Consent and Personal Care

Teaching your child about consent is important.

It will help keep them safe.

It will help them make healthy decisions.

It is important to teach your child about consent in personal care.

Personal care is another word for hygiene and keeping private body parts healthy.

Teaching your child about consent and personal care will help them to keep safe and make healthy decisions about their body when they need support.

What is on this page?

This page is about how you can support your child to learn about consent and personal care.

It has easy read information about:

- what consent and personal care means
- why it is important to teach about consent and personal care
- who should be practicing consent with your child during personal care
- things you can try to teach your child about consent and personal care

What does consent mean in personal care?

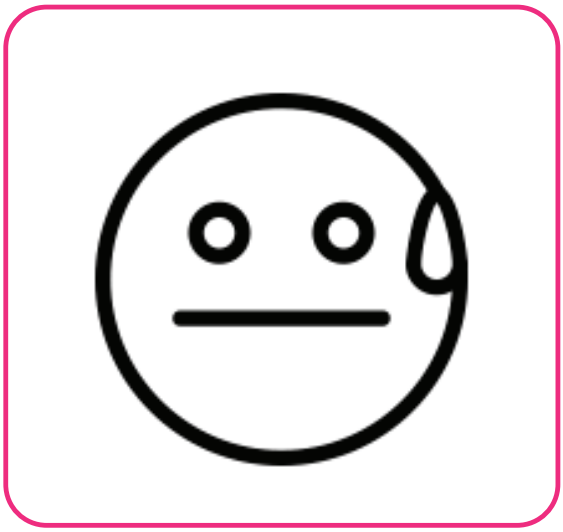
Giving consent is when one person says 'yes' or gives permission to another person to do something.

People must always ask if it is OK before touching someone else.

This is asking for consent.

In personal care consent means that you:

- ask your child before helping them with things like showering, toileting or getting dressed
- give your child time to think about what they want to do
- wait until your child responds before starting personal care



It can feel awkward to ask your child for their consent before helping them with personal care.

This is OK.

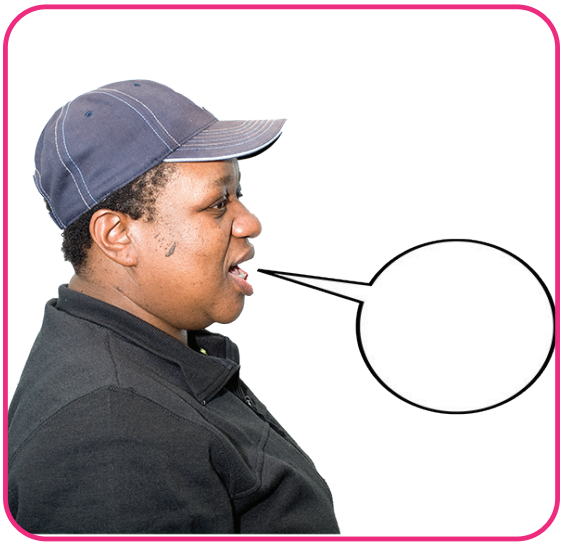
Sometimes children might not want to do a personal care task, or they might not be able to do it themselves.

If your child has high support needs, they might need more help with personal care than other children.

This is OK.

Sometimes children cannot say ‘no’ to help with personal care.

This might be when a personal care task will keep them healthy, like wiping their bottom or having a shower.



This is OK.

It is important that you still ask your child for consent.

This will help your child to practice making choices and build their skills for personal care.

If your child says ‘no’, and personal care needs to happen for health reasons, it is important to give them choices.

Giving choices helps your child to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ about things to do with their personal care.

Making choices can help your child to be involved in their personal care and to feel safe in their body.

Choices in personal care might be:

- Do you want to have a bath before or after dinner?
- Do you want to try wiping first?
- Do you want me to help you brush your teeth, or do you want to try yourself?

Giving choices is an example of supported decision making.

To learn more about supported decision making, go to: Supported decision making.

Why is teaching about consent in personal care so important?

When your child goes through puberty, they will start to do more personal care tasks.

These personal care tasks involve private body parts, like cleaning their penis or vulva.

Teaching about consent and personal care helps your child to learn that their body belongs to them.

Some children will need more support with personal care tasks as they grow up.

They might not be able to do their own personal care.

This is OK.

This might mean that your child has a parent, carer or paid support worker to help them.

This is also OK.

If your child has someone helping them with their personal care, it is very important that the person helping them is practicing consent.

This is to help your child understand that everybody needs to ask permission before touching their body or private body parts.

It is important to give your child lots of opportunities to practice consent with people in their life.

It is important to practice consent every day in lots of different situations.

Practicing consent with friends, family and support people will help your child to learn about consent.

Who should be practising consent with my child during personal care?

Everybody who supports your child with personal care should be practicing consent.

This includes:

- parents
- family members
- friends
- teachers
- paid support workers

Your child should expect that anybody who helps them will ask for consent before touching them.

Strategies for you to try

Here are some things you can try to teach about consent and personal care.

Give context

Context means giving information about why something is important or why it needs to happen.

It is good to talk to your child about:

- what are the different personal care tasks they need to do
- why the personal care tasks are important
- why they need to happen
- how they happen

It is important to give your child this information, even if they are non-verbal.

Here is an example.

“You have been running around outside and are dirty so you need to have a shower, otherwise you’ll be smelly.

I’m going to help you have a shower but you will be in charge.

Are you ready?”

Give choices and build skills

You can support your child to make choices for themselves.

This is called supported decision making.

To learn more about supported decision making, go to: Supported decision making.

Making choices can help your child to learn how to make bigger decisions as they grow up.

If a personal care task has to happen for health reasons, giving choices is a good way to practice consent.

This can help your child to feel in control of things that are happening to their body.

This can also help your child to learn how to do different personal care tasks in a safe way.

Here are some examples about making personal care choices:

- "When do you want to shower?

  In the morning or the evening"

- "What body wash do you want to use?

  Berry or vanilla?"

- "Which washcloth do you want to use?

  Purple or green"

- "What do you want to do after your shower?

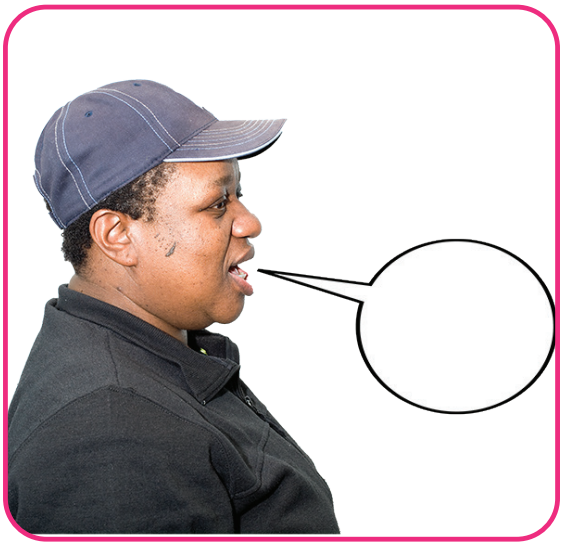
  Read a book, have some private time or watch TV?"

These tasks can take a long time if your child is learning.

This is OK.

It is good to support your child to do the best they can before asking them if it is OK for you to finish helping them.

Say the actions out loud



Talking about the different personal care tasks is a good way to help your child understand what they involve and why they need to happen.

This is very important when doing a task your child cannot do on their own, like cleaning their private body parts or wiping their bottom.

You can also create things to help your child know each of the steps, like:

- lists
- social stories
- picture boards

This can help them to follow along and know what comes next.

This will also help them to know what steps are right and wrong for the task.

Here is an example.

“I’m going to help wash your hair now.

Is that ok?

The first step is to get the shampoo.

Can you point to the shampoo?

I'm going to squirt some shampoo into my hand and then scrub it into your hair to clean it.

Now we are going to rinse the shampoo out.

I'm going to pour some water over your head to get the bubbles out, are you ready?

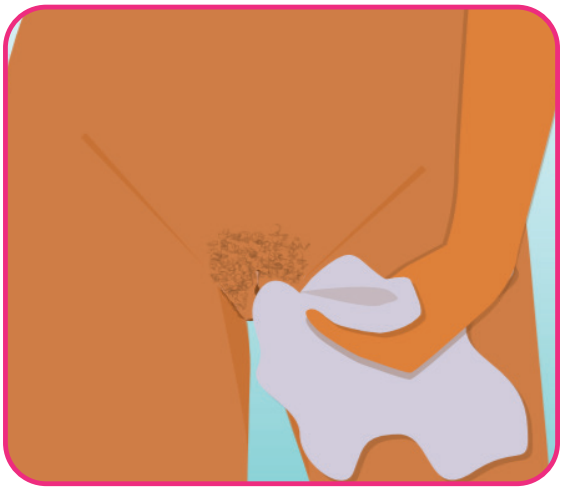
Make sure you close your eyes, the soap can make your eyes feel sore"

Resources for you to use

Cleaning your penis

Planet Puberty

https://www.planetpuberty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Cleaning-you-penis-V4.pdf



Cleaning your vulva

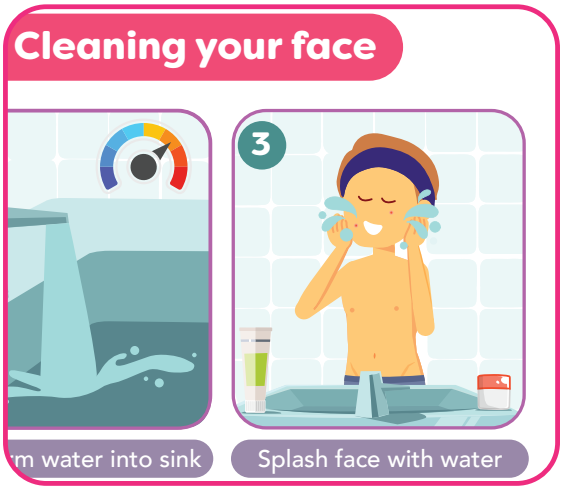
Planet Puberty

https://www.planetpuberty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Cleaning-your-vulva-F.pdf

How to put on deodorant

Planet Puberty

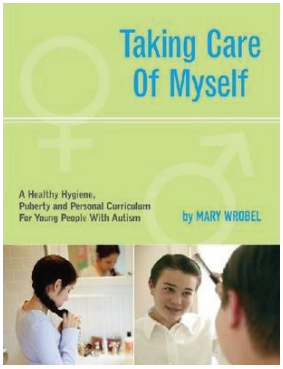
https://www.planetpuberty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/How-to-use-deodorant-F.pdf



Cleaning your face

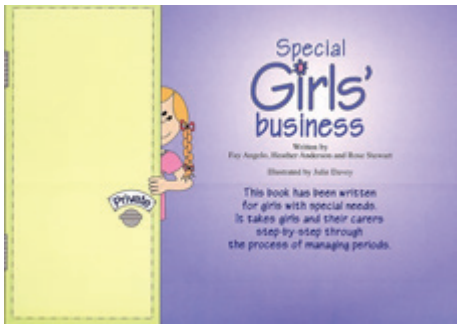
Planet Puberty

https://www.planetpuberty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Acne_pimple-face-care-V2.pdf



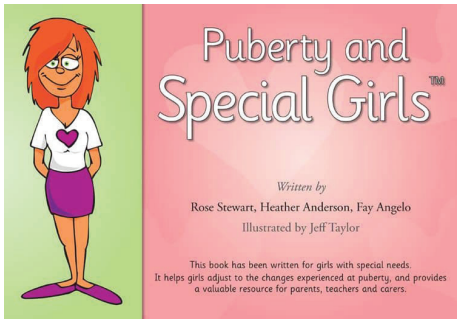
Taking Care of Myself

by Mary Wrobel



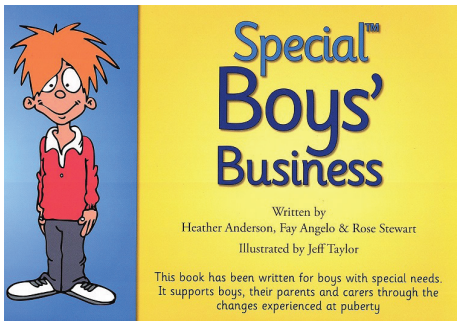
Special Girls' Business

by Fay Angelo, Heather Pritchard and Rose Stewart



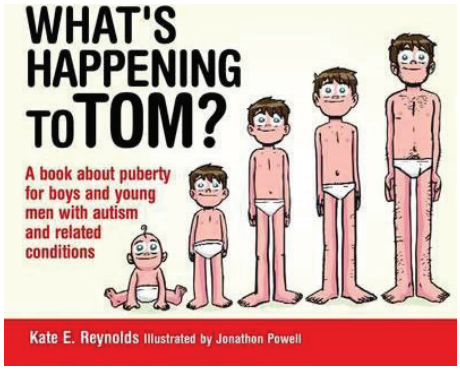
Puberty and Special Girls

by Rose Stewart, Heather Anderson and Fay Angelo



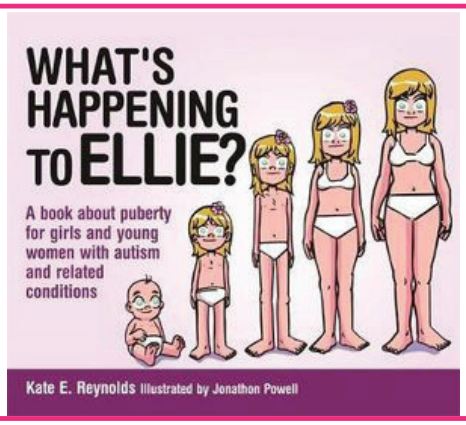
Special Boys' Business

by Heather Anderson, Fay Angelo and Rose Stewart



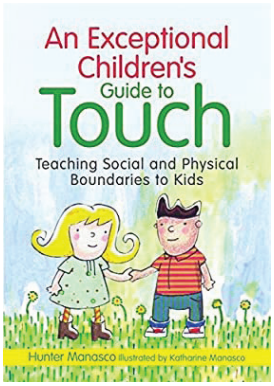
What's Happening to Tom

by Kate E. Reynolds



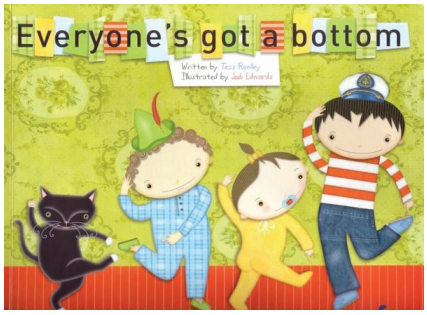
What's Happening to Ellie

by Kate E. Reynolds



An Exceptional Children's Guide to Touch

by Hunter Manasco



Everyone's Got a Bottom

by Tess Rowley

What to read next:

- Consent in relationships
- Keeping your body hygienic

For more information go to the Planet Puberty website

www.planetpuberty.org.au