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 Society**

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| **Time for session** | 50-60 minutes |
| **Suitable for:** | KS3: Year 8 |
| **Aim** | To ensure the group have a deep knowledge of puberty, menstrual wellbeing, and begin to think critically how periods are perceived and discussed in society. |

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| **Outcomes:** | **By the end of this activity, participants will be able to:**   * Define what **puberty** means and **consolidate** previous knowledge on anatomy, puberty changes, menstrual wellbeing, period products and awareness of bodies. * Can **name at least 4 different** products which people can use to manage their periods. * Think **critically** about how puberty and menstruation is portrayed in society. * 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
  + Period Pitch cards (1 set)
  + Label the body worksheet and facilitator prompt sheet
  + Flip chart paper and pens (for each small group)
  + Period Quiz handout
  + Periods & Society PP (if using)

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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 periods and society. * 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 | 1. **minutes** |
| **2** | **Puberty and periods**  **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 if 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 then asks the group to define a period or menstruation, before running through the definition using the key messages below.   **Key Questions**   * Can it feel awkward to talk about these things? Why? * Is puberty the same for everyone? * What are some changes which happen during puberty? * Why do you think it is important to talk about these changes before they happen? * How do we speak about periods in society? * How might people feel on their period (symptoms)?   **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 8-14 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. * 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 the egg isn’t fertilised by sperm, the egg disperses in the uterus and comes out through the vagina as blood. 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 3-8 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. * 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. * “See a GP if your periods haven't started by age 18 (or 14 if there are no other signs of puberty either)” NHS website. * “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 * 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. * These symptoms make it seem like periods are awful but they’re not all bad! Use your period as an opportunity to look after yourself, do what you enjoy! Light exercise, getting enough sleep, eating a balanced diet, doing your favourite hobby/distracting yourself, painkillers, hot water bottles and warm baths can all help.   Everyone experiences their period symptoms differently, but society is not always ready to speak about them. Let’s think about how we can change this! | 1. **minutes** |
| **3** | **Period Pitch Activity**  **Method**   * Facilitator hands out cards with images of different period products on them. Divide young people into groups of 3-5. * After a few minutes of preparation time, each group go to the front of the class and give an ‘elevator pitch’ about their product, although they can’t mention the actual name of the product. They can also draw on the whiteboard and using words or gestures – like charades. The aim is to ‘sell’ their product to the rest of the class! * Facilitator debriefs using key messages.   **Key Questions**   * Why might people use different period products? * Is there a taboo about speaking about periods? Why is there a taboo about speaking about period products in society (encourage home vs. school debate)? * Do we need to think about sustainability when selecting products?   **Key Messages**   * Please see period product pitch cards for more information * 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. * The cost of period products might be a factor in which ones you choose. Some multi-use, sustainable period products are available but require more money to buy them, though you may save money over time. * Having an emergency period product 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. This is also true if you haven’t started yet. | 1. **minutes** |
| **4** | **Label the body**  **Method**   * Facilitator explains that we are going to think about genitals in more detail and understand the correct words for different parts and what they are for. * Facilitator shows images of the internal reproductive system, first one then the other on a presentation. Facilitator may choose to have the areas unnamed to see if anyone in the group knows the names, before revealing the answers. * Using the facilitator debrief sheet, questions and keys messages, facilitator explains the names and functions of each element of the internal reproductive system.   **Questions**   * Is everyone’s body the same? * What is the name for the area between a person’s legs? * How can we keep our genitals clean?   **Key Messages**   * Everyone’s bodies, including genitals, are slightly different. We should respect other people and not tease or laugh at those who are different to us. * Genitals are broadly split into two types; girls, and those with a vulva, and boys, and those who have a penis and testicles. * These genitalia on the outside of a person’s body connect to the internal reproductive system on the inside of a person’s body. * People’s genitals are very sensitive and it is important to keep them clean by gently washing with warm water or unperfumed soap (no strong perfumed soap). If you have foreskin (skin over the head of the penis) wash gently under it to stop it getting smelly, itchy or sore. * 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. * We often refer to the external genital organs (the bits you can see) as the vagina, but this is actually called the vulva. | * 1. **minutes** |
| **5** | **Period’s quiz**  **Method**   * Using the Period Quiz handout and/ or PowerPoint, the facilitator runs through each question, asking for suggestions and revealing the answer. * Answer any questions and debrief.   **Key Questions**   * Can it feel awkward to talk about these things? Why? * Is puberty the same for everyone?   **Key messages**  See the Periods Quiz handout for the answers and debriefing. This is also in the PP notes. | **10 minutes** |
| **6** | **How do we make a period-friendly environment in society?**  **Method**   * Facilitator asks the group if they think there are any barriers to talking about periods? Is there stigma? (Lead a group discussion, using the questions below) * Then, Hand out large pieces of paper to young people. Ask the group to imagine they are their school board, or the government, and encourage them to think about how they could make society more period friendly. Group should write down ideas on their paper. * After a few minutes ask for suggestions before debriefing.   *(If you have ran out of time, take some quick suggestions on this one to round up with some critical thinking)*  **Key questions**   * What does stigma mean? * What might affect how we think about periods in society? * Is it harder to talk about in mixed groups? And if so, why? * What might make it difficult for people to talk about bodies and wellbeing in relation to periods?   For the period-friendly environment task:   * What areas of life could you focus on? * Is there anything you’ve learned today that could help you in this task? * Is there anything you may have seen in the news or on social media that could help you here? * Who is left out from conversations about periods?   **Key messages**   * 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. * We think we should talk about periods, our bodies and the menstrual cycle openly and make a more period friendly environment. * “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 * The more that people know about the menstruation, the less mysterious or scary it becomes. Is there someone you know who doesn’t know as much about periods and the menstrual cycle as you do now? Could you share some of your learnt knowledge? * Include people of all genders in the conversation! * Some other ideas for creating a period friendly environment are having free period products in school and other community settings, as well as student always being allowed to go to the toilet when they need to in class. | **10 minutes** |
| **7** | **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:**   * When discussing puberty and bodies, revisit prior knowledge about menstrual wellbeing * Remind young people that it is good to speak openly about these topics in society in order to break stigma and taboo, although we should also be respectful of each other’s opinions and different characteristics (referencing Equality Act of 2010 to promote diversity). If someone feels uncomfortable and doesn’t want to participate, it is ok if they just want to listen. 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.   **Extension:**  **What are other words or phrases you’ve heard used for periods?**  **Euphemism activity  Method:**   * Split the class into small groups, giving each group a piece flipchart paper and a pen. * Ask the groups to write as many other words or phrases for periods as they can think of. * Ask groups to feedback their words and go through discussion questions. * **Discussion questions:** * Why do you think people use these words instead of period? * Are there any you like or don’t like, why? * What effect do you think using these words/phrases can have? * **Debrief/ key messages:** * You can use what language you are comfortable with, but it is important that we all know the scientific language as well. When you seek medical help, if you use euphemisms or slang, the medical professional may not understand or misunderstand your problem. * Some people feel that using euphemisms for our bodies or periods can enforce the idea that we shouldn’t be talking about them. It is important we talk about our and other bodies openly, with respect and understanding – link back to avoiding putting gender onto bodies. | | |
| **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 vulvas and vaginas**  <https://www.brook.org.uk/your-life/vaginas-and-vulvas/>  **Information on penises and testicles**  <https://www.brook.org.uk/your-life/penises-and-testicles/>  **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/> | | |