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 & Wellbeing**

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| **Time for session** | 50-60 minutes |
| **Suitable for:** | KS3: Year 9 |
| **Aim** | To ensure the group have a broader understanding about puberty, & wellbeing, and begin to think critically about 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 puberty and explore **body changes**. * Recognise **myths and taboos** related to puberty * Understand **puberty and how it links to well-being** * Discuss societal ideas about **menstruation** and assess how these relate to your **values** * Identify 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 Quiz handout
  + Periods & Wellbeing PowerPoint (if using)
  + Advice a friend quote cards

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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 puberty and well-being * 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 (Difference in Sex Development). * 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 is better known as ‘Difference in Sex Development’ (DSD)– 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*](https://www.brook.org.uk/topics/gender/) *or* [*NHS website*](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/differences-in-sex-development/)*)* * Facilitator asks the group what puberty is and gives some key facts, using key messages below. This allows the facilitator to assess the group’s knowledge of puberty. * Facilitator then asks the group to define a period or menstruation, before running through the definition using the key messages below.   **Key Questions**   * 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?   **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 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. * Menstrual well-being 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)” see [NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/periods/starting-periods/) for more information. * “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.” see [NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/periods/starting-periods/) for more information. * 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, 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** | **Puberty Myths/ Facts**  *See handout sheet for facilitators for answers and debrief for the quiz.*  **Method**     * Facilitatorexplains that we are going to see what you can remember from any prior learning about puberty and also challenge any myths that might relate to puberty. * Facilitator reads out a statement from the Puberty myths/ facts sheet and asks the group to vote on whether the think it’s a myth or a fact. This can be done either through moving from one side of the room or another, hands up or hands down, stand up or sit down etc. * Facilitator repeats with all of the statements, answering and then debriefing after each statement     **Key Questions**     * Is masturbating unhealthy? * Is it normal to start having sexual feelings? * How does puberty make someone feel? What can we do to feel more positive?     **Key Messages**   * Please see puberty myths/facts facilitator sheets for specific answers * Developing sexual feelings might happen during puberty; thinking more about sex and potentially who we might fancy. This might mean you start to think about your sexual orientation (which genders you are attracted to) but don’t worry if you’re not sure yet. In this wild mix of growing, changing and hormones it can take time to work things out. * You may find you want to explore your body and touch areas (penis/ vulva) for sexual pleasure. This is called masturbation and is a normal part of growing up. Make sure to have clean hands and do it in a private place. * Wet dreams are when someone ejaculates whilst asleep. Some people remember having a nice dream, but others just wake up to find a wet patch. It’s important to clean up afterwards and change your sheets etc. But remember this is normal and nothing to be worried about, it can just be a part of puberty.   **Strategies to manage changes**   * It’s common to feel embarrassed or overwhelmed about these changes but remember everyone goes through puberty. It’s also an exciting time and part of growing up! * Puberty makes us smellier, try to change your clothes and wash every day using soap or shower gel. Underarm spray such as deodorant (which covers up the smell) or antiperspirants (that stop or dry up sweat) can also help. * You’ll also need to keep your genitals clean. Avoid strong products. Unscented soap and warm water is all you need. If you have foreskin (skin over the head of your penis) wash gently under it to stop it getting smelly, itchy or sore. * Puberty can also affect the way we feel and our emotions can be heightened, especially as we try to cope with the changes to our bodies. * Try to be kind to yourself and people around you, without comparing to others. Do things which may you feel positive and support your mental health. Sleeping enough, doing some exercise (that we enjoy) and eating healthily can also help us feel more positive. * As we grow up we will take more responsibility for our own health. This will involve noticing when our bodies might change, or something feels a bit different to us. But if something does not feel right, we should talk to our parents/carers. * If we have testicles, it is important to check them regularly for lumps or swelling in case of cancer, and it is also important that we all check our breasts and learn to recognise if there are any changes. Don’t panic though, these cancers are very rare in young people, but it’s good to get to start knowing your body and asking for help if we are unsure or have any concerns about our health. You’ll learn about this in more detail in later secondary school. * Ask questions if you need help or are confused, make sure you are getting your answers from a reliable source, not just what everyone else is saying. | 1. **minutes** |
| **4** | **What do we think about? Debate exercise**  **Method**   * Explain that in this activity there are no right or wrong answers. It is about your own views. Everyone may be different and that is okay! No judgements. * The facilitator may want to explain to the group that we challenge the statement not the person and to ensure the group understand and agree to this; refer back to the group agreement/safe space. * Facilitator reads out statements and participants go to one end of the room for agree and one end of the room for disagree. The room is a scale, so people may fall somewhere in between. * Encourage discussion from participants on why they are standing where they are.   *Facilitator doesn’t need to use all statements – use ones you think would work best with the group*   * Once the facilitator has worked through the statements, ask the group “what affects how you experience and view periods”? * Ask young people to contribute their ideas about what might impact their experience of their periods. Write answers on the board.   *To extent the activity the facilitator could ask the group to write down their thoughts on anonymous post it notes, rather than calling out.*  **Statements**   * *When someone is on their period, they can still do everything they usually do in their day-to-day life (swimming/exams/running)* * *How we view periods in our society needs to change* * *My parents/ carers/ older family members view periods differently to how I do* * *Most people are comfortable talking to their dad/ male carer or male members of their family about periods* * *Periods should be normal to talk about* * *The media has a negative influence on how we view our bodies and periods* * *I feel comfortable using the words vagina and vulva*   **Key Questions**   * Do you have to do certain things or not when you’re on your period? * What should you do if your family has a different view on periods to you? * Where do you think the ‘taboo’ around periods comes from? * What are the big influences in young people’s lives? * Where do we get messages about bodies from? * What can impact on the way we think about our bodies and puberty?   **Key Messages**   * We all experience puberty differently * When speaking about body image and self-esteem, young people may allude to feeling self-conscious on their periods because of how their body looks/feels/smells. * 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.* * There are lots of products out there now that mean people who have periods can still enjoy activities without their period interrupting/ or stopping them from taking part * It is important to respect people’s personal boundaries and beliefs (unless they are harmful) * It is also important to respect protected characteristics and not discriminate anyone (for example their gender/sexuality) * There might be ways we can begin to think differently about periods, and ways we can remove the stigma around them. * Whether we have periods or not, it’s good for us to have an understanding of what they are and to feel comfortable talking about them. This can help to break the stigma around periods and to normalise the conversation. So, in the future you might want to talk about periods with your partner/someone in your family and feel happy doing so. * Many messages we receive from society might impact us in different ways. It is important to be critical of what these messages tell us, and to be mindful of how they might impact our well-being. * See notes on PowerPoint slide for facilitators prompts for “What affects how you experience and view periods” questions if needed. | **20 minutes** |
| **5** | **How Could we advise a friend?**  **Method**   * Put the group into pairs, and allocate each pair one of the quotes or if time allows ask to consider all 3 scenarios and how they would advise each person * Bring the group together and ask for feedback/discussion, using key questions, messages and prompts to support the discussion.   **Key Questions**   * How can we support our well-being during puberty? * Will we experience puberty differently, and if so, how? * Who can we talk to if we are feeling anxious or stressed about these changes?   **Key Messages**     * Different influences can affect our emotional well-being, in good ways and bad ways; including body changes. * Puberty may cause us to feel worried, or anxious about the changes that are happening or have not happened. It’s good to talk about how we are feeling. * It is important for us to understand ways to help our emotional well-being and resilience. This might be linked to physical activity, time outdoors, hobbies, time spent with friends and family, or helping others. * There are many sources of help and support for our health. Help is something we can always get from an adult we trust like our parent, carer or a teacher. There are also reputable organisations that can offer support digitally, over the phone, by text or face to face.   ***Prompts for the facilitator for Help a friend quotes***   * Sam is a gender-neutral name, consider this scenario from the perspectives of different genders. A reminder that puberty can start between the ages of 7-16 years old. We all grow and change at different rates, and there's nothing you can do to make it happen sooner or later. Your body will change when it's ready. Sam does not need to feel worried but should be supported to talk to someone to help alleviate their concerns * Jack is experiencing changes in this mood and feeling emotional. Jack can be reassured that this is normal, and his feelings will settle down eventually. It’s good for Jack to explain how he is feeling to his friends/family and to ensure he does positive activities to support his well-being * Alex might be experiencing period poverty, there are places where Alex can access free period products including at school. Alex might also feel awkward talking to their dad about their periods, perhaps Alex needs support having this conversation. Alex should be reassured about starting their period; this is normal and healthy and advised about the products available. | **10-15 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/Brook website | **5 minutes** |
| **Relevant differentiation to support or challenge pupils** | | |
| **Consolidation:**   * When discussing puberty and bodies, revisit prior knowledge about menstrual wellbeing and periods in society * Some young people may feel frightened about the idea of bleeding on their periods, ensure clear explanations are provided when discussing periods. Consider 1-1 learning. * 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 does not 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.   **Extension**   * In pairs discuss how someone could access support about body changes and/or periods. Who would they go to and what support might they need? Ideas could include parent/carer, teacher, GP, walk-in clinic, friends, online services like health and ChildLine. Support could be around gender identity, not starting periods, period cramps and so on. Practice asking for support. Discuss signposting, who the children can turn to 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. | | |
| **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/>  https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/differences-in-sex-development/  **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/>  **Information on fertility**  <https://www.brook.org.uk/your-life/fertility-awareness-methods/>  **Information on wellbeing**  <https://www.brook.org.uk/your-life/mental-health-and-emotional-wellbeing/>  **Support for trans and gender diverse children**  <https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/> | | |