recap body changes. * Understand that periods, experiences and bodies are **unique** for each person. * Name at least **4 different products** which people can use to manage their periods. * Identify ways to help someone **manage** **their own menstrual cycle** or support others. * Understand where to **go to ask for help** and support with questions about our bodies.   This session links to KS3 government statutory guidance & PSHE Association guidance. |

# **Resources required:**

* + Post-it notes
  + Puberty changes facilitator’s prompt sheet (if using)
  + Puberty bag & key changes facilitator prompt sheet (bag to include pads, tampons, menstrual cup, period pants, reusable period pads if possible)
  + Puberty Pictionary activity (print and cut out ahead of lesson)
  + Puberty and Menstrual Wellbeing PowerPoint (if using)
  + Brook’s Period Tracker (for those who want to take it away to track their menstrual cycle)

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| **Activities and method** | | |
| **Activity** | **Description & key messages** | **Timing** |
| **1** | **Introduction – creating a safe space & lesson aims**  **Activity**   * Explain that we are going to talk about our bodies and puberty * Create a safe space with the children, ensure that pupils understand that the classroom is a confidential space and free from judgement. * Please communicate the session aims with the group and key messages | 1. **minutes** |
| **2** | **Puberty and body changes**  **Method**   * Facilitator explains that during this session we are going to be talking about people’s bodies rather than referring to puberty changes based on gender. This is because we want to be inclusive of people who identify as trans, non-binary or inter-sex. * For some of us, our gender identity is not the one everyone expected when we were born based on our genitals. You may feel female and have a penis, you may feel male and have a vulva or may feel like a mix of the two. This is known as being trans, transgender, or genderqueer and can make puberty extra complicated; however, puberty can still be positive. Please speak to someone you trust if anything is worrying you or if you have any questions. * Intersex – this describes a person whose biology doesn’t easily fit into ‘male’ or ‘female’ sexes and is far more common than we might think. It may mean they experience some aspects of puberty differently. (*For more information, please visit Brook’s website)* * Facilitator asks the group what puberty is and gives some key facts, using key messages below. * Facilitator explains to the group that we are going to think recap puberty changes; some happen to some people and not to others. * Facilitator then asks if there are any changes we haven’t mentioned? Can anyone think of anymore?   **Key Questions**   * Can it feel awkward to talk about these things? Why? * Is puberty the same for everyone? * What age does puberty happen? * What are some changes which happen during puberty? * Are all the changes physical? * How does puberty make someone feel? What can we do to feel positive? * Why do you think it is important to talk about these changes before they happen? * How could you support someone’s/your own menstrual wellbeing?   **Key Messages**   * Puberty is when people start to change from being a child into a young adult. Hormones (chemicals produced by your brain) cause your body to change and grow to become able to biologically conceive a baby. They also affect the way you think and feel. * This can start any time from 7-16 years old. Not everyone develops at the same age or speed and it can take between 2-4 years to complete. * Puberty changes are a normal part of growing up. * People will start puberty at a slightly different time and will develop differently – it’s important to respect that we are all different. * Puberty is a time for new opportunities and feelings. You will have new responsibilities to take care of yourself and you may want more independence. * Some changes happen only to people with a penis, some only to people with a vulva; some happen to both. * The hormones released in puberty can impact our emotions and feelings. Make sure you are kind to yourself and others. | 1. **minutes** |
|  | **What’s the first thing you think of when you hear ‘periods’?**  **Method**  • Facilitator asks the group to anonymously write down a word or phrase they think of when they hear ‘periods’ on a post it note (the young people can write down more than one). You may choose to state no swear words or offensive words for some groups.  • Facilitator then collects them in and reads out some to the whole group. Alternatively, the facilitator can just ask young people to shout out suggestions!  • This question may bring up themes of embarrassment/shame/ taboo/ stigma around periods and it’s important to let the young people know that though there are no wrong ways to feel, periods are not something to be covered up or ashamed of. They are natural and unique to each person. Follow up questions could be ‘Why do people feel embarrassed?’ ‘Why do people feel they’re dirty?’ ‘Where does this come from?’ this is where you can talk about adverts, myths, boys often not being taught about them etc.  • Equally the group may not mention this theme (which would be great!) and instead focus on practicalities like pads etc. or how they feel and so on.  *Facilitator then goes on to give some key information and definition of periods and the menstrual cycle using the key messages below.*  **Key Questions**  • Do we often talk about periods? Is this only with certain people? Why do we think that is?  • How could we make environments more ‘period-friendly’?  **Key Messages**  In this session, we will be using the terms ‘period’ and ‘menstruation’, because they mean the same thing. Menstruation is the scientific term for a period. They are triggered by hormones released from the brain during puberty.   * Every month (ish), the ovaries release an egg – this is called ovulation. If this egg is not fertilised by a sperm, the egg disperses and is then shed with the uterine lining, and this is what period blood is. Some people’s menstrual cycle may last away between 21 and 40 days * The average age to start is 12 but most people’s periods start between 8 and 14. If you have not started your period by the time you are 18 it is a good idea to speak to a doctor. * There’s no ‘normal’ period or cycle, everyone is different! But usually they last a few days (commonly 2-10 days) passing between 5-12 teaspoons of pink, red or brown blood – this can be thick or watery. Periods can be irregular, heavy or light and can change throughout your life. * It’s normal to get vaginal discharge throughout the month. The amount that comes out can vary, depending on where you’re at in your menstrual cycle. Sometimes discharge looks thick and white, and other times (when you’re releasing an egg, around ovulation) it looks stringy and clear. It can also have a yellowish look to it. The point of discharge is to keep the vagina moist, clean and healthy. It cleans the vagina by getting rid of dead cells and bacteria. So it is nothing to worry about, in fact it’s a sign everything is healthy and working as it should. If your vaginal discharge changes colour, consistency, or smell this may be the sign of an infection, so it’s important to speak to a doctor. * Use plain, unperfumed soap every day to gently wash your vulva. Never clean inside the vagina (douche) as it washes out the good bacteria. Always wipe front to back, to avoid transferring bacteria from the anus. * Tracking your cycle can help you learn about your body and how you might feel at different stages. After a few periods you might see patterns and learn what to expect. You might want to use an app or a paper tracker. * Menstrual wellbeing is an important part of self-care, and wider education around bodies. Part of this is preparing yourself for the practicalities of having a period, seeing what works best for you and your cycle. * Everyone experiences their menstrual cycles differently. * Often menstruators are taught that periods should be hidden, covered up, secret and not talked about. Though there is no ‘wrong’ way to feel, periods are not something to be covered up or ashamed of. They are natural and unique to each person. * “The impact of stigma and shame around menstruation is felt across many areas of young people’s lives, from mental health, body image and self-esteem, to limiting activities and behaviours. It also acts as a barrier to communication and knowledge about bodies, and ways to care for them.” *Plan International UK report* | 1. **minutes** |
| **4** | **Period Products bag**  **Method**   * Facilitator asks the group how someone could manage the period blood? Take some suggestions * Use the period products bag to cover different period management options, using Brook period handout sheets to debrief key points. * Allow the young people to look at and handle the different options, asking any questions * Facilitator may choose to hand out printed period trackers at this point to members of the class who would like them.   **Key Questions**   * What period products have you heard of? Are some options better than others? * What factors might someone think about when choosing a period product? * Do you only have to use one type of period product? * Is it important to consider sustainability when we are selecting period products?   **Key Messages**   * People generally use a combination of products. Most come in different sizes and to suit different flows (heavy or light). Experiment to find what works best for you. No one type of product is better, it’s just the best option for that person. * Tampons – Are small tubes of material, inserted into the vagina with applicators or your finger to absorb blood. Shouldn’t be kept in for more than 8 hours. Don’t worry, they can’t get stuck or lost! They have a string attached to pull them out with. You should only use one at a time, only use on your period and use a size suitable for your flow (e.g. don’t use a super-size on your lighter days). They should be thrown in a bin, not flushed down the toilet. * Pads- Made of absorbent material to absorb blood. Have a sticky back - and sometimes wings – to keep them in place in your underwear. * Reusable pads –made from cotton and/or bamboo and are put into your underwear to absorb the period blood. After use, rinse the pad under cold water and put it into the washing machine. It’s best not to use fabric conditioner as it can affect the absorbency. The breathable material means used pads will not smell. You may change them one to six times a day depending on how heavy your period is. * Period underwear - Period pants are made with built in absorbency technology and look like ordinary pants/ knickers. Depending on how heavy your period is, you can use them as an alternative to other products or use them with other products. After use, you should rinse them in cold water until the water runs clear, put them in the washing machine on a cold cycle not using any fabric conditioner and hang them out to dry. Then you can reuse them. * Menstrual cups - A soft silicone cup that is folded and inserted into the vagina and opens up inside. It catches the blood, rather than absorbs it. It can be left in for up to 8 hours, then you remove it and empty the blood. You can wipe or rinse it and reinsert. After each period you’ll need to clean it thoroughly with boiling water and keep it stored it a clean, dry place. * The NHS says “Toxic shock syndrome (TSS) is a very rare but life-threatening condition caused by bacteria getting into the body and releasing harmful toxins. It's often associated with tampon use…”Some symptoms are a high temperature, flu-like symptoms, feeling sick, widespread sunburnt like rash, dizziness or confusion. These symptoms could be due to other conditions but it’s important to seek medical help through contacting your GP or NHS 111. It is very rare, but you can protect yourself by not leaving a tampon in longer than 8 hours, washing your hands before inserting a tampon, never using more than one tampon at a time and making sure you use the correct absorbency for your flow. More information here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/toxic-shock-syndrome/> | * 1. **minutes** |
| **5** | **Period Pictionary & menstrual wellbeing activity**  **Method**   * Print out period Pictionary cards and hand out to a volunteer(s). If your class is big and two whiteboards are available, pick a couple. * The volunteer/facilitator draws the image from the card, and the first person to shout out the answer wins the point (and is given the card). If the group are new to the topic, give them some of the easier cards (such as none that involve the reproductive system, e.g. ovary). Limit or increase the number of cards depending on time available. * The facilitator asks the group to reflect on some of the menstrual wellbeing ideas we have mentioned in this activity – does anyone do any of these? (this can be private reflection, no one should be forced to share) * Facilitator leads a discussion on self-care and menstrual wellbeing during the menstrual cycle, using key questions and key messages to debrief. * Encourage young people to think about things they might need to support their own or others wellbeing during menstruation, encouraging conversations around self-care. Facilitator may choose to ask young people to reflect on this as a piece of follow up homework.   **Key Questions**   * Why do we need to think about wellbeing during your period? * Why is it important to talk about period products as part of menstrual wellbeing? * Do we need to prepare in advance to look after ourselves before we get and during getting periods? * Does everyone experience the same period signs? * Does anyone have any top tips on what to do if you start your period unexpectedly? * Does anyone have any tips if someone has leaked or how to get rid of period stains from clothes? * What if people haven’t started their periods yet – does anyone have any advice?   **Key Messages**   * Some common signs that you may have before or during your period are feeling cramps in your lower stomach or back, feeling tense, emotional or irritable before a period (known as PMS), breast tenderness, spots, upset stomach, tiredness, bloating, headaches. You won’t necessarily get all or any of these signs – everyone is different. * During your period, some people get cramps which feel like a sore stomach or lower back. A warm bath, hot water bottle and keeping active can help. Any pain relief medication should only be given under adult supervision. * Period cramps can be uncomfortable but should not stop you doing normal things like going to school or work. If they are very painful please go to see your doctor for advice. * Remember your feelings are valid whether you are on your period or not – no one should disregard or mock how you feel by saying things like ‘are you on your period?’ This is not acceptable and often sexist. * Do something to make you feel positive, especially at particular times during your menstrual cycle. This could be going for a walk or relaxing in bed. Do what feels right for you. * If you have questions about your body, period or menstrual cycle please speak to an adult you trust. If you have very painful periods please don’t put off getting medical help. * What we need during our menstrual cycle will change, and everyone experiences their menstrual cycle differently. * It is only natural that sometimes you may stain your clothes or bed linen during a period. The best way to remove any stains is to use COLD water and soap to hand wash the stain (sooner is better than later), then when you can, pop it in the washing machine. A little salt, baking soda or lemon juice (on lighter coloured clothes) all help with tougher stains. * Having emergency period products with you when you are out and about can be a good idea. But remember you can always ask friends or an adult you trust too. * Tracking your cycle can help you learn about your body and how you might feel at different stages. You might see patterns and learn what to expect. You might want to use an app or a paper tracker. This can help with knowing when your period is due, as well as how heavy it is, and so be more prepared. * The average age to start is 12 but most people’s periods start between 8 and 14. If you have not started your period by the time you are 18 it is a good idea to speak to a doctor. * “Signs that your period is on its way are if you've grown underarm and pubic hair. Typically, you'll start your periods about 2 years after your breasts start growing and about a year after getting a white vaginal discharge. The average girl will get her first period around 12 years old, but it varies from person to person.” NHS website * As a society, there are ways we can incorporate menstrual wellbeing at home, in school (free period products, assigned staff to discuss menstrual wellbeing with) and in wider cultures. Is there anything you could do to support menstrual wellbeing? | **15 -20 minutes** |
| **6** | **Summary**   * Facilitators answer any questions carefully. * Provide a short summary of today’s learning. * Ensure young people can identify someone they can talk to if this lesson raises any concerns. * Signpost to reputable organisations and the school’s mentor or counsellor. | **5 minutes** |
| **Relevant differentiation to support or challenge pupils** | | |
| **Consolidation:**   * It is important to be understanding to our friends if they have difficulty managing their behaviour/response to feelings. * When discussing genitals remind children that we do not need to discuss our own genitals specifically at this point, and if they have any personal questions they can discuss this with the facilitator privately. * Discuss signposting, who the children can turn too if, for example, they want to discuss their gender identity more, or they feel that they are worried about something to do with their body. * For some children, it may be more appropriate to break down this lesson into smaller parts and to have a member of support staff run through each component individually. * It might be necessary to follow up and recap topics learned in this session if young people have never approached this topic before.   **Extension:**   * Everyone writes down at least one question about puberty onto a post-it note and teacher draws it out of a box, the group helps to answer the question (ensure in line with topic and age/stage appropriate). | | |
| **Further resources to support and extend learning** | | |
| **What is puberty**  <https://www.brook.org.uk/your-life/puberty/>  <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/stages-of-puberty-what-happens-to-boys-and-girls/>  <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/you-your-body/puberty/puberty-facts/>  **Information on periods and the menstrual cycle**  <https://www.brook.org.uk/your-life/periods/>  **Information on gender**  <https://www.brook.org.uk/your-life/difference-between-sex-and-gender/>  **Support for trans and gender diverse children**  <https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/> | | |