

Welcome to Puberty



A guide for parents and people who care
for children with intellectual disability
and autism.

Easy Read



How to use this guide



This book is a **guide**.

A **guide** is a book that gives useful information about something.

We are called Family Planning Australia.



We wrote this guide.

This guide has information from our website called 'Planet Puberty', www.planetpuberty.org.au

We called our website 'Planet Puberty' because

- when you start puberty it can be hard
- some of the changes can make you feel like you are living on a different planet.



Planet Puberty can help children, parents, and carers to learn more about puberty.

When you see the words 'we', 'our', or 'us' it means Family Planning Australia.

When you see the word 'you', it means the person who is reading this guide.

We wrote this guide in an easy to read way.

There will be some hard words.

We will

- write the hard words in **bold**
- tell you what they mean.

You can ask someone to help you

- read this guide
- know what this guide is about
- find more information.



You can find the original guide here: https://www.planetpuberty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/FAM0001_A5_Brochure_LR_Digital-Version.pdf

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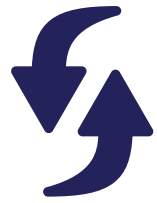
Welcome to puberty



Puberty is the time when you grow up from being a child to being an adult.

During this time, lots of changes happen to your

- body
- feelings



Puberty

- starts at different times
- lasts for different amounts of time.

This is because everyone's bodies are different.



For all children, puberty can

- be confusing
- be scary
- make you feel different.

People who look after children with intellectual disability and autism can help them to understand puberty.



Changes during puberty

- do not happen at the same time
- often happen slowly.

It is hard to know when puberty will start.

This is why it is important to start talking to your child about puberty as early as you can.



This guide will help people who look after children with intellectual disability and autism to talk to them about puberty.

You can learn more about what happens during puberty by reading what is on our website here:

www.planetpuberty.org.au

Thinking about puberty



Before talking to children about puberty, it is a good idea to think about how you felt when you went through puberty.

These questions might help you to remember what it was like.



1. What are some of the changes that happened to your body when you were growing up?

2. Can you remember what you felt like when your body was changing?

3. Did someone help you to understand the changes that were happening to your body?



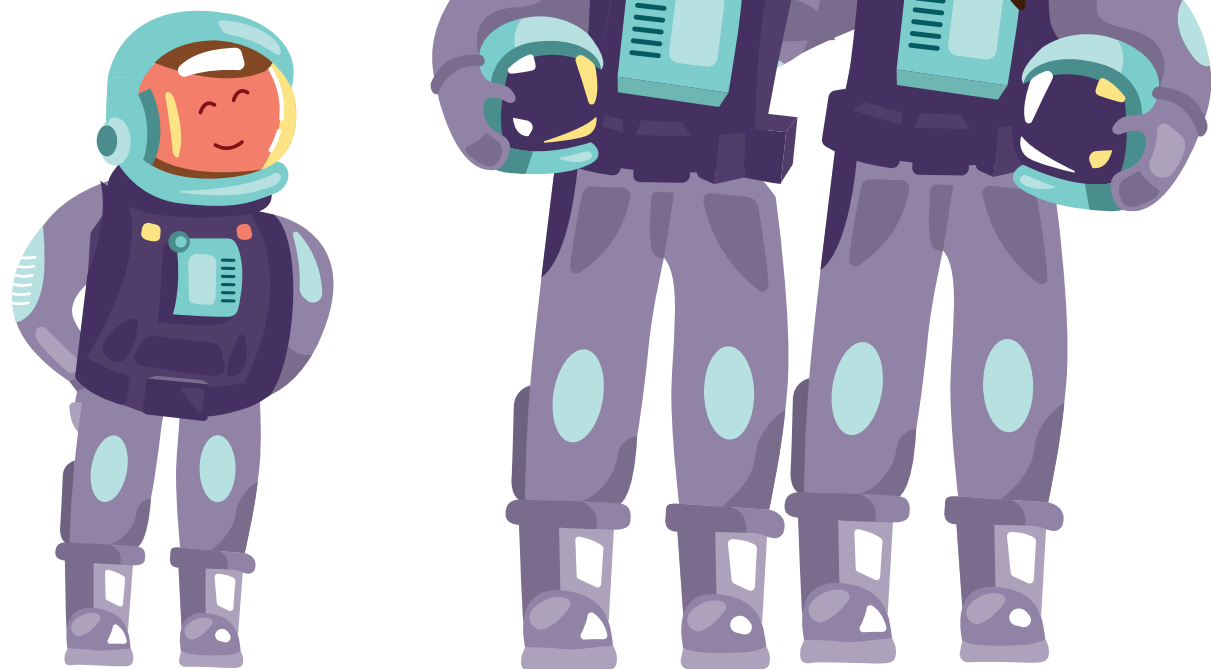
4. Can you remember anything that helped you?

5. What do you want your child to know about their body?



6. What do you want your child to know about relationships?

How to start?



Social stories help children to learn about what to do and what might happen.

You do not have to know everything about puberty.

We have made a list of things that you can teach your child as they grow.

It is ok if your child does not learn all the things on the list.

You can start with what your child does know.

Then you can give them more information when they are ready.



Every child learns in a different way.

You will know what works for your child.

You can use things that help your child to learn when talking about puberty.

Some children like to learn with

- **social stories**
- pictures
- games.

Social stories are pictures and information that can help children to learn about

- situations
- events
- activities.



A list for when your child is starting to learn about their bodies and relationships.



We call this the ‘beginner’ stage.

Put a tick next to the things on the list below when your child learns the information.

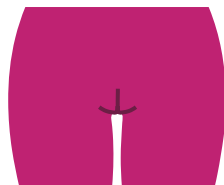
A tick looks like this



- ☐ Knows the right names for **private body parts**.
- Private body parts** are the parts of your body that your underwear covers.

The private body parts are:

- Bottom
- Breasts
- **Vagina**
- **Vulva**
- Penis
- **Testicles**



The **vulva** is the part between the tops of a woman’s legs.

The vulva is made up of two large and two small lips of skin called the labia.

Vulvas come in different colours, shapes and sizes.

The **vagina** is a

- strong
- stretchy

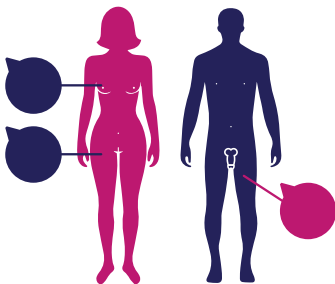
passage that opens at the vulva.



- ☐ The **testicles** are sometimes called ‘balls’.
- They hang on the outside of a man’s body near the penis.
- Testicles come in different shapes and sizes.



- ☐ Can **consent** to things.
- Consent** is being asked if you agree to something.
- This means saying yes or no.
- You need to know what is happening before you can say yes.



- ☐ Knows the difference between a boy’s body and a girl’s body.



- ☐ Knows that there are parts of the body that people can see in public.
- Your hands are an example of a body part that you can see in public.



- ☐ Knows that private body parts should not be seen in public.



- ☐ Knows that a baby grows inside the body of a woman.



- ☐ Knows that people have **relationships**.
- A relationship is how people know each other.
- A **relationship** in your family might be a
- mum
 - dad
 - brother
 - sister
 - aunty
 - grandparent

You can also have a relationship with a friend.



- ☐ Knows how to keep their body clean.

A list for when your child is learning about and experiencing puberty.



We call this the ‘middle phase’.

Put a tick next to the things on the list below when your child learns the information.

A tick looks like this

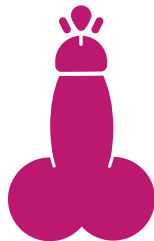


- ☐ Knows what a **period** is and when it comes.
A **period** is also called **menstruation**.
A period is when blood comes out of your vagina. It is a normal part of growing up.
The blood can come out for 3-7 days and nights, every month.
Menstruation is the way a woman and girls body prepares to have a baby.
A period means that a woman’s body is ready to have babies, if she wants to.
Periods usually start when girls get to puberty.
Periods will keep coming every month until a woman starts **menopause**.



Menopause is when a woman stops getting her period.

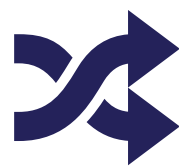
Menopause usually happens when a woman is around 50 years old.



- ☐ Knows what a **wet dream** is and when they might happen.
A **wet dream** is **ejaculation** when you are asleep.
Ejaculation is when semen comes out of a man or boys’ **penis**.
Semen is a white liquid that all boys start to make when they get to puberty.
Semen usually comes out of a penis when it is hard.
- ☐ Knows that bodies change when they grow into an adult.
This can be things like
 - getting taller
 - growing pubic hair
 - growing breasts.
- ☐ Knows different types of relationships.
- ☐ Knows that people might want to touch each other in relationships.
- ☐ Knows when someone should not touch them.
- ☐ Can say ‘no’ if they do not want to be touched.
- ☐ Knows when someone is touching them without their consent.
- ☐ Knows they can tell someone not to touch them.
- ☐ Knows that they can tell someone if they were touched without their consent.



☐ Knows what can happen if they touch someone on their vagina or penis without that person's consent.



☐ Knows about more changes that are happening to their body.

These can include things like

- pimples
- smells under their arms
- voice sounding different
- changes to how they feel.

☐ Knows what **sex** is.



There are lots of ways people can have **sex**.

Some ways people can have sex include when a

- man puts his hard penis inside a woman's vagina
This is called sexual intercourse.
- man puts his hard penis into a person's **anus**
This is called anal sex.
The **anus** is the hole in a person's bottom.
- person kisses and licks a woman's vulva, vagina, or **clitoris**.
This is called oral sex.
The **clitoris** is a small organ at the front of vulva.
- person kisses and sucks a man's penis.
This is also called oral sex.



☐ Knows how babies are made.

Babies are made when

- the **sperm** from a man and an egg from a woman join together in the woman's **uterus**
- the uterus is an organ inside a woman's body where a baby grows.

Sperm is a special type of cell made by a man.

They look like tadpoles with long tails.

Sperm goes through the penis and mixes with semen.

- babies grow inside the uterus for 9 months
- the baby then leaves the uterus and comes out of the vagina.

☐ Knows that there will be changes to how they feel as they grow older.

This can include having new physical feelings when they touch their private body parts.

☐ Knows what **masturbation** is.

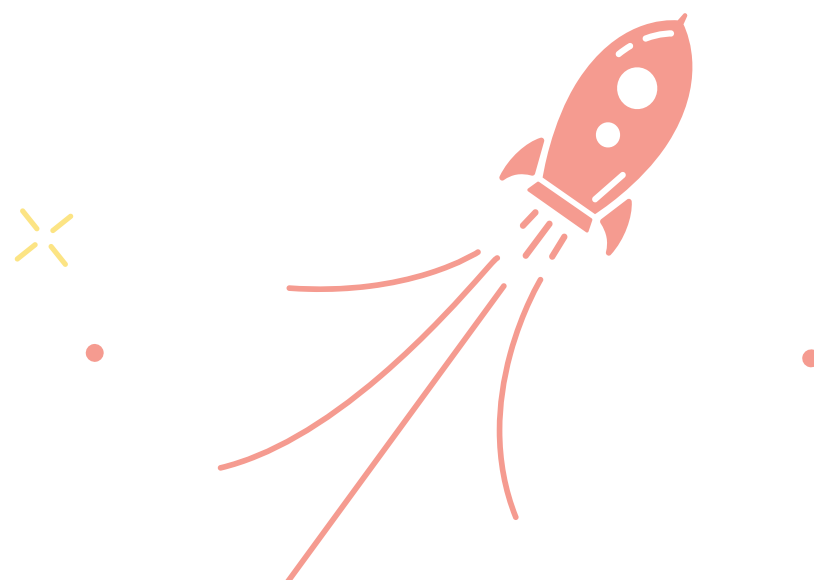
Masturbation is when you touch your private body parts to feel good in a private place.

It is normal.

It is not bad.

☐ Knows where it is ok to masturbate.

Knows how to keep their body clean.



A list for when your child has gone through puberty and is about to become an adult.



We call this the 'advanced' stage.

Put a tick next to the things on the list below when your child learns the information.

A tick looks like this



My child knows:



What feelings relating to sex and relationships are.



What it means to be

- **lesbian**
- **gay**
- **bisexual**
- **transgender**
- **asexual.**



Lesbian is women who are attracted to other women.

Gay is men who are attracted to other men.

Bisexual is when someone is attracted to both women and men.

Transgender is when you have been born with

- a penis but you feel like you are a woman, not a man
- a vagina but you feel like you are a man, not a woman.

Asexual is when you are not sexually attracted to men or women.



How to be in a sexual relationship with someone else.

This may include things like

- going on **dates** with someone
Dates are when you spend time with someone that you are attracted to.
- knows what to do if someone does not want to go on a date with them
- having sex with that person if they want to.



What consent is.



What **contraception** is and how to get it.

Contraception is what a woman and man use to have sex but do not want to make a baby.



There are lots of different types of contraception.

Most types of contraception are used by women.

But there are some types of contraception used by men.

A doctor can help people to work out what contraception is best for them.



About **safe sex**.

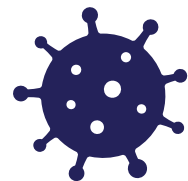
Safe sex is using a **condom** and **lube**.

A **condom** is a thin cover that is put on a man's penis.

Lube is gel that is used to keep sex nice and slippery.

It makes sex more comfortable.

Planning how you will help your child with puberty.



☐ About what **Sexually Transmissible Infections** are.

Sexually Transmissible Infections can be passed between people when they have sex. They are called STIs for short.

STIs can be avoided by having safe sex.

☐ How to keep safe from STIs.

☐ How to look after their sexual health.

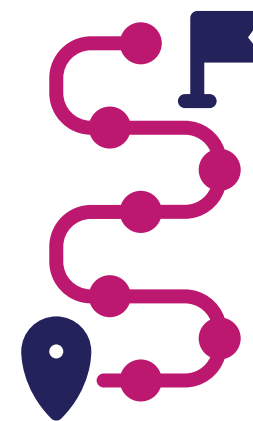
Examples of this are

- going to the doctor to test for STIs
- checking breasts for any lumps.



☐ What it is like to be a mum or a dad including

- the things that are good
- the things that are hard.



You can make a plan to help your child learn about puberty.

Here are some questions for you to think about.

1. What are some of the things that your child already knows about puberty?
2. What is your child learning about puberty at school now?
3. What does your child need to learn next about puberty?



Talking about puberty



It is best if you start talking about puberty as soon as possible.

Children with intellectual disability can take longer to learn new things.

You can help your child by starting to talk about puberty when they are little.

This will help your child learn the things they need to learn for when they are older such as

- body changes
- changes to how they feel
- changes with friends
- relationships
- having safe sex
- going through **menopause**.

Here are some tips for talking to your child about puberty:

It is ok if you cannot answer a question your child has.

You can say 'I do not know how to answer that, I will get back to you'.

You could sit with your child while finding out the answer.

You can ask for help.

It can be hard to teach children about puberty.

It is ok to ask for help.

Go to the end of this guide to see a list of places where you can get help.

Include pictures or symbols that represent sex and relationships on **communication boards**.

Communication boards are used by people to support them to talk.



Communication boards

- help people to talk
- use symbols and pictures for words and things
- help people to learn
- can be printed on paper or into a book
- can be used on devices like a phone or an iPad.



Be calm when your child asks you questions.

Do not make judgements about your child from the questions they ask.

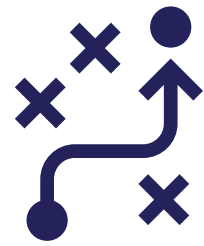
Your child will be more likely to ask you for help in the future.

Use games to help your child learn and practice.

You can also teach your child by showing them how to do things.

This could be helpful if your child does not use speech to talk.





Start early and use **repetition**.

Repetition is when you do something more than once.

Children with disability can learn lots when

- the information is given to them slowly
- they hear something many times.



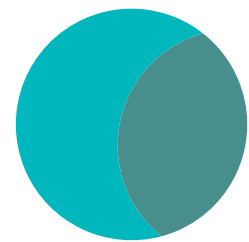
You can talk to your child about things that happen to other people.

Here are some examples of moments where you can teach your child about changes that can happen during puberty and as an adult.



You can talk about someone who

- your child knows who is having a baby
- your child knows from a television show who is in a new relationship.



Questions that are asked a lot.



Here are some questions that are asked a lot by other parents.

We have answered these questions.

We hope they are helpful for you.

Question

My child has not started school.

I think they are too little to start learning about puberty.

What if I tell them something that they are not ready to learn about?

Answer

Children need to start learning about puberty when they are little.

They will then learn more as they get older.

You only need to teach your child what they need to know for their age.

Some of the things you can start teaching when children are little are the names for their private body parts, like penis and vagina.

You can talk to your child about private body parts when they are

- in the bath
- using the toilet
- getting dressed
- getting undressed.

Talking about puberty with children when they are little will help them to prepare for changes that will happen to them as they get older.

When you talk about these things with your child they will know it is ok to ask

- questions
- for help.



Question My child is a teenager.

They are 15 years old.

They have an intellectual disability.

They understand things like someone aged 7 would.

I am worried that they will not understand what I'm trying to teach them about puberty.

How can I help them to understand why their body is changing?



Answer Children with intellectual disability will still have puberty.

The changes to their body can be scary if they do not understand why they are happening.

You can help your child get ready for puberty by teaching them about it.

It is important for children with intellectual disability to know what the changes will be.

It will help them to feel ok when the changes happen.

Children with disability can learn lots when

- the information is given to them slowly
- they hear something many times.

Some children will need more time to learn.

This is ok.

You know how your child likes to communicate.

You can use the things your child likes to help them learn.

This might include things like

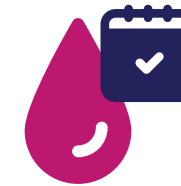
- singing songs about body parts
- looking at picture books together
- naming body parts on dolls
- watching television together and talking about what you see.



Question My daughter might get her period soon.

I am worried about how she will feel when her period starts.

How can I help her know what to do when her period starts?



Answer

Starting a period can be a difficult time for girls and the people who look after them.

Many girls with disability are fine to manage their periods when they

- get information about what a period is
- can practice using period products.

You can help your child to feel ready when their period starts by doing these things.

- Talk about the changes that will happen to your child's body during puberty
- Talk about periods often
- Tell your child that periods are normal
- Tell your child that it is not bad to have a period
- Teach your child about how to use period products
- Teach your child about how to keep clean when they have their period
- You can buy period products before your child has their period
- Your child can practice using period products
- You could get your child to practice using a period product, like a pad, when they are doing something they enjoy
- Use dolls, books and cartoons to help talk about periods
- Speak to your child's doctor if they have any problems with their period such as
 - not getting their period every four weeks
 - getting lots of pain with their period
 - having lots of blood that is hard to manage.



Question



My child does not use words to speak.
How can I teach them about puberty?

Answer

You would already know when your child needs something.

This is because you have learnt how to communicate with them through other ways.

Teaching your child about puberty can be done in the same way that you teach your child other new things.

There are some things you can do to teach your child about puberty.

You can

- use pictures that show things that your child can do at home and when out
- use social stories to teach your child about things like
 - putting clothes on
 - taking clothes off
 - masturbating
 - relationships with other people.
- use **sign language**
Sign language is when you talk using hand and body movements.
- include pictures or symbols that represent sex and relationships on communication boards
- ask for help to find the right things to help your child learn.



Question



Sometimes, my child

- takes their clothes off when they are out of the house
- touches their private body parts when they are out of the house.

How can I help my child to stop them from doing this?

Answer

Children with intellectual disability and autism can take a bit longer to learn about

- private body parts
- parts of their body that other people are ok to see in public
- places where they should put their clothes on
- places where they should take their clothes off
- things they can do with their body in private places at home
- things that they should not do with their body when they are out of the house.



You can start by teaching your child about what a private place is.

A private place is somewhere where people must ask permission to enter. These include

- toilet at home
- bathroom at home
- bedroom.

You can also teach your child about what a public place is.

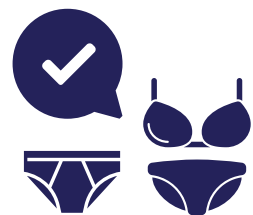
A public place is

- any place where other people can be at
- shared with other people.

These include a

- school
- lounge room
- park
- kitchen.





You can teach your child that their private body parts are the parts of the body that they put underwear on

- show your child how you get dressed at home including things like
 - shutting your door when you get dressed
 - shutting your door when you take your clothes off.
- teach your child that private things should be done in private places like:
 - taking their clothes off
 - touching their private body parts.



You could print pictures of

- public places
- private places

Ask your child to sort the pictures into

- public places
- private places.



It is ok if your child does not learn quickly.

You might need to show your child many times.

Your child will learn when they are ready.

Organisations that can help



We have a website.

It is called Planet Puberty.

Our website has lots of information and things you can use to help teach your child about puberty.

You can see our website by typing planetpuberty.org.au in the search bar on your phone or computer.



There are also lots of other organisations that can help you.

We have made a list for you below.

You need to look for the organisations that are in the State or Territory where you live.



New South Wales

Family Planning Australia

Website: fpnsw.org.au/disability

Phone: 1300 658 886

Parentline New South Wales

Website: parentline.org.au

Phone: 1300 130 052

Queensland

True Relationships and Reproductive Health

Website: true.org.au

Phone: 07 4051 3788

Parentline Queensland and Northern Territory

Website: parentline.com.au

Phone: 1300 301 300

Victoria

Sexual Health Victoria

🌐 Website: shvic.org.au

📞 Phone: 1800 013 952

Association for Children with a Disability

🌐 Website: acd.org.au/support-line/

📞 Phone: 03 9880 700
1800 654 013

Parentline Victoria

📞 Phone: 13 22 89

Australian Capital Territory

Sexual Health and Family Planning
Australian Capital Territory

🌐 Website: shfpact.org.au

📞 Phone: 02 6247 3077

Australian Capital Territory
Community Services

🌐 Website: communityservices.act.gov.au/children-and-families/support-for-parents-and-families

📞 Phone: 13 34 27

South Australia

Shine South Australia

🌐 Website: shinesa.org.au

📞 Phone: (08) 8300 5300

Special Education Resource Unit

🌐 Website: sies.sa.edu.au

📞 Phone: 08 8235 2871

The Parent Helpline

📞 Phone: 1300 364 100

Western Australia

People 1st Programme

🌐 Website: people1stprogramme.com.au

📞 Phone: 08 9227 6414

Sexuality Education Counselling
and Consultancy Agency

🌐 Website: secca.org.au

📞 Phone: 08 9420 7226

Ngala Parenting Line

🌐 Website: ngala.com.au/parenting-line

📞 Phone:

If you live in the city or use a
mobile phone: 08 9368 9368

If you live in the country or use a
phone in your home: 1800 111 546

Northern Territory

Family Planning Welfare
Association of Northern Territory

🌐 Website: www.fpwnt.com.au/

📞 Phone: 08 8948 0144

Relationships Australia Northern
Territory

🌐 Website: nt.relationships.org.au/

📞 Phone: 1300 458 600

Parentline Queensland and
Northern Territory

🌐 Website: parentline.com.au

📞 Phone: 1300 301 300

Tasmania

Family Planning Tasmania

🌐 Website: fpt.asn.au

📞 Phone: 03 6273 9117

Respectful Relationships Tasmania

🌐 Website: respectfulrelationships.education.tas.gov.au

📞 Phone: 1800 816 057

Parentline

📞 Phone: 1300 808 178

Planet Puberty

Contact Us

Family Planning Australia

Website: fpnsw.org.au

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Planet Puberty website:

planetpuberty.org.au

