



PUBERTY

The onset of their child's puberty can be a concern for any parent, but when the child has additional needs especially learning difficulties and/or social and communication difficulties this phase can be particularly problematic.

At The SNAP Centre and on the SNAP helpline we are often asked for help with this particular issue. It seems that although sex and relationship education (SRE) is part of the National Curriculum, this is often not delivered at the correct time for a child with special needs or not differentiated to the appropriate level. Mainstream schools can usually only lesson plan with age appropriate material, which may not match the level of the child with special needs at that time.

Special schools also seem to struggle with appropriate handling of this subject. The school nurse should be a good source of information, but it seems to be a difficulty to offer the right support for each child's individual needs at a specific time.

Some of the common issues:

- Understanding the physical changes in their body
- Personal hygiene and the need to wash more carefully and use deodorant
- Learning about privacy and respecting others' privacy
- Public and private places
- Appropriate touching and physical contact with others
- For boys - erections and wet dreams
- For girls - periods and coping with sanitary protection
- Masturbation
- Mood swings
- Becoming more independent with personal care
- Learning to cope with shaving
- Acne and spots

Further issues are about relationships, vulnerability and understanding the rights and wrongs of theirs and other people's behaviours.

The SNAP library contains a number of resources on these subjects including the following:

Talking Together... About Growing Up: A Workbook for Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities - fpa

Talking Together... About Sex and Relationships: A Practical Resource for Schools and Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities - fpa

Making Sense of Sex: A Forthright Guide to Puberty, Sex and Relationships for People with Asperger's Syndrome - Sarah Attwood

Personal Hygiene: What's That Got to Do with Me? - Pat Crissey

Taking Care of Myself: A Hygiene, Puberty and Personal Curriculum for Young People with Autism - Mary Wrobel



All About Us: A CD-ROM for People with Learning Disabilities on Growing Up and Personal and Sexual Relationships – fpa
The Autism-Friendly Guide to Periods – Robyn Steward
Periods – A Practical Guide (Book & CD) – Me and Us
Girls Growing Up on the Autism Spectrum: What Parents and Professionals Should Know About the Pre-teen and Teenage Years - Shana Nichols
The Adolescent with Developmental Co-ordination Disorder – Amanda Kirby
Teaching Children with Down Syndrome About Their Bodies, Boundaries and Sexuality: A Guide for Parents and Professionals – Terri Couwenhoven
Asperger's Syndrome and Puberty: by The Girl with the Curly Hair – Alis Rowe
The Care and Keeping of You (Revised): The Body Book for Younger Girls – Valorie Schaefer
The Care and Keeping of You 2: The Body Book for Older Girls – Cara Natterson
The Growing Up Guide for Girls: what girls on the autism spectrum need to know! – Davida Hartman
The Growing Up Book for Boys: what boys on the autism spectrum need to know! – Davida Hartman
What's Happening to Tom? : a book about puberty for boys and young men with autism – Kate E Reynolds

There are some excellent PDF downloads available from the NHS Centre for HIV & Sexual Health:

Puberty & Sexuality for Children and Young People with a Learning Disability (2009)
<http://www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk/resource/puberty-and-sexuality-for-children-and-young-people-with-a-learning-disability/> - The documents contain many illustrated resources and worksheets to make tackling these issues with your child easier, more appropriate and less complicated than most books. We have a printed version of the document in the SNAP library for you to look at and we can print off the pages you need on request.

<http://www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk/resources/resources-catalogue/> All Change: Boys and Girls versions. These are small booklets looking at issues around puberty and can be used to stimulate discussion and present factual information in an accessible form (*Copies available in the SNAP library*).

<http://www.me-and-us.co.uk/ppg/index.html> Periods – A Practical Guide. A book and CD to teach girls and young women with a learning disability about menstruation. With photos and images a girl can learn how to deal with her periods (*available in the SNAP library*).

Information sheet from The National Autistic Society called Sex Education and Puberty:
<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication/sex-education.aspx>

The contacts and links given via this SNAP information sheet have been shared as a starting point for your own research. We believe the information to be genuine and correct at the time of publishing, however no responsibility for loss occasioned by any person acting or refraining from acting as a result of the material contained herein can be accepted by SNAP.